

41. The motion is agreed to. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. This will be the last vote this morning.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state:

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Jon David Levy, of Maine, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maine.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Richard J. Durbin, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Brian Schatz, Heidi Heitkamp, Martin Heinrich, Tammy Baldwin, Debbie Stabenow, Mazie Hirono, Barbara Boxer, Dianne Feinstein, Angus S. King, Jr., Tim Kaine, Sheldon Whitehouse, Amy Klobuchar.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Jon David Levy, of Maine, to be United States District Court Judge for the District of Maine, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rules.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) and the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 63, nays 34, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 116 Ex.]

YEAS—63

Ayotte	Harkin	Murkowski
Baldwin	Heinrich	Murphy
Begich	Heitkamp	Murray
Bennet	Heller	Nelson
Blumenthal	Hirono	Paul
Booker	Hoeven	Reed
Boxer	Isakson	Reid
Brown	Johnson (SD)	Rockefeller
Cantwell	Kaine	Sanders
Cardin	King	Schatz
Carper	Kirk	Schumer
Casey	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Collins	Landrieu	Stabenow
Coons	Leahy	Tester
Donnelly	Levin	Udall (CO)
Durbin	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Feinstein	Markey	Walsh
Flake	McCaskill	Warner
Franken	Menendez	Warren
Gillibrand	Merkley	Whitehouse
Hagan	Mikulski	Wyden

NAYS—34

Alexander	Coburn	Enzi
Barrasso	Cochran	Fischer
Blunt	Corker	Graham
Burr	Cornyn	Grassley
Chambliss	Crapo	Hatch
Coats	Cruz	Inhofe

Johanns	Portman	Thune
Johnson (WI)	Risch	Toomey
Lee	Roberts	Vitter
McCain	Scott	Wicker
McConnell	Sessions	
Moran	Shelby	

NOT VOTING—3

Boozman	Pryor	Rubio
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 63, the nays are 34. The motion to invoke cloture is agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I wish to speak as in morning business for 1 minute.

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

MISSISSIPPI STORMS

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I simply want to take a moment to say a few words about the devastating storms that swept through my home State of Mississippi yesterday.

My prayers are with the families of those who lost their lives, those who were injured, and the communities across the State that are now hard at work to pick up the pieces.

We are grateful for local officials, weather forecasters, and first responders who saved lives by getting the word out that people should seek shelter from the storm. This is government at its best, when State, local, and Federal forces, alongside the news media and private businesses, work together to keep people out of harm's way. There is no doubt this cooperation and communication saved hundreds of lives across the South yesterday. Both will be instrumental in preparing for additional storms in the forecast today.

Mississippians are known for being resilient in the wake of tragedy. We have overcome unprecedented challenges in the past, and we will do so again. Nature's wrath may be fierce but the spirit of fellowship and perseverance of my fellow Mississippians—as well as all Americans—will move us forward.

I thank the Chair.

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:58 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

MINIMUM WAGE FAIRNESS ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 3:30 p.m. will be under the control of the majority.

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, we are now debating legislation that will be up for a vote tomorrow. It will be a cloture vote on bringing a minimum wage increase bill to the floor.

Let's be clear about this. It is a cloture vote. This means it is going to take 60 votes, and that will happen tomorrow. I assume most of the day we will be discussing that. I hope so. I know others have come to the floor previously to discuss this.

As the chairman of the committee and as the chief sponsor of this bill, I intend to be back on the floor later today to respond to some of the allegations made by Senators on the other side of the aisle regarding this bill and minimum wage as a concept, but I wish to take a few minutes to sort of set the stage for this legislation and what it is going to mean for our economy and for working Americans.

What I would say at the outset is that the minimum wage bill is about a lot of things: It is going to give an economic boost. It will increase the GDP of our country. It will do a lot of good economically for our society, but basically it is about economic fairness. It is about what kind of society we want America to be.

Keep in mind, the Fair Labor Standards Act which set the minimum wage was passed at the end of the Depression, 1939, when we were still in the Depression, and it was immediately to give a raise in wages to hard-working Americans. That is what it did.

Since that time, actually on both sides of the aisle, we have raised the minimum wage a number of times. This is just another step in making sure that those at the bottom of the economic ladder in America also get a hand up, to get help to make sure they too have a fair shot at the American dream.

So that is what this minimum wage bill is truly about. It is about core American values; the value that no one who works full time all year long should live in poverty. That is what this is about.

The fact is the value of the minimum wage has eroded so much over the last few years that the minimum wage right now is way below poverty. In other words, someone can work full time every day, all year long, and they are still in poverty. But they are working every day. That is not fair. The American value system is one that if someone puts in their work and works hard, they ought not to be living in poverty.

Right now, tens of millions of Americans are struggling just to keep a roof over their heads, to pay the heating bill, to find some money for an extra pair of shoes for a growing child, even getting money together to take the bus to work. Think about this: A minimum wage worker's paycheck has stayed the same since 2009. This chart illustrates what has happened.

If we go back to 2009, the minimum wage has increased zero percent. But

look what has gone up: Electricity has gone up 4.2 percent; rent, 7.3 percent; auto repairs, 7.6 percent; food at home, 8.8 percent. This is since 2009. Childcare has gone up 11.7 percent. Mass transit, which is how people who make minimum wage get back and forth to work, has gone up 17.8 percent since 2009. Yet their paycheck has not gone up.

What does this chart tell us? This tells us that people making minimum wage are falling further and further behind because these are things that low-income Americans have to spend money on: lights, rent, fixing up their old car, food, childcare, and mass transit. Look how much they have gone up. Yet the minimum wage has stayed the same. That is why this is a value issue.

When people who work hard and play by the rules have to rely upon food stamps and food banks to feed their children and the minimum wage has them trapped in poverty, it is unacceptable. It is un-American. It is not what our Nation is about.

So Americans deserve a raise. That is why this bill raises it from \$7.25 to \$10.10 an hour in three annual steps. It will link the minimum wage to the cost of living in the future. In other words, we index it for the future so we don't have this prospect that as other things increase in price, the minimum wage stays the same. It is time to index it in the future.

Our bill also provides for a raise for tipped workers—the people who serve your food, push the wheelchairs at the airports, and park cars. Every time I tell somebody this, they tell me I can't be right; I must be mistaken. I tell them the tipped wage today is \$2.13 an hour, and it has been that way since 1991. Not a 1-cent increase since 1991. People find that hard to believe. It is hard to believe, but it is very true.

So our bill would increase tipped wages from \$2.13 an hour up to 70 percent of the minimum wage over a 6-year period of time, the first increase in tipped wages in 23 years.

An increase in the minimum wage benefits everyone. Twenty-eight million workers will get a raise—15 million are women, so over 50 percent of the increase—4 million African-American workers; 7 million Hispanic workers; and 7 million parents will get a raise. And we forget about this. How about our kids? Fourteen million kids will benefit from a minimum wage increase. That means their families will get an increase in the minimum wage. This benefits the kids. So think about the children in America. They are going to get a raise too.

Again, raising the minimum wage helps our families and it helps our economy. This is why we had a press conference this morning with a group called Business for a Fair Minimum Wage. One thousand businesses across the country representing every State in our Nation have signed on saying: Yes, we need to increase the minimum wage to at least \$10.10 an hour. They understand and Main Street businesses understand this.

If we increase the minimum wage for people in the community, they are not running off to Paris, France, to spend the money. They are going to spend that money on Main Street, and that helps our small businesses. This is why so many small businesses get it. They understand that if we raise the minimum wage, that helps them. That helps the local economy on Main Street.

The Economic Policy Institute estimates that our minimum wage bill will put \$35 billion in the hands of millions of workers, and that money will be spent on Main Street. It will pump an additional \$22 billion into our GDP, supporting 85,000 new jobs as the raise is phased in over 3 years.

There is another issue I think we need to address, and that is what happens with low-wage workers and how they do sustain themselves. They are in poverty from the minimum wage. So what do they rely on? They rely on food stamps, Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program. They rely upon the earned-income tax credit and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program. That costs taxpayers in America \$243 billion a year.

Again, I am not saying that by increasing the minimum wage we are going to knock that down to zero. I can't say that, but what I can say is that a study was done just on food stamps, and if we raise the minimum wage, in the first year we will save \$4.6 billion in taxpayers' money because people will now have enough money to go out and buy their own food. They will not rely on food stamps.

A lot of these other things will be cut back too, such as TANF and Medicaid or CHIP. I can't say how much, but people understand that this is what we are paying as taxpayers to support a minimum wage below the poverty line.

Again, people understand how important this minimum wage is. That is why it is so broadly supported by such a cross-section of American people.

Here is a poll that has been done. A USA Today and Pew Research Center poll this year indicated that 73 percent of all voters support raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour—90 percent Democrats, 71 percent Independents, and even 53 percent of Republicans believe we ought to raise it to at least \$10.10 an hour.

So the American people get it. There is overwhelming support for raising the minimum wage. But I am just mystified by how vehemently my Republican colleagues oppose this modest increase. I just don't understand it. But what I hear is the same old outdated, disproved arguments against giving working Americans a raise.

There are some on the other side who believe we should do away with the minimum wage. There should be no minimum wage at all. Try that one on for size. Talk about a race to the bottom. Four dollars an hour maybe? Three dollars an hour? Two dollars an hour? You see, I have always said that

without a strong minimum wage and without a good, strong Wage and Hour Division at the Department of Labor to make sure people adhere to it—if we don't have that, then there is always someone a little worse off than you who will bid lower than you for that job.

So someone says: We will pay \$7 an hour. There is always somebody that just needs the job a little more, they are desperate, and they say: I will take it for \$6 an hour. Then there are some a little worse off than that who say: We will take it for \$5 an hour, and we get a downward spiral.

That is why I say our American value is to have a strong minimum wage, whereby people who work hard—and some of these jobs are hard work. People are on their feet 8 hours a day or they are doing some manual labor or they are doing the kind of jobs a lot of people don't do. Yet they live in poverty. It is not right. Raising the minimum wage is common sense that adheres to our American values and gives everyone a fair shot at the American dream.

I hope my colleagues will do the right thing and vote for cloture, allow us to get on the bill. We can have some amendments offered, and we can vote to give working Americans a raise after all these years.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Madam President, I rise to join my colleagues to urge support for increasing the Federal minimum wage.

Today's minimum wage of \$7.25 falls short and working families are falling behind. It hasn't kept up with the rising cost of everyday life. In fact, it is \$2 less than it was in 1968, when adjusted for inflation. A full-time worker earning the minimum wage in 2014 makes less than someone did in 1968, almost half a century ago.

Now, \$7.25 may be just a number to some but not for so many families in my State struggling to get by. It means working two or three jobs just to put food on the table or fill the gas tank or buy clothes for their children and still not be able to climb out of poverty.

Our Nation was founded on a basic premise that no matter who you are, if you work hard, you can get ahead. You can make a decent living. We haven't always kept that promise. We have the opportunity to do so this week for millions of hard-working men and women, young and old, who are paid the minimum wage.

Working Americans are not moving forward. They are falling behind. Year after year, paycheck by paycheck, they work just as hard, but they earn less and less. This is a disturbing trend, not just for minimum wage workers but all across the board. Worker productivity is rising pretty dramatically—69 percent in the last 25 years—but real hourly wages are not keeping pace, up 26.5

percent in the last 25 years. For the top 1 percent it couldn't be better. Their share of earned income is the highest it has been since 1929. But the average worker has to run faster and faster just to stay in place.

This is not the promise we made. This is not the way to a better America for each generation, but this is the reality for too many workers in New Mexico and across the Nation. They are living it every day. They get up, they take care of their kids, and they go to work. They may run faster, they may work harder, but they cannot get ahead.

A full-time minimum wage worker makes only \$15,000 a year, well below the \$23,550 poverty line for a family of four with two children. New Mexico has too many families in poverty, working hard, doing their best but falling further and further behind. This bill would give them a chance to build a better future for themselves and for their children.

I have received many letters from my constituents because they know how important raising the minimum wage is. Here is a letter from Kathryn from Fruitland, NM. She says: "Morally, raising the minimum wage is the right thing to do, because people working full time deserve to live decently."

Barbara from Clovis, NM, told me: "There are so many people who work for minimum wage and have a desperately hard time paying the bills."

Liz from Albuquerque says: "I hope you will do all in your power to assure that every working American will be assured of making a living wage, not just a 'minimum' wage."

Increasing the minimum wage helps families and helps the economy. It is one of the best things we can do to kick-start New Mexico's economy. It means workers in New Mexico would have over \$200 million more to spend. It means boosting our State's GDP by \$127 million, helping local businesses and generating 500 new jobs. It means moving forward, and it means that we honor an important idea that folks receive a fair day's pay for a hard day's work. That is the deal, and it is a big deal. Let's consider the alternative: When every year costs rise and the minimum wage stays the same, that is like a pay cut for families that can least afford it.

The bill before us increases the minimum wage in three steps. Six months after the bill is signed, it raises the minimum wage by less than \$1. A year later it bumps up the minimum wage by 95 cents, and two years after the first increase, it would finally reach \$10.10, which is about where it would be if it had kept up with inflation over the past 40 years. But this bill does more than just give hard workers today the chance to earn a decent wage. It also includes an important provision to allow the minimum wage to continue to keep up with every-day costs so that future generations who are working their way up can have a fair shot.

Our country has debated raising the minimum wage several times in the past. Opponents always paint a very gloomy picture, but we have been able to get bipartisan agreement to do it. Afterwards, families and the economy have been better off, and the pessimistic predictions haven't come true. We need to build an economy that works for everyone. Most Americans believe it is time to increase the minimum wage because it is the right thing to do, and it is the smart thing to do. It is time to keep our Nation's promise to reward hard work. It is time for all families to have a fair chance at the American dream.

I urge my colleagues to support increasing the minimum wage. It is long overdue for millions of working families who continue to struggle, who continue to wait, and who have waited long enough.

I yield the floor, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Thank you, Madam President.

I came to the floor to join Senator HARKIN, Senator UDALL, and Senator BOXER in supporting the increase in the minimum wage that would give 28 million American workers a very long overdue raise.

I know that the years since the economic collapse in 2008 have really been hard for families in New Hampshire and across the country. Although we have seen CEO salaries rise, pay for working families has stagnated. While the cost of food, transportation, and childcare all continue to climb and families struggle to make ends meet, the minimum wage for American workers has been stuck at \$7.25 an hour since 2009. At that rate a single mother working full time in New Hampshire does not earn enough to keep her family out of poverty. So let me just be clear: Adults working full time cannot support their families on the minimum wage, and that needs to change.

The fair minimum wage act would increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 over 2 years. That would provide a raise to nearly 20 percent of New Hampshire's workforce and lift 10,000 people in New Hampshire out of poverty. Nationwide, nearly one-third of all minimum wage workers are women over the age of 25. In New Hampshire 70 percent of minimum wage workers are women. This effort is about these women and the 34,000 children in the Granite State whose parents would have a little more in their paychecks each week if we increased the minimum pay to \$10.10.

I know that many critics claim that only teenagers hold those minimum wage jobs but, sadly, that is just not true. Teens make up only 12 percent of those who would get a raise if we boosted pay to \$10.10 an hour. Minimum wage workers are also veterans. The fair minimum wage act is about giving a raise to the 4,500 New Hampshire veterans who now earn \$7.25 an

hour—the minimum wage—and who are struggling to get by. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting to give these veterans a raise.

Making sure workers in New Hampshire get a fair wage for an honest day's work is something that I have focused on since I was Governor. In 1997 I signed a bill into law that boosted minimum wages for tipped workers in New Hampshire. Nearly 75 percent of those tipped workers are women. As was the case then, today we must act to raise the minimum wage to ensure that hard-working Americans get a fair shot at success. I urge my colleagues to join me on both sides of the aisle in supporting the fair minimum wage act. Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, it is my honor to rise today to support this very important bill, the Minimum Wage Fairness Act of 2014. I am very proud of my colleagues who have just spoken, and particularly, I want to say, of Senator SHAHEEN who, as I understand it, is the only woman here in the Senate who is both a former Governor and a Senator; is that correct?

Mrs. SHAHEEN. It is.

Mrs. BOXER. When Senator SHAHEEN was a Governor she stood up for the people, and as a Senator she certainly fights for her people.

Part of this fight involves making sure that when you work hard and you work full time you don't have to live in poverty. It just isn't fair. Remember most of the people on the minimum wage are adults. They are not children. They are not teenagers. They are adults. So many of them are trying to raise their children in jobs at the minimum wage level, and you don't have to be a mathematician to know that the current minimum wage leaves you in poverty. So you have a full-time job, you work your heart out, and you wind up in poverty.

I went back into my little memory books, and I found my son's first paycheck when he was working his way through school. He went to a supermarket to work as a checkout clerk. He came into a store called Lucky Stores. They were a union store, so he joined the union. Do you know what that young man made in those years? In 1986, 28 years ago—it is right here—it was \$7.41 an hour. Imagine. So he was so proud he could work hard. When he came home, he was able to help pay for his tuition and his books.

We are talking about a minimum wage that is \$10.10 an hour. Here is this young man working as an entry level checkout clerk at a supermarket in 1986 making over \$7 an hour. This minimum wage has got to be raised.

We have the chart. If you put inflation on the minimum wage as it was in 1968—just inflation—the minimum wage would be \$10.69 an hour. We are not even going that far. We are saying \$10.10 an hour. So all we are suggesting is, make sure inflation is covered. That is all we are saying.

Increasing the minimum wage will give people a chance, a fair shot. Remember, most of the people on minimum wage are adults. If you stop someone on the street and ask who they think is on the minimum wage, a lot of folks guess it is teenagers. No. By the way, most of those happen to be women.

I am deeply disappointed and distressed that the Republicans are opposing this measure. Why do Republicans want to deny hard-working Americans a raise? The country supports it overwhelmingly. I don't understand it because in 2007, the last time we raised the minimum wage, it was bipartisan. A huge majority of Senators then agreed that a full day's work deserved a fair paycheck. The minimum wage in 2007 was during George W. Bush's Presidency. Let me say that again. For the minimum wage in 2007, which was the last time we raised it, the increase passed 94 to 3, and George W. Bush signed it into law. What has changed in the Republicans' hearts? What has changed in the Republicans' minds? Are they turning against the people?

If you ask them they will say that it is just not fair to small businesses. Well, more than 80 percent of small businesses pay their people more than the minimum wage. So come on. A majority of small businesses support what we are trying to do. So don't come on the floor and say you are opposing it because it is too much too soon. Wrong. It is even lower than the inflation rate, and secondly, regarding that small business doesn't want it, in fact, they do.

Now before that was 1989. We raised the minimum wage then, and it was 89 to 8, and at that time it was George H. W. Bush. So wait a minute. What is going on here? I don't get this. It is not about who is in the White House; it is about the working people of this country. Where is the bipartisan spirit? It is gone, and America is paying a heavy price with the minimum wage stuck at \$7.25 an hour and with inflation eating away every day at it.

Let me read you just two or three stories about workers. Alicia McCrary, a single mom who testified in March before the Senate HELP Committee, struggles to support her sons with a minimum wage job in fast food. She has trouble getting them haircuts, shoes, clothing, and other items that kids need. She says: "My boys ask: Why isn't there enough money? You work, and you work really hard, Mom."

She said: "I don't have a good answer other than I don't get paid enough."

She is right. She doesn't get paid a fair minimum wage.

NBC News ran a story of a man who works three jobs. Two of them are overnight—he works three jobs—two of them are overnight jobs for minimum wage. He said:

I have four young children. They need a dad around. That is why I work a day job when they are in school and then go back to

work when they go to bed. But it takes 3 jobs to make ends meet because of \$7.25 an hour. I am 43 and have over 20 years' experience and make \$7.25 an hour.

That is wrong. These parents work so hard and their kids are growing up with so little, and their parents look in their children's eyes and they suffer because they want to do more for their children.

Economists project that this bill—which I hope most or almost every Democrat will support—will raise the wages of 28 million people in America. All we need is a handful of Republicans to join with us and we will get it done. By the way, if it were a majority rule, we would get it done. They are filibustering it. Let's be clear. They not only oppose it; they are forcing us to get 60 votes.

Twenty percent of the children in America are counting on this, 14 million children who would be lifted out of poverty if we pass the Harkin bill.

Then we have tipped workers. If I asked anyone on the street how much tipped workers make, they would say minimum wage. Most people don't know what the Federal tipped minimum wage is. I know the Presiding Officer has worked on this. It is \$2.13 an hour. Can my colleagues imagine? Again, \$2.13 an hour is the tipped minimum wage.

Many tipped workers live in poverty and instability. They don't know if they will make enough to cover the bills.

We will hear that if we pay the full minimum wage, it will be too hard on the restaurant owners. In my State the tipped workers get the full minimum wage, and that wage is \$8 an hour, going up to \$10, in California. So the tipped workers get the minimum wage amount every hour. Guess what. Our restaurants are going gangbusters. And guess what else. When a person does well and has their minimum wage plus their tips, they get to go out once in a while to a restaurant. They can go down to the corner store and get something for their children.

Sandra Samoa is a bartender in Chicago. She says if the bar is slow, she might take home just \$40 after an 8-hour shift. She lives with her mom and her young son. This woman sleeps on the floor so her son can sleep in a bed. If we don't represent people such as these, who the heck do we represent—the Koch brothers? They are worth billions. This woman comes home Sundays with \$40 in her pocket, she sleeps on the floor, and she says, "My whole plan is to have a room for him one day."

So, listen, if we are who we are supposed to be—the representatives of the people and working families—then we want to make sure we raise the minimum wage. It helps everybody, including those in business. That is why most small businesses support this.

We know the great story of Henry Ford, who raised the day rate of his workers way back in the olden days,

and people said: What are you doing? You are raising wages? You could get away with paying them—whatever it was.

He said: I am raising them because I want them to buy my car—the cars we make.

What we are going to hear on this floor from our colleagues is that we are going too fast, we are raising this too much. I have already shown my colleagues that we are raising it less than inflation, so that is baloney on its face.

No. 2, they say: Oh, it is going to hurt small business.

I have already stated that 82 percent of small businesses already pay all of their employees more than the Federal minimum wage, and more than half of them support raising it to \$10.10 because they know people will spend money on their products and in their stores.

Then the next thing they are going to say is it is a job-loser. They are going to cite one study, which I call an outlier, from CBO. It said the minimum wage would reduce employment by three-tenths of 1 percent over the next 2 years. When I heard that, I thought, what is this about? I looked at some other studies. A study by three prominent labor economists from the University of Massachusetts, the University of North Carolina, and the University of California-Berkeley found that minimum wage increases absolutely do not cause job losses. The Economic Policy Institute found that the Harkin bill would increase employment by 84,000 jobs and add \$22 billion to our economy over 2½ years. Let me repeat that. The Harkin bill would increase employment by 84,000 jobs and add \$22 billion to our economy.

But let's look at history. We have to really ask ourselves—these guys and gals who are saying don't raise the minimum wage because it will lose jobs—what if they said that going back through time and they prevailed? We would never have raised the minimum wage. I worked for the minimum wage a long time ago. At that time it was a dollar an hour, and I earned 50 cents an hour because I was a teenager. It was great then. I earned 50 cents an hour. I am looking at the young people here, and they are thinking, you must be really old. They would be right.

My point is that the minimum wage was a buck an hour and it was raised many times. Since 1989 the minimum wage has been raised three times. It was raised many times before that. There have been 18 increases since 1956. So we can put that in our minds—18 increases in the minimum wage since 1956. Suppose the other side had taken that attitude: Don't raise it. Well, it would still be, I guess, a buck an hour, 50 cents if you are a kid. Today "50 Cent" is a singing group, right?

We have raised the minimum wage over and over again. What has happened? The economy has added millions of jobs. Since 1956 it has added 80 million. Since 1956, we have raised the

minimum wage 18 times and we have created 80 million new jobs. So if anybody says this is a job-killer, I just say, read the history books.

Americans support raising the minimum wage. I hope my colleagues are listening. The American people know \$7.25 an hour is not enough. A Wall Street Journal/NBC poll found that 63 percent of Americans support raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour. Let me say that again. Sixty-three percent of Americans support raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour.

All we need is a handful of Republicans. If they are listening to me, I hope they heard some of my arguments. No. 1, it is good for business to raise the minimum wage because people have more to spend. No. 2, history has shown that we have raised the minimum wage over and over again and we have created 80 million jobs. No. 3, most of the people earning minimum wage are adults, and most of those are women, and people are trying to raise their families on the minimum wage.

The last point is that we have always had strong bipartisan support. When George W. signed it into law, there was strong support from the Republicans. When his dad was in office, there was strong support. I can't believe the Republican Party has turned its back on working people, but if they have, we will find out tomorrow. The American people know what this is about.

The American dream is within reach, but we have to have fairness out there. People need a fair shot. We shouldn't tell someone who is a dad that he has to work three jobs. That is wrong. We need to lift up these workers and not let them fall behind.

When workers do better, families do better. When parents buy their kids enough to eat and shoes to wear, when they can go get a haircut at the local barber, when they can put gas in their car and fix up their house just a little, everybody does better. The community does better. Businesses do better. Families can walk tall when we reward hard work. When our workers earn a fair wage, our economy is stronger and our country is better. So let's give American working families a fair shot. We are not asking for the Moon and the Sun and the stars. All we want is just a little light at the end of the tunnel. Thank you.

I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, nearly 7 years ago both parties worked together to pass bipartisan legislation that raised the minimum wage. Nineteen of my Republican colleagues, with whom I serve in the Senate today, voted for that bipartisan legislation, and Republican President George W. Bush signed it into law on May 25, 2007.

Since that time big banks on Wall Street drove our economy into a ditch. We faced a financial sector meltdown and were confronted with the worst recession since the Great Depression.

Hard-working Americans lost jobs. They lost their homes. They lost their retirement savings. Hard-working families paid a steep price for the reckless actions of others when all they ever asked for was that their hard work be rewarded.

Today people are working as hard as ever. Many are working full time. Many are working two jobs just to make ends meet; they deserve to get ahead. Yet far too many are barely getting by or living in poverty.

Middle-class incomes have flat-lined and income inequality in the United States is at a record high. And, today, a full-time minimum-wage worker earns only \$15,080 per year.

The sad reality is the minimum wage is not high enough to keep full-time workers out of poverty. That is simply wrong, and it is our job to work together to change it because in America no one who works hard full time should have to live in poverty.

I am here today to urge my colleagues to help lift nearly 2 million people—2 million of their fellow Americans—out of poverty.

I am here today to urge my colleagues to support the Minimum Wage Fairness Act and give 28 million hard-working Americans the raise they have earned.

Some opponents of this bill have dismissed this effort as nothing more than raising the wages of teenagers who are simply working in the summer months. Well, that simply is no longer true. In fact, it never was true.

Eighty-eight percent of minimum-wage workers are adults age 20 or older, and the average age of a minimum-wage worker in America is 35 years old. More than half of minimum-wage workers are women. These are Americans who are working hard to get ahead, and they deserve to have us working together to help give them a fair shot.

Raising the minimum wage is not just the right thing to do to reward hard work; it can certainly boost our economy because studies show that minimum-wage workers spend the extra dollars they earn on basics such as food and clothing at businesses right in their home communities.

For someone earning \$7.25 an hour and working full time, raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 puts an extra \$5,700 into their pockets. That \$5,700 provides groceries for a year or utilities for a year, money to spend on gas and clothing for a year, or 6 months of housing—fueling our local economies at a time when our recovery continues to limp along.

Raising the minimum wage would lift 2 million hard-working people out of poverty. Passing this legislation would mean that more hard-working Americans will be able to provide for their families without the help of government programs such as SNAP, otherwise known as food stamps, saving tax-

payers \$4.6 billion from reduced nutrition assistance payments in 1 year alone.

I believe we need to build a fairer economy and grow the middle class from the bottom up. And I believe our economy is strongest when we expand opportunity for everyone, when everyone gets a fair shot.

I am proud to join my colleagues here today and tomorrow to deliver a call for action. It is simple. The time is now to give hard-working Americans a raise. We can do that if both parties work together to reward hard work so that an honest day's work pays more.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the importance of raising the minimum wage.

People truly deserve a fair shot at the American dream, and it is time to come together to raise the minimum wage.

Our State just raised the minimum wage. We actually had one of the lowest minimum wages in the country—\$6.15 per hour—and we are now at \$9.50 per hour. So that was a major jump up. It was something that was needed, and it had a lot of support in the State of Minnesota, a State that has a very strong economy, with an unemployment rate of only 4.8 percent. But even when they have jobs people still have found it very hard to afford basic things or to send their kids to college.

We should follow Minnesota's example. We should raise the Federal minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour.

I am a cosponsor of the Minimum Wage Fairness Act. I want to thank Senator HARKIN for his leadership on this issue and his dedication to the working families of America.

I also want to thank Senator MERKLEY and all of my colleagues who have worked tirelessly to raise the minimum wage.

As the Senate chair of the Joint Economic Committee, I held a hearing on income inequality earlier this year with former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich. His data showed—and this is a number I will never forget—that the top 400 people in this country—the top 400 people—have the same amount of wealth as the bottom 50 percent of Americans. This means that half of Americans—of everyone in this country—have the same amount of wealth as the top 400 people.

So how do we address this? We know there are a lot of things we need to do: training people who do not have the jobs and do not have the skills right now, increasing exports, immigration reform—there are all kinds of things we can do. But we know one major thing we can do to help an individual family have a fair shot is to increase the minimum wage.

Like many of my colleagues who have spoken today, I worked my fair share of minimum-wage jobs. I started as a carhop at the A&W Root Beer stand in Wayzata, MN. I then graduated to being a waitress, for about 3 years, at Bakers Square pie shop,

where I once spilled 12 iced teas on 1 customer. That is when I decided to go to law school. But I worked those jobs, and it gave me a sense of what it was like for some of the people I worked with—that this was their job, this was their job cutting pies, this was their job washing dishes. This was how they supported themselves. It gave me a sense of how important it is to look out for those people who are doing the work we depend on every single day.

Think of how this affects women. Two-thirds of today's families rely on the mother's income in some way. Mothers are the primary breadwinners in more than one-third of families. Yet we also know that women make up nearly two-thirds of all the workers who earn the minimum wage or less.

An example of this is a waitress named Tiffany from Houston, TX, who recently came to Washington. We did an event together and answered questions. Her story is the story of so many American women across this country. She is a single mom. She loves her daughter so much. She is working as a waitress, and many times, with the way the laws work down in Texas, she does not make many tips in one night. So what does she do? She fills in by working on holidays. She has worked many Christmas Eves. She has missed every single Halloween with her daughter because it was a good night to be working at the bar at the restaurant. She has missed all kinds of other holidays, and she went through them, as we stood there.

You think to yourself: Sometimes, especially when you first start off, that happens. I have had it happen. But it should not keep happening after you have worked years and years at the same place. But it is just one example of what our minimum-wage workers have to do to try to make ends meet. They have to work another job. They have to work a holiday. They have to work another shift. That goes on every single day in America.

A woman working full time in a minimum-wage job only makes about \$15,000 per year, which is not enough for her to work her way out of poverty. It is not enough for her to send herself or her kids to college. A full-time job should not mean full-time poverty.

Today, more than 15 million women in America are counting on us to help them get a fairer wage. Many of them, as I noted, are working in demanding retail and hospitality jobs—as waitresses, store clerks, hotel maids—where they are on their feet and they are running all day. They may not be able to come here today and sit in the gallery and say: Hey, I need a raise. So we have to be their voices. We have to talk for them today.

Despite their hard work, they have an almost impossible time making ends met. They struggle to afford the basics—a decent place to live or food for their family, never mind being able to save for a rainy day or for college or for their own retirement.

I released a Joint Economic Committee report on Earnings, Income and Retirement Security for Women. One striking thing we saw in this report is that a woman's lower lifetime earnings means lower retirement security. So this is more than about today's wages. This is about an entire lifespan. Women live longer. If they are making less, if their minimum wage does not allow them to save for retirement, it is even tougher for them in their golden years.

There is also a strong economic case for raising the minimum wage today. Low-wage workers would see their earnings increase by \$31 billion if we raise the minimum wage. And we know what they are going to do with this. They are going to try to save a little of it, but they are going to spend it. They are going to spend it in Washington State. They are going to spend it in West Virginia. They are going to spend it on clothes for their kids, on food for their families, and filling up their gas tanks. They are going to help keep the economy going.

I once saw a documentary that Robert Reich did where he talked to a major CEO with tons of money. He took him into his room, and he said: OK. I only have three pairs of jeans. How can you really have more than three pairs of jeans? Maybe you could have four, but you really don't need more than that.

His point was this: If we want to have an economy that works, we cannot have all of the profits and money sucked up by the people who run things. We want them to be rewarded for their work, but they can only buy so many jeans.

If you have that money go fairly across the spectrum, then everyone gets to buy their pair of jeans. What we are doing is literally cutting down our markets by not making sure—in a consumer-driven economy, where 70 percent of our economy is consumer driven, we are putting ourselves in a situation where people are not able to buy things.

We also know that raising the minimum wage is good for business. We know that raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour could help approximately 28 million workers, with almost half of the benefits going to households with incomes below \$35,000 per year.

We know that more than 15 million women would receive a raise. We know that \$31 billion would be added to our economy. We know that seven Nobel laureates in economics, along with over 600 economists, support raising the minimum wage to restore the value that has been lost to inflation over the years. The minimum wage is now a third of the value of what it was in 1968.

It was the beloved late Paul Wellstone of my State who famously said: "We all do better when we all do better." If he were here today, that is what he would be saying. I know it is still true, and so do my colleagues who

join me today. We need to be focused on doing better so we all do better.

With this in mind, I urge my colleagues to join me in fighting for working families, and especially the working women of this country, to give them a fair shot and pass a long overdue minimum-wage increase.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Minnesota for her really important statement. I come here today to join her and talk about this one small idea that stands for a huge difference in the lives of all of our constituents and, as she pointed out, for women in particular; that is, of course, the idea that if you are putting in 40 or 50 or 60 hours of work per week, you are able to put food on the table and pay your bills and you will not be stuck below the poverty line.

This idea could change the lives of millions of Americans if Congress simply acted and raised the minimum wage. But we have to act now because right now one in four women in our workforce is making the minimum wage. That is 15 million American women who are making the equivalent of about two gallons of gas per hour.

Are we prepared to tell them that should be enough to support themselves and their kids? In fact, as we have heard several times now here in this Chamber, nearly two-thirds of those who earn the minimum wage or less are women. This is coming at a time when more and more women are depended upon as the sole income earners in American families.

Right now, in cities and towns across America, there are millions of those women who are getting up at the crack of dawn for work every day who are stuck living in poverty, who cannot save for a car, much less a house. They cannot pay for school to get new skills and a new job, and they cannot even afford to provide their children with warm winter clothes or basic medical care.

Unfortunately, this also comes at a time now when we are seeing CEO salaries skyrocketing across the country, all while America's minimum wage stays flat. In 2013, the average S&P CEO earned \$11.7 million. That is 21 percent more than they earned in 2009—21 percent—and 630 percent more in real value than in 1983—630 percent more.

Unbelievably, this means that the average CEO today earns more before lunchtime on his first day of work than a minimum-wage worker earns all year. That is not how it is supposed to work in America, the country where you are told if you work hard and you play by the rules, you can get ahead.

So when we talk about the minimum wage, let's be clear: Raising the minimum wage is about bringing back our middle class. I am proud that in my State we are taking the lead. In my

home State of Washington, our workforce enjoys the highest minimum wage in the country. I wish to point out to our friends on the other side of the aisle, Washington State's economy has not been negatively impacted by our high minimum wage. In fact, our economy has benefited from a high minimum wage. Job growth has continued at a rate above the national average. Payrolls in our restaurants and in our bars have expanded because more people have more money in their pockets to spend out at dinner at night or on the weekend. Poverty in Washington State has trailed the national level for at least 7 years.

It is not just in Washington State that we are seeing those successes. In fact, this week the Center for Economic and Policy Research reported that of the 13 States that increased their minimum wage in early 2014, 11 of them have seen a gain in employment since then, and half of the 10 fastest growing States by employment were among this group of minimum-wage raisers.

This is just one of many reasons why I strongly support increasing the national minimum wage to \$10.10. It is not going to make anyone rich, but for the 400,000 Washington residents who would be directly impacted, it would mean an average annual raise of approximately \$375. That is no small amount for the over 48,000 in my State who would be lifted out of poverty with an increase in the minimum wage.

But we have to do more. In fact, today two-thirds of our families rely on income from both parents. Thanks to our outdated Tax Code, a woman who is thinking about reentering the workforce as the second earner may face higher tax rates than her husband. That is unfair and it has got to change. So last month I introduced the 21st Century Worker Tax Cut Act, which would help solve that problem by giving struggling two-earner families with children a tax deduction on the second earner's income.

My hope is that tomorrow here in the Senate we can come together on behalf of the millions of Americans who, like my own mother when I was growing up, are the sole breadwinner and caregiver in their family. I hope our colleagues have gotten a sense of how \$7.25 an hour translates to a grocery trip for a family of four or to shopping for school supplies or even how it impacts making the daily commute.

That is why all of us are here today, this afternoon, to give that mom or that dad a fair shot at succeeding in America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, if you live along the southeastern coast of the United States, you know the sea level is rising. We have a lot of people who would question the reason for this rise of the sea level. Some people deny

there is climate change, that the Earth is warming up.

I think as we look at the science, we will clearly understand the greenhouse effect is occurring. The more we put gases into the atmosphere by human action such as carbon dioxide, the more the Sun's rays come in and reflect upon the Earth's surface and would naturally radiate out into space. The fact is, as the Earth's surface reflects the Sun's rays back out into space, which is what Mother Nature intended, keeping the delicate balance of the temperature of the Earth, what happens when we put greenhouse gases such as CO₂ into the atmosphere, a shield or blanket, the effect of a greenhouse occurs.

As they reflect back out, they are trapped—the Sun's rays, the heat from them—and it continues to warm up the Earth. Thus, we have the greenhouse effect.

One of the consequences of the greenhouse effect is that the icecaps in Greenland to the north and Antarctica to the south are melting. This causes the sea level to rise.

Another effect of the greenhouse effect is that as the Earth's temperature rises, most of the surface of the planet is covered with seawater. Therefore, the water absorbs that heat. That causes additional effects such as the intensity, the frequency, the ferocity of storms that fuel the storm surge and power from the surface water they consume.

Having said all of that, then, what are we seeing as a consequence? As I said in my opening, if you live along the southeastern coast of the United States, you know that seas are rising. The commerce committee, under the blessing of our chairman, Senator ROCKEFELLER, just held a hearing in ground zero. Ground zero is Miami Beach, FL.

One of the people to testify was a NASA scientist, a Ph.D., who happens to be a three-time shuttle astronaut. He testified in front of the committee—not predictions, not forecasts, he testified what are the actual measurements of the rise of the sea level over the course of the last half century. That rise is anywhere from 5 to 8 inches along the southeastern coast. The effects of that are being felt in southern Florida. For instance, it is now a normal occurrence at high tide that we are finding parts of Miami Beach are, in fact, flooded. The actual beach itself and the dunes are higher than some of the land as it progresses away from the ocean and the barrier island of Miami Beach becomes lower.

There is a major north-south thoroughfare called Alton Road on Miami Beach. At high tide, it is frequent that Alton Road floods. What we are expecting in seasonal high tides coming this October, just as they were last October, is we will see maybe up to a foot of water in Alton Road.

Why does this occur if it is not flooding over the dunes by the beach? Be-

cause Florida sits on a porous substrate of limestone. It is like Swiss cheese. This is why people say: Well, why do you not do what the Dutch did? The Dutch built dikes. They are under sea level; New Orleans, the same thing, dikes and canals. Under sea level. You cannot do that in Florida, because with the porous limestone supporting the earth, the land, what happens is the rise in tides causes more pressure, and it causes the saltwater to start to invade this honeycomb of limestone that supports the land of Florida and there you get saltwater intrusion.

With the rising tides and rising sea levels, that water also starts coming into the drainage systems that keep Florida dry. That is happening now in Miami Beach at high tide. We had it last time in October in the seasonal high tides. We are going to have it again in the high tides coming this October. So naturally this is going to cause a considerable extra expense since you cannot build a dike for the local government, the State government, and the Federal Government to keep people dry. I am happy to say the local governments of South Florida have all banded together and you are seeing them speak with one voice as they have, for example, not competing for a grant from the Federal Government but instead they have banded together and supported the grant application for the city of Miami which is the first ground zero, in order for Miami to try to attack its problem.

There is an economic consequence to this as well, as we had someone from the Miami-Dade convention bureau come and point out. I can sum it up as I did during the hearing: No beach, no bucks. Florida is blessed since we have more coastline than any other State save for Alaska, and we certainly have more beach than any other State. Florida is blessed with these beautiful beaches that people from all over the world want to come and enjoy.

No beach, no bucks. It is going to have a huge economic consequence, not only in the cost of government to try to hold back the water but also in lost business.

I will conclude my remarks by saying not the measurements, 5 to 8 inches. That has already been done. That has happened, 5 to 8 inches of sea level rise the last 50 years.

Now the forecast. The forecast in the scientific community—and we had one of the scientists from one of the State universities testify, along with the NASA scientist, is that it is going to be upwards of a foot within the next 20 to 30 years. By the end of this century, we are talking 2 to 3 feet.

Let me tell you what that means for the State of Florida. The State of Florida this year will surpass New York in population as the third largest State, moving on toward 20 million people, and 75 percent of that population is on the coast of Florida. The east coast, the west coast, which is the gulf coast, is 75 percent of our population. If we

don't turn this back 2 to 3 feet by the end of this century, that 75 percent of our population will, in fact, be underwater.

We are trying to get insurance companies interested. We had a major reinsurer testify that although insurance policies are set—property and casualty policy premiums—in 1- to 3-year increments, over the course of time that is certainly going to change.

I conclude my remarks by complimenting the next Senator who is going to speak. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island has been our conscience. He and Senator BARBARA BOXER have been ringing the bell on this issue for months and for years in trying to get people to pay attention to what is happening.

I want Senator WHITEHOUSE to share what he has done over his Easter vacation in trying to bring attention to this subject.

At the end of the day, we have to do something about it, and that means we are going to have to be very sensitive about all the stuff that not only we, the United States of America, are putting into the air and creating that shield, that greenhouse effect, but we are going to have to get other countries that are polluting even more than we are to do the same.

Senator WHITEHOUSE, I thank you for what you have done as you share your story with us. You have done a courageous act of patriotism in bringing attention to this dramatic issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I understand the time is controlled now by the Republicans. When Senator HOEVEN arrives, I will yield the floor to him. But in the meantime, I thank Senator NELSON for his leadership in this area.

Let the record reflect that although Rhode Island may call itself the Ocean State, Florida has its fair share of coastline as well. The effects on Florida's coast are really very significant.

Because time is short and because I see Senator HOEVEN has arrived and because Senator NELSON is a modest individual who would not want to brag on himself, let me say one thing and then I will come back later and discuss my Easter southern climate tour at greater length.

The Miami Herald is a very significant newspaper in Florida, and it attended and reacted to the Commerce Committee hearing Senator NELSON led in his home State. I want to read from two short sections that opened by saying:

For South Floridians, the topics of climate change and rising sea levels are no longer to be dismissed as tree-hugger mumbo-jumbo.

Pause next time you hear that parts of Miami Beach or the intersection of A1A and Las Olas Boulevard have flooded because of . . . high tides?

Let the light go off atop your head: It's science, stupid.

On Tuesday, Florida Democratic U.S. Senator Bill Nelson brought illumination to Miami Beach—Ground Zero for our unique coastal battle with Mother Nature.

It concludes with these last few words:

South Florida owes Senator Nelson its thanks for shining a bright light on this issue. Everyone from local residents to elected officials should follow his lead, turning awareness of this major environmental issue into action. It is critical to saving our region.

If we don't, we'll soon have water—not sand—in our shoes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 4:45 p.m. today will be under the control of the Republicans.

The Senator from North Dakota.

KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

Mr. HOEVEN. I rise to discuss the Keystone XL Pipeline project. I will be joined by a number of my colleagues, whom I will thank at the beginning for joining me. They will come today with the same message that I have; that is, the Keystone XL Pipeline project, the project that has now been under review by this administration for more than 5 years—we are now in year 6. We are on the floor of the Senate asking for, quite simply, a vote to approve the Keystone XL Pipeline project. I have put legislation in on a number of occasions. In 2012 we approved a time limit for the President to make a decision. I believe that bill got on the order of 73 votes—strong bipartisan support. We attached it to the payroll tax holiday, and it said that the President had to make a decision on the Keystone XL Pipeline within 90 days. He did. He turned it down, and he turned it down on the basis of the routing in Nebraska.

So not only did the State of Nebraska go through an incredible amount of work, but the State Department and others went back to work, did a whole new environmental impact statement after Nebraska had rerouted the pipeline, which was approved by both its legislature and its Governor, and came forward with a new route and a new environmental impact statement. That was right at the beginning of 2012.

So we set a timeline for the President to make a decision. He made the decision and he turned down the project, but we addressed the concerns he raised. They were fully addressed.

Then later we also offered a resolution of support putting the Senate on record in support of the project. That was attached to the budget resolution at the beginning of 2013. We came back the next year, and on that occasion the Senate, with 62 votes, said: Hey, we support the project. Here is a resolution in support of the project stating that it is, in fact, in the national interest and ought to be approved.

Since then the President has done nothing. Well, that is not quite right. Not only has he not made a decision now—and we are in the sixth year after four environmental impact statements, all of which said there is no significant environmental impact created by the

project—not only has the President not made a decision, with Congress on record supporting the project, but, in fact, a little over 1 week ago on Good Friday, on the afternoon of Good Friday, when he figured nobody was paying any attention, the President came out and basically put out a statement and said that not only has he not made a decision but he is not going to make a decision, that on the basis of litigation he is going to postpone the decision indefinitely.

So we are in year 6, having met all of the requirements on numerous occasions on a project that will provide energy and jobs, that will help with national security by reducing our dependence on oil from the Middle East, a project that his own Department of State, after environmental impact statement after environmental impact statement, has come back and said will create no significant environmental impact, will create 42,000 jobs, and will help us get energy and not only move energy from States such as North Dakota and Montana in our country to the refineries safely but also bring in oil from Canada to our country so we don't have to import it from the Middle East.

The President says: Well, we are in year 6, but I am going to postpone this decision indefinitely.

Here we are. We have a bill I introduced some time ago. We have 27 cosponsors on the bill, both parties. What the bill does, it approves the Keystone XL Pipeline project congressionally. Instead of continuing to wait after 6 years and now the President's announcement that he is going to delay the decision indefinitely, passing this bill would approve the project congressionally.

The way that works is that under the foreign commerce clause in the Constitution, Congress has the authority to approve this project. They have that authority under Congress's ability to oversee foreign commerce, commerce with other nations. We know that because we took time to research it. We had the Congressional Research Service do the research for us, and they say this is a constitutional authority of the Congress.

We have provided that bill. The bill has been filed. As I said, we have 27 sponsors, and now it is time to vote.

We have been holding off on having a vote because the President said: You know, we are going to go through the process—or he is going to go through the process and he is going to honor the process.

The environmental—actually, the fourth and supposedly final environmental impact statement came out at the end of January. There was a 90-day comment period after that, which was to expire the first part of May. The expectation was that now that the process at that point—once the process was exhausted, the President would, in fact, render the long-awaited decision.

But, as I say, on Good Friday, a little over 1 week ago, he came out and said:

No, no decision. Furthermore, he is not going to make a decision, and that delay is indefinite. So clearly the administration opposes the project and they are going to defeat it with delay. They are going to defeat it with endless delays. There is no amount of process that will ever be adequate for the administration. They will continue to delay this decision, thinking that at some point it will go away, and so they defeat the project through one delay after another. That is why it is time to vote.

In a recent poll that was released last week, 70 percent of the American people want this project approved—70 percent. That was a Rasmussen poll.

The President is trying to defeat the project through delays in order to appease special interest groups while the American people very much want this project approved. It is Congress's responsibility to take a stand. It is long past time to vote.

At this point, I am making some revisions to the legislation to update it for the final environmental impact statement. We are working to get every single Republican Member of this body on board, which I believe we will do, and as many Democratic Members as possible. We are pushing as hard as we can to get a vote. It is time for the Senate to stand, exercise its responsibility, and vote.

Now the Senate majority leader is looking at moving to energy legislation, energy efficiency legislation. That is good. Let's go there. Let's have the debate. Let's offer amendments. Let's have votes. Let's do the work of the people that this body is elected to do.

As part of that, we are going to require a vote on the Keystone XL Pipeline, a vote to approve it congressionally, and everybody can decide where they stand. But this is a project which is long overdue. It is time to vote, and it is time to vote on congressional approval. That is our message today, and that is going to continue to be our message as we work on energy legislation.

I am very pleased to have other Members who have agreed to come join this discussion. I turn to the good Senator from Kansas, the senior Senator from Kansas, somebody who has been in this body for a long time, who has seen these issues, and who understands the responsibility we have to vote on behalf of these issues, to take a stand for the American people.

I yield to the senior Senator from Kansas, a State through which this pipeline passes, and ask him does he perceive that this project is in the national interest.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Thank you, Mr. President.

I would be more than happy to respond to my good friend and colleague.

Thank you for your leadership, thank you for your bill, and thank you for

your statement. There is no question that this is in the national interest—absolutely none.

I rise today to join my fellow Republican colleagues and then to extend the arm of cooperation to our friends across the aisle.

I want to express my deep disappointment in this administration's repeated delay of the final approval of the Keystone Pipeline. I hope that what the Senator has indicated will come true, that if in fact it is the wish of the majority leader to at least bring up an energy bill—and I hope he would not limit it, I hope he would allow amendments to it—then with the support we have within the Congress we could get going on something that is truly a jobs act as well as providing for the national security.

The irony should not be lost on anyone that while those on the other side continue messaging and messaging and talking about supposed government solutions to our high national unemployment rate—including emergency unemployment insurance, income inequality, minimum wage—we have a project right before us waiting for approval that would create tens of thousands of jobs and all without using one dime of taxpayer money. If you want an actual solution to unemployment, here it is: Provide eager Americans with full-time jobs making well over the national minimum wage. That is a jobs package.

Regarding the pipeline's environmental soundness, the Senator has been absolutely correct. Just last June the President indicated he would not grant final approval of the Keystone XL Pipeline if it would exacerbate carbon emissions. The good news is this, Mr. President: The State Department has already indicated that the construction of the pipeline will have no measurable impact—none—on increasing global carbon emissions. So from an economic standpoint, it is a no-brainer, and from the scientific conclusions reached by this administration's own State Department regarding the environmental soundness of the project, it is a no-brainer.

At the end of the day, the Canadian oil sands are going to be developed. That is a fact. The real question is, Will that oil be shipped overseas? Will it be transported to the United States by rail or will it travel by pipeline? In fact, transporting oil via pipeline is the most environmentally sound way to do it.

Lastly—and this plays into the larger discussion we are having about the escalating issues with regard to the Middle East, Ukraine, and Russia reverting again to a growling bear—why not send a strong message to the rest of the world—most especially to Russia—that we are serious about energy security? At last, at last, energy security; that we will work with our friends in Canada to start challenging nationally run oil cartels as to who can supply our friends with needed energy.

While the larger energy discussion regarding situations unfolding around the world are focused mostly on LNG, Russia's influence goes well beyond natural gas. We should understand that. Just look at our own data produced by the Energy Information Administration, which shows that Russia is second only to Saudi Arabia in exports of oil.

So this is our opportunity from a national security standpoint to send an important message that the time of despotic governments wishing to wield power by controlling the flow of energy is coming to an end. Let's allow this project to be the first step in hopefully many more toward showing we are serious as a government about achieving North American energy security.

Again, this project has been reviewed, as has been noted by my distinguished friend, for over 5 years, with five environmental impact statements concluding it is safe. This project makes sense economically, environmentally, and from a national security perspective. What does not make sense is yet another treading-water non-decision, another delay beyond the fall elections. With regard to our national energy policy, it is long overdue for the United States to lead by leading.

Mr. President, approve the pipeline.

To the majority leader: Let us have an amendment—if, in fact, we do go on to consider energy legislation this work period—that will be in the best interest of every State in the Union, every American, for our national security, and our overall energy policy.

I thank my colleague again for his leadership. I really appreciate it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. I wish to thank the distinguished Senator from Kansas for his words today and for his support of this important project.

I would also like to turn to the distinguished Senator from Iowa, somebody who truly believes we should have an "all of the above" energy approach but one that means actually doing—not only producing from our traditional sources of fossil fuels but also our renewable sources. He is someone who also understands that if we are truly going to have an "all of the above" energy plan in this country and do it, not just talk about it, we need the infrastructure to make it happen.

So I turn to the good Senator from Iowa and ask him: Isn't this the vital infrastructure this country needs in order to truly have an "all of the above" energy plan that works?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. It is a jobs bill, it is an energy bill, it is a national security issue, and it sends the message around the world that we are not going to be dependent upon the rest of the world for our energy. It is all those things and probably a lot more, and I thank the Senator from North Dakota for putting this afternoon together and

also, over a long period of time, being a spokesman for the Keystone XL Pipeline not only here in the Senate, but I have seen the Senator on Sunday news shows speaking to the entire Nation about the value of the Keystone XL Pipeline.

I think today we are saying enough is enough. We are saying it is time to end the unjustified and—now we know—the political delay of the construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline. I am glad so many of my colleagues are coming to the floor today to call for the approval of this project.

The TransCanada Corporation applied for a Presidential permit from the U.S. Department of State to construct and operate the Keystone XL Pipeline way back in September of 2008. Yet here we are still talking about it. For nearly 6 years this administration has been sitting on the application. Time and time again the State Department, which has the responsibility to review, reviewed the environmental impacts of the pipeline, and once again, time and time again, they found that the pipeline will have no significant impact on the environment.

In 2011 Secretary Clinton said a decision would come before the end of 2011. In March 2013, when President Obama was invited to come and talk to Senate Republicans in our caucus—and he was told he could talk about anything he wanted to talk about—one of the topics that came up was that a decision would be made on this pipeline before the end of 2013. He said that 13 months ago, yet still no decision.

As has been stated by my colleagues, on Good Friday afternoon of this year, the State Department announced an indefinite delay in the comment period on the pipeline project. So it appears unlikely that President Obama will make a decision at any time in the near future, if ever.

This indefinite delay is mind-boggling considering all the advantages of this pipeline. Granting the permit for the pipeline will create thousands of jobs directly and indirectly. It will provide more than 800,000 barrels of Canadian oil daily from a friendly economic partner.

Rejection of the pipeline permit will not affect Canada's decision to develop these oil resources because they are smarter than we are. They have made a national decision that they are going to harvest their energy resources, whereas we are playing around as to whether we ought to do that. As we play around, we tend to be more dependent upon foreign sources. So the Keystone Pipeline is clearly in the national interest of the United States. Yet President Obama is unwilling and unable—or maybe I should say “or unable”—to make a decision.

Just think of the economy today and what this could do to improve the economy, particularly with regard to the unemployment factor in our economy, currently at 6.7 percent. That means 10 million jobs that are not

available for Americans. That number is the unemployed. The labor force participation rate remains near a 35-year low, at 63.2 percent. If the labor force participation rate were the same as when President Obama took office, the unemployment rate would be 10.3 percent instead of 6.7 percent. With these deplorable unemployment numbers, one would think the President would be very anxious to get as many people employed as he could.

The President and the Senate majority here, which happens to be 55 Democrats, should be doing everything they can to grow the economy and create jobs. This would be something that could be bipartisan. In fact, we have already had bipartisan votes on this subject. Yet the Senate Democratic leadership continues to block Senate action to approve the permit. Instead, they are proposing ideas that would actually cost jobs rather than create jobs at a time of 6.7 percent unemployment. For example, later this week we in the Senate will vote on a proposal to increase the minimum wage. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office concluded that this proposal will cost 500,000 jobs and perhaps as many as 1 million jobs. That is not the Republican Party making that statement; that is the professional people of the Congressional Budget Office.

It should be noted that while a higher minimum wage will benefit those low-wage workers who remain employed, it will also push the least skilled, most disadvantaged, and most vulnerable workers out of employment. We should be doing everything to increase employment, not having more people laid off.

We have the health care reform bill—another great example. The Congressional Budget Office estimated earlier this year that the health care reform bill will result in 2½ million fewer workers in our workforce by 2025.

President Obama has also proposed another \$1.8 trillion in new taxes in his latest budget proposal. Higher taxes stifle economic growth and cost jobs.

The policies being advocated by the majority party and by the President limit opportunities for working families, reduce economic growth, and prevent the economy from achieving its full potential.

Obviously, getting back to the Keystone Pipeline, the decision to grant the permit for that pipeline is no longer being considered based on policy but based on politics. That is too bad for America's energy consumers and thousands of job seekers who would benefit.

I don't happen to come from the oil patches of Texas, Oklahoma, or North Dakota. There are no oil or gas producers in my State. But I do support an energy policy that is truly “all of the above.” I represent farmers and consumers who want access to affordable, reliable energy. I represent Iowans who would rather get their energy from a friend and ally such as Canada rather

than Venezuela or unstable parts of the Middle East, where they will take our money and probably use it to train people who want to kill Americans. I represent Iowans who actually know that this oil will be developed regardless of this pipeline, and they know it is just a question of whether it will come to the United States or end up in China.

I represent Iowans who understand the economic and national security impact of this pipeline. They want to see the government get out of the way of this shovel-ready, private-sector infrastructure project.

How many times were we promised in the stimulus bill that we were going to create X number of jobs that were shovel ready? Most of that \$800 billion went to public employment, not to shovel-ready jobs. The President even admitted that.

This pipeline is shovel ready. It is time to end the political delay and approve this pipeline.

I yield.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Iowa, who has made the case so well, and I look to his experience on energy issues and ag issues and his understanding of what it takes to truly have an all-of-the-above energy policy. As he said so well, it is not only needed infrastructure but it is jobs.

Here we are, talking about getting the economy going and getting people back to work. This doesn't cost one penny of Federal spending, and it puts people to work and creates hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue to help reduce our deficit and our debt.

So we are talking about putting people back to work, we are talking about energy for this country, we are talking about revenues to reduce the debt, and the administration refuses to make a decision. It is almost beyond belief.

I turn next to the Senator from Alabama, the ranking member on the Budget Committee. He speaks eloquently and often on the need to balance our budget, on the need to reduce the deficit and the debt and to get our spending under control.

So here we have a project that, without spending one penny, will generate hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues to help reduce the deficit and debt while we put people to work.

Those statistics are provided by this administration's State Department. Those aren't our statistics. Those statistics come out of the environmental impact statement put together by the State Department of this administration.

So I turn to the Senator from Alabama, somebody who has led on the need to get this economy going, to create good, quality jobs and to reduce the deficit and debt. I ask the good the Senator from Alabama: Won't this project help do all of those things?

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank Senator HOEVEN.

The Senator is exactly right; it will do all of those things. It is a step in the right direction in every area.

I appreciate my leader on the Judiciary Committee and ranking member, Senator GRASSLEY. I would ask a rather simple question of Senator GRASSLEY which ought not to be forgotten in this process. If a pipeline is built and an additional source of gasoline is brought into the Midwest or other areas, if it is not cheaper than the gas that is already being supplied, isn't it true that nobody will buy it?

So won't this mean an opportunity for people in the whole country to be able to have another source of fuel which would be less costly and help bring down costs?

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am glad to yield.

I think that is very basic economics: Increase supply and reduce price.

The other matter is it makes us more energy independent. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars every day to import oil. There is no sense doing that when we can get it right here in North America.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank the Senator. I thank Senator HOEVEN for his steadfast, consistent, principled leadership on this important issue. He has been there consistently. I don't think there is any Senator in this body who understands the details of this issue more than he does. It is just a positive thing for America. It just is, and I thank the Senator for his efforts.

We have been reviewing this for 5 years. Legally, as I see this situation, it is this: There is no Federal law at this time dealing with this issue. Presidents have issued Executive orders that created a mechanism to allow the State Department to review a request for a pipeline like Keystone XL. But clearly there is no doubt that Congress has every right to legislate on this issue. Just because we haven't yet, that doesn't mean we never will or never should, and I strongly believe that with the failed leadership of President Obama on this question, we are going to have to pass legislation. It is just that critical.

The Secretary of State has essentially asserted that under these Executive orders the State Department must evaluate the environmental issue. They have dealt with that, and they have satisfied that environmental process. There is the question left of the national interest.

So if we don't have a serious environmental issue—which I don't think we do, and pretty clearly we don't—then the question is: What is in the national interest?

Senator HOEVEN represents a state on the border with Canada, and we have good relations with Canada.

First, I don't think there is any nation in the world with which we need to maintain and enhance our relationship more than with our good partner, Canada.

Second, let me ask the Senator this. The Senator is close to Canada. He knows the situation. If this pipeline is not approved, will it weaken and harm our relationship with our good neighbor, Canada, or will it make it better?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, Prime Minister Harper of Canada has said on a number of occasions how important this project is to Canada. The Ambassador of Canada to the United States is Gary Doer, somebody who was formerly the Premier of Manitoba and somebody I worked with when I was Governor of North Dakota. We worked together for about a decade on all kinds of issues. As the Senator said, Canada is our closest friend and ally, and they are a huge energy producer. And we are producing more energy.

So here is a project which is incredibly important to Canada. It is an opportunity for us to get more energy, both energy that we are producing and energy from Canada, rather than from the Middle East—something the American people very much want. If we don't approve it, what are we saying to our closest friend and ally, when they have said very clearly and repeatedly, this project is very, very important to them?

To add irony to that indignity, they will still produce the oil, but they will be forced to send it to China. So we will import oil from the Middle East and force our closest friend and ally to export their oil to China, creating more greenhouse gas emissions, not less? That is what happens if we don't approve the project.

If the President refuses to do it, then we have the responsibility to step up and do it. Yes, the Senator is 100 percent right that it is not only a project that our people very much want approved but it is also something the people of Canada and the Government of Canada very much want approved. So the Senator is right.

I would yield the floor back to the good Senator from Alabama and encourage him to bring in our esteemed colleagues from South Dakota and South Carolina as well into this important discussion.

Mr. SESSIONS. The Senator is so correct. In my time here in the Senate, this is one of the most inexplicable actions by a President I have ever seen. He has persisted in this after months and years have gone by and when the facts continue to come forward that justify this pipeline—for jobs in America, for lower energy costs in America, for importing oil from our ally Canada, where the people buy a great deal from us. Any wealth that goes to Canada, we can be sure a lot of that will come back to the United States because they purchase a great deal from us. But does Venezuela or Saudi Arabia or other countries that we buy oil from buy a lot from us? No.

So this is a partnership and relationship which benefits both parties. I just

am astounded that it has not been approved to date.

The Washington Post editorial board wrote last week that the President's decision to delay the Keystone Pipeline was "absurd." This is an independent, liberal-leaning newspaper that cares about the environment. So it seems the President is clearly acquiescing in favor of special interests.

Senator THUNE is familiar with Mr. Tom Steyer, who a recent Associated Press article characterized as "a former hedge fund manager and environmentalist, who says he will spend \$100 million—\$50 million of his own money and \$50 million from other donors"—to defeat Republicans to promote environmental issues. He asked for some things if he is going to put up \$100 million.

I am not happy about it. I believe the interests of the people of this country have been subordinated to either an extreme environmentalist agenda or to plain money. There is no other rational basis for the position we find ourselves in. It is really tragic.

We need jobs in this country. We have the fewest percentage of people working in America today in the working age group since 1975. Median income has dropped over \$2,000 to \$2,600. We are not doing well. These are high-paying jobs. It keeps growth and creativity here in the United States and in North America through our partner, Canada.

I am grateful to see others who are so interested in this issue. I feel really strongly we should move forward with this. It is the right thing to do. It is not politics. It is the right thing.

A lot of Democratic members favor this pipeline. Union groups, who tend to be Democrats, favor this pipeline. It is not a Republican-Democratic issue. This is an extremist issue against a commonsense issue. Sixty-two Senators voted for a budget amendment last year during the Senate budget debate that was supportive of the Keystone pipeline.

My good staffer Jeff Wood found a Charles Dickens quote about the fictional "Circumlocution Office," of which Dickens wrote:

Whatever was required to be done, the Circumlocution Office was beforehand with all the public departments in the art of perceiving—how not to do it. . . . [W]ith projects for the general welfare . . . , which in slow lapse of time and agony had passed safely through other public departments . . . got referred at last to the Circumlocution Office, and never reappeared in the light of day. Boards sat upon them, secretaries minuted upon them, commissioners gabbled about them, clerks registered, entered, checked, and ticked them off, and they melted away. In short, all the business of the country went through the Circumlocution Office, except the business that never came out of it. . . .

(Chapter 10 of Charles Dickens' "Little Dorrit," 1855).

In my opinion, this bill would create thousands of good jobs if it is passed and this pipeline is built. It would strengthen, not weaken, our relationship with Canada. It would bring a new

flow of oil into the United States and the Midwest which will provide competition and which would reduce costs. It would be a competitive source of energy for America.

Canada is a good trading partner. They buy a lot from us. The oil will be sold somewhere else if it is not sold in the United States.

By the way, pipelines are everywhere in this country. In my State of Alabama, pipelines crisscross the State. We don't have any problems with this. The idea that we can't build another pipeline in this country is about as ludicrous as one can imagine.

So I thank Senator HOEVEN for the great leadership he has provided. I appreciate the opportunity to join with him. It is the right thing for the people of this country, and we need to get this done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. I would like to thank the distinguished Senator from Alabama not only for his outstanding argument but for his passion as somebody who truly cares about getting this economy going.

I would turn to the distinguished Senator from South Dakota and also to the distinguished Senator from Texas, and I would like to ask that they both engage in this discussion, starting with the good Senator from South Dakota.

In South Dakota they understand how to create a good business climate. They have no income tax. They have a strong economy because they understand what it takes to create a good environment so that businesses will invest and grow and create jobs. I would like to ask the Senator how this relates to the discussion of the Keystone XL Pipeline.

To the distinguished senior Senator from Texas—clearly Texas knows energy production—I would ask for his thoughts in terms of how important this infrastructure is for energy development and production in our State.

First, I would like to turn to the Senator from South Dakota.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Let me just say to my colleague from North Dakota that we would like to have more North Dakota energy in South Dakota, of course, and have the direct benefit of that, but we focus in our State on jobs, and that is what this is all about—jobs, jobs, jobs.

The President's own State Department says that this project would support 42,000 jobs—16,100 direct jobs including construction, and another 26,000 jobs that would be from indirect spending. That is not us. That is not the Senator from North Dakota, the Senator from Texas, the Senator from Oklahoma or the Senator from Missouri on this side saying it would create jobs. That is the President's own State Department saying it would create jobs and \$2 billion in earnings—a \$3.4 billion contribution to the U.S.

economy. When you think about the States that are impacted—the State of North Dakota directly and my State of South Dakota would be traversed by the pipeline—we have a lot of local and State governments that would benefit from this.

They say in the first year of operations it would generate \$55.6 million of tax revenue, \$17.9 million in my State of South Dakota. When you talk about what that can do in terms of infrastructure, what it can do in terms of providing revenue to build schools, public services, those sorts of things, it takes the pressure off the local property tax owners, area ranchers, homeowners, and businesses. That is another impact.

I would also say to my colleagues on the floor that it would strengthen our energy security. Some 830,000 barrels a day would come through that pipeline. That is half of what we import from the Middle East and about the total of what we import on a daily basis from Venezuela. So if you look at how much we can ship from that pipeline and how much that lessens the dependence we have on areas of the world that are much less favorable to the United States than is our neighbor of Canada, that is a very real consideration in this debate.

Finally, I would say to my colleague, the Senator from North Dakota—and I thank him for his leadership on this issue—that the time to act is now. This has been studied and scrutinized and reviewed more than any project in history—8½ years, 2,048 days as of Tuesday, today, April 29. Five environmental reviews all concluded the pipeline would not have a significant impact on the environment. Just when you thought the process couldn't be dragged out any longer, this administration once again decided to block construction of this project and delay the national interest determination process.

Sean McGarvey, President of North America's Building Trades Union, called this latest move:

... a cold, hard slap in the face for hard working Americans who are literally waiting for President Obama's approval and the tens of thousands of jobs it will generate.

That comes from a labor union leader in this country. The unions want this, businesses in this country want it, and the American people want it by overwhelming margins. The only people who don't want it are some of the President's political supporters who, as the Senator from Alabama has pointed out, are extending hundreds, hundreds of millions of dollars, tens of millions of dollars, \$400 million, as the Senator from Alabama pointed out. That is what is holding this up.

It is an offense to the American people to have a project like this that can do so much in terms of job creation and lessening our dependence upon foreign sources of energy and helping millions of Americans who are looking for work and simply being held up by the Presi-

dent of the United States. I hope the Senate Democrats and Republicans would come together to pass legislation that supports this pipeline's being built, whether the President agrees to it or not.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I would like to thank the distinguished Senator from South Dakota and turn to our colleague from the State of Oklahoma, certainly a State that understands energy production and understands how vital this pipeline infrastructure is. So with the indulgence of the Senator from Texas, I would ask to return to the Senator from Oklahoma.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. I appreciate the Senator from Texas yielding at this time.

Every time I hear people talking about the jobs at stake here I think about my State of Oklahoma, which probably has more jobs at stake than any other state because Cushing, OK, is the crossroads of the pipeline now throughout America.

Looking at this chart, just over 2 years ago President Obama came to Cushing to give a speech on national TV with all the pipeline in the background. You can see these tubes over there. He talked about how this is a major breakthrough and that we are going to "... cut through the red tape, break through bureaucratic hurdles and make this project a priority, to go ahead and get it done."

Yet he has done nothing but obstruct this since that time. The southern leg of the pipeline may be finished, but that was part of the project that the President didn't have any say in. The President could do something when you cross international lines, but he could not do it from that point south. The portion between Canada and Cushing is completely stalled because the President has delayed making a decision, as has been said, for 5 years now.

To me the Keystone XL Pipeline is the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the way President Obama thinks about the oil and natural gas industry. Today we heard great speeches from many of my colleagues, and they are highlighting the great impact of the Keystone Pipeline's construction and what it would mean to the economy. We know that it would directly create 42,000 jobs and 10,000 more would be supported by the overall manufacturing materials and processes that are required to complete the project, but the real impact on the President's failure to act on Keystone can be seen in this chart.

This chart shows the potential around this country. These are federal lands. If we were able to develop these federal lands, what all would be involved here? You know, it is incredible that we have a President who talks about being friendly to oil and gas and denies the war against fossil fuels. While we have had an increase in production on State and private land of some 40 percent, on the Federal land

we have had a decrease in production of 16 percent. I don't know how that is even possible, but the midstream infrastructure and the pipelines in particular are one of the most important things we need to fully develop in these resources. We need to be able to move oil and gas from areas where it has been developed to areas where it is refined, processed, and consumed. The need for infrastructure expansion is astounding.

ICF International is a consulting firm, and I think their credibility has been established. They released a report last week that says U.S. companies will need to invest \$641 billion over the next 20 years in infrastructure to keep up with the growing oil and gas production. That is just what they know about that right now. If you add to that what would happen if they were able to open all of this and end the war on fossil fuels, look at the potential we would have in this country.

The increase in oil and gas production we have seen in recent years has occurred solely on State and private lands. There are many things President Obama could do to make the numbers far higher. In fact, we could have total energy independence in a matter of months, not a matter of years, if the President were to lift his ban on federal lands.

So the President has continued his war on fossil fuels. The President's efforts have been intently focused on hurting the production of oil and gas resources—be it through stall tactics or efforts to establish complex and confusing regulations on the hydraulic fracturing process. Every way we turn we see President Obama trying to put the oil and gas industry out of business.

The Keystone XL Pipeline is the bellwether of energy policy today. It is a simple decision. I know many of my colleagues have talked about it and have had the information, as the leader of our group has here today, on what we could be doing in this country. Yet there is some kind of assumption that if we don't complete the pipeline, they will stop the process up in Alberta, Canada. They are going to continue, but it is going to be China and other countries that are going to benefit from it. So I applaud the Senator for the great work he is doing. We have to let the American people know of the potential we have right here in this country and develop that potential. I thank the Senator from Texas for yielding.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I would like to thank the Senator from Oklahoma for his work on this important issue, and I turn to the Senator from Texas, a State that produces more oil and gas than any other State in the Union, and ask for his thoughts and support.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I appreciate the leadership from the Senator

from North Dakota. He has been a champion of this important program that enjoys the support of huge bipartisan majorities all across the country because they understand the importance of energy security. They understand the importance of getting this energy from a friendly country such as Canada. They understand the jobs that go along with it. They understand the need for hard-working American families to have affordable energy, whether it is gasoline, heating fuel or the like. So this makes sense on so many different levels, but I have to say that really the biggest obstacle is the Federal Government itself.

Not approving this pipeline makes exactly zero sense. I know some people are put off a little bit—I would say to the Senator from North Dakota—by the idea of a new pipeline as if this is some novel creation. But just as an exercise in my own personal edification, I happened to Google—or maybe it was Bing or some other search engine—“oil and gas pipelines” on the Internet, and I was astonished at the huge complex interplay of oil and gas pipelines all across the United States of America. Most Americans aren't even aware they exist because they safely operate, and they move this oil and gas around the country in a way that benefits our economy and creates jobs and helps us put people back to work which is the most important thing we can do.

So we know for the last 5 years, since the great recession, we have had an economy characterized by stubbornly slow economic growth and persistently high unemployment. We have the smallest percentage of people actually participating in the workforce since World War II. We have seen a decline in median household incomes, so average hard-working families have seen their income go down, and we have seen this nagging sense of uncertainty about the future, not just because of the economy but because of the obstacles the Federal Government puts in its way.

I would ask the Senator from North Dakota—I know that North Dakota has had some experience here—by not building this pipeline, what are the other ways that this oil is being transported, and what is the risk and benefit associated with that? People may think this is sort of an either/or—you either have the oil flow or not. But the truth is there are other alternatives, but they are not necessarily in the public interest or as safe as this pipeline might be.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. To respond to the Senator from Texas, of course, by not having a median pipeline infrastructure we are forced to move oil by other means and that means primarily railcars, and it is overburdening our rail system. As you have seen, we have had accidents, and it is just the overburdening of the current capacity of our rail system.

For example, in North Dakota we produce a million barrels of oil a day.

Over 700,000 now has to move by rail car because we don't have adequate pipelines. So this is not just about bringing oil from Canada to the United States. It is also about moving oil from States such as Montana and North Dakota to refineries in the most efficient and safest way possible. For example, the Keystone XL Pipeline on the day it opens will take 500 trucks a day off some of our roads in the western part of our State. So it is clearly a safety issue. The State Department says if this pipeline isn't built, to move that amount of oil you would have to move 1,400 railcars a day. That is 14 unit trains of 100 railcars a day. Clearly, we don't have that rail capacity. Clearly we don't have that rail capacity, so we need this vital infrastructure. We can't develop the energy in this country and work with Canada to truly become energy independent without vital infrastructure, which this project represents.

Mr. CORNYN. I know there are other Senators who wish to speak, and I will conclude on this point. It is with some sense of appreciation that I note the two lowest unemployment rate cities and regions in the country are, I believe, Bismarck, ND, and Midland-Odessa, the Permian Basin in Texas. Not coincidentally, those are the sites of some of the shale gas and the oil and gas production we are seeing that is thanks to modern drilling techniques and innovative practices that produce this American renaissance in energy, for which we should be enormously grateful.

This is the way to get our economy back on track. This is the way to extract ourselves from dangerous parts of the world and unreliable sources of energy. And this is the way to get Americans back to work.

I thank the Senator for his leadership, and I am happy to participate in this colloquy. Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I wish to thank the esteemed Senator from Texas.

I wish to turn to the distinguished Senator from Missouri for his thoughts on the importance of this project and the need for our country to become energy independent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I thank my friend for leading this colloquy. I think the Senator from South Carolina, Mr. SCOTT, is going to speak for a few minutes before I do, and then I will be glad to enter into this discussion. It is an important topic. Nobody has been a greater leader on this than my friend from North Dakota, and I thank him for organizing this colloquy, as many of us wish to come to the floor today to speak on this critical issue.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I turn to the Senator from South Carolina and I welcome his comments on this important topic.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. SCOTT. I thank the Senator from North Dakota for his strong leadership on that which is obvious to most of us, which is the need to move forward on the Keystone Pipeline.

I was a businessman before I arrived here in Congress and I will tell my colleagues that our goal in business was to do the right thing. As a Senator, I wish to do the right thing for all of the American people. Thanks to the strong leadership of Senator HOEVEN, we have an opportunity to do just that. Yet this administration continues to ignore policies that would help hard-working, hard-hit American families.

I think back several years ago when I was growing up in a single-parent household, and I think about the very difficult choices my mom had to make between food and gas and energy consumption. What a horrible position to put any American family in. Yet every single day we delay a decision on the pipeline, we say to struggling families: Not now, not here, but maybe later. That is not the right message to send on the broader topic of this energy economy.

The fact is, if we factor in incomes under \$30,000, 25 percent of that income goes toward energy consumption. What a difficult position to find a single parent in, struggling to make ends meet. Yet we have an opportunity not only to address that issue in the broader topic of the energy conversation but to specifically address the issue faced by millions and millions of Americans, and that is the issue of unemployment.

The pipeline is not an issue of politics, it is an issue of the American people. The fact is that over 42,000 jobs would be created and we would pump billions of dollars into the Nation's economy. Yet the administration simply says—after 5½ years, after several studies—we should wait a little longer, as if we have not waited long enough, with those 42,000 American families who could be positively impacted by going back to work. How long should we wait to see this administration do the right thing?

I support this proposal. I support the legislation. I support congressional action to move this administration into a position where 61 percent of the American people already find themselves. They are already saying, Let's move forward on the pipeline. They are ready to see action on constructing the pipeline because they understand that if we can't solve this simple issue, where there is already bipartisan support, how do we address the deeper challenges in the energy economy?

I don't often find myself in the position to quote from members or even presidents of labor unions. I have to gulp when I make my next statement, because it is so rare, so foreign to me. But I will say that Terry O'Sullivan, general president of the Laborers' International Union of North America, got it right when he said, "This is once again politics at its worst."

Here we see an amazing collaboration between labor unions, Democratic Senators, Republican Senators, and conservative groups, all coming together, asking—even begging—the President to do the right thing. I don't know exactly what it will take to get the President to do what he said during a lunch meeting with all of the Republican Senators when he said, Do you know what we should do? By the end of 2013, we should find ourselves with a decision coming out of his office, his administration. Yet this is 2014. It reminds me a little bit of ObamaCare; they continue to move the deadlines.

We need action for the American people and we need action for the American people right now.

Let me close, Mr. President by thinking through where we are today on such a simple decision. I believe 62 Senators in this body during the budget resolution debate supported moving forward on the Keystone Pipeline; is that correct?

Mr. HOEVEN. That is correct.

Mr. SCOTT. I believe we have had a number of votes over the last 2 years where many Senators have said, have voted, and have written letters asking for action on this pipeline. I think that is correct. Yet if we can't solve a bipartisan issue on the pipeline today, how do we start solving the broader issues regarding energy, including offshore energy production? How do we get ourselves into a position, I say to the Senator from Alaska, where we could have a conversation about offshore production? My State could see 7,500 new jobs and \$2.2 billion annually added to our economy, and \$87.5 million of new revenue generated for my State. But we can't solve the simple, bipartisan-supported effort of the Keystone Pipeline.

I thank Senator HOEVEN for his strong leadership and I hope we will find it possible to move this legislation forward quickly, and let's get it done.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. I wish to thank the Senator from South Carolina for putting this issue in very human terms, including what it means for people in this country who want a job. I thank him for his passion on this important issue.

I turn now to the Senator from Missouri for his input on this important issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the Senator from South Carolina for pointing out that bad Economic Policies have the most impact on the most vulnerable among us, including the number he gave of the percentage of income of families who have less than \$30,000 of income a year, how much of that already goes to energy.

The administration says they are for an all-of-the-above energy policy. That appears to be an all-of-the-above energy policy unless we know it works

and unless we know it is available and unless we know we could get it, in this case, from a friendly source. Somehow, they are not for that. They are for "all of the above" until we really look at what is there and what we know works and what makes our current energy needs met in the best way.

The pipeline is an example of a solution that would decrease our country's dependence on nations we can't rely on quite as heavily. It increases our trading relationship with our very best trading partner. That oil is going to be sold to somebody and a pipeline will be built. The question is, Is the pipeline built to connect to the most logical customer and the best trading partner and come south or does the pipeline go to the west and the oil goes to Asia? This is not about whether the oil comes out of the ground. It is not about whether a pipeline gets built. It is about whether we do that which makes the most sense.

On April 18, the State Department, by the direction of the President, once again, said we are going to wait a little while longer. How many deadlines do we have to blow by? I think it is interesting that in the last couple of months when people have left the administration—when the Secretary of the Interior leaves and is asked about the pipeline, he says, Oh, of course we should build the pipeline. When the Secretary of Energy leaves and is asked about the pipeline, he says, Oh, of course we should build the pipeline. Everybody knows that the logical, commonsense thing to do is to build this pipeline and let us benefit from this energy. It has become an example of a commonsense decision versus regulators out of control—regulators who don't want us to use the resources we have or the resources that are right next to us.

The national security implications of Canadian oil are pretty great and pretty obvious for everybody to figure out. The economic security implications of doing business with somebody who does business with us—every time we send the Canadians a dollar, for decades, they have sent us back at least 90 cents. Every time we involve ourselves in that trade and strengthen their economy, they turn right back around and strengthen our economy. Why wouldn't we want to do that?

Just the cost alone of building the pipeline, talk about a shovel-ready project: 20,000 jobs, not a single taxpayer dollar involved. In fact, the company immediately starts paying taxes to State and local government as that pipeline is extended through communities and almost all of our States. Another 830,000 barrels of oil a day. Roughly 6 percent of all of our daily imports come from this one new source. But, as others have pointed out, that pipeline then becomes available for other objectives as well. A bipartisan determination on this floor has shown that we should obviously build this pipeline.

We constantly talk about private sector job creation. Believe me, it is not just building and producing more American energy that are the jobs created, it is the jobs created when we have a utility bill we can rely on and a delivery system we can count on. People will make things in the United States again. The right kind of American energy policy becomes immediately the right kind of American manufacturing policy.

The pipeline has almost become the tip of the iceberg that everybody has their eye on, but it is an example of the problem that we refuse to do things that will make our economy stronger, make our families stronger, and create jobs in America that have better take-home pay than the jobs that people have seen in the last 5 years. The take-home pay for American families has gone down and down and down in every one of those years when we look at the surveys.

This is a fight worth having. Again, nobody has been more dedicated to that effort than the Senator from North Dakota who understands what a difference energy can make in the State. He saw that happen as Governor. We have seen that happen in the State he lives in. The right kind of American energy policy can provide so many of those exact same benefits for the United States of America. This is one of the easy examples to talk about, out of a volume of examples of the administration clearly headed on a path that makes no sense when we really look at the national security impact, the economic impact, or, most importantly, the impact on American families.

I again thank the Senator for leading this fight.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. I thank the Senator from Missouri and turn to our ranking member on the Energy Committee, the Senator from Alaska, who deals with energy issues every day.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. I wish to thank my colleague from North Dakota. I have had an opportunity to go to North Dakota and see firsthand how, in Senator HOEVEN's State, they are embracing this energy renaissance we are seeing in this country—a renaissance that is truly allowing us to move forward with jobs and economic opportunity not only for the good of this country but really for the good of so many others.

When we are talking about our neighbors to the north in Canada—or if one is from Alaska our neighbors to the east—there is a recognition that the United States and Canada are really joined at the well, if you will. That is a term I have used quite frequently.

But when it comes to energy issues, there are 17 operating oil pipelines between the United States and Canada. There are another 30 electric transmission lines. There are 29 natural gas

pipelines. This is all energy infrastructure that crosses the border with Canada—whether it is into Montana, Washington, North Dakota, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Vermont, Idaho, Maine.

You have to wonder—you have to wonder—are not these all in the national interest? What is so unique, what is so compelling about this Keystone XL Pipeline that it is not only taking the 5 years of study that has already been done but is now on indefinite hold for yet further study?

So it causes one to kind of go back in time. Let's look at some of the pipelines that have been already determined as being in the national interest.

Back in August of 2009, the Department of State signed off on Enbridge Energy's Alberta Clipper Pipeline. When you look at what they did in signing off on that, it is exactly what we are talking about here with the Keystone XL. It said—and this is coming from the national interest determination on the Alberta Clipper. I ask unanimous consent to have that application printed in the RECORD.

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

7.0 DECISION AND BASIS FOR DECISION

The Deputy Secretary of State has determined that a Presidential Permit will be issued to Enbridge Energy, Limited Partnership to construct, connect, operate, and maintain facilities at the border for the transport of crude oil between the United States and Canada across the international boundary, as described in the Application for a Presidential Permit dated May 15, 2007 and as further amended by the subsequent filings of Enbridge with the DOS and by information incorporated into the Final EIS issued June 5, 2009. The Deputy Secretary also finds that:

Construction and Operation of the Alberta Clipper Project Serves the National Interest—The addition of crude oil pipeline capacity between the Western Canada Sedimentary Basin (WCSB) and the United States serves the strategic interests of the United States for the following reasons:

It increases the diversity of available supplies among the United States' worldwide crude oil sources in a time of considerable political tension in other major oil producing countries and regions. Increased output from the WCSB can be utilized by a growing number of refineries in the United States that have access and means of transport for these increased supplies.

It shortens the transportation pathway for a sizeable portion of United States crude oil imports. Crude oil supplies in Western Canada represent the largest and closest foreign supply source to domestic refineries that do not require, in contrast to other suppliers, many days or weeks of marine transportation.

It increases crude oil supplies from a major non-Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries producer which is a stable and reliable ally and trading partner of the United States, with which we have free trade agreements which augment the security of this energy supply.

Moreover, the United States and Canada, through bilateral diplomacy and a Clean Energy Dialogue process that is now underway, are working across our respective energy sectors to cooperate on best practices and

technology, including carbon sequestration and storage, so as to lower the overall environmental footprint of our energy sectors. The Government of Canada and the Province of Alberta have also set greenhouse gas reduction targets and implementation programs to help them achieve them.

Approval of this permit will also send a positive economic signal, in a difficult economic period, about the future reliability and availability of a portion of United States' energy imports, and in the immediate term, will provide construction jobs.

It provides additional supplies of crude oil to make up for the continued decline in imports from several other major U.S. suppliers.

Construction and Operation of the Alberta Clipper Project Meets Environmental Protection Policies—The DOS concludes that the proposed Alberta Clipper Project, if designed, constructed, and operated in accordance with the Project Description in Section 2.0 of the FEIS, as amended by additional approaches and mitigation measures agreed to by Enbridge as a result of the DOS environmental analyses and as further amended by specific permit conditions contained in the permit and those to be assigned by the state and federal agencies with jurisdiction over aspects of the project along the pipeline corridor, would result in limited adverse environmental impacts.

Concerns have been raised about higher-than-average levels of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with oil sands crude. The Department has considered these concerns, and considers that they are best addressed in the context of the overall set of domestic policies that Canada and the United States will take to address their respective greenhouse gas emissions. The United States will continue to reduce reliance on oil through conservation and energy efficiency measures, such as recently increased Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards, as well as through the pursuit of comprehensive climate legislation and an ambitious global agreement on climate change that includes substantial emission reductions for both the United States and Canada. The Department, on behalf of the Administration, will urge ambitious action by Canada, and will cooperate with the Canadian government through the U.S.-Canada Clean Energy Dialogue and other processes to promote the deployment of technologies that reduce our respective GHG emissions.

The Scope of the Permit Issued to Enbridge shall extend only up to and including the first mainline shut-off valve or pumping station in the United States. Executive Order 11423, initially delegating the President's authority to the DOS, specifically notes that "the proper conduct of the foreign relations of the United States requires that Executive permission be obtained for the construction and maintenance at the borders of the United States of facilities connecting the United States with a foreign country." Similarly, Section I of Executive Order 13337, further delegating the President's authority, states that DOS has authority for issuance of Presidential permits for the "construction, connection, operation, and maintenance at the borders of the United States of facilities . . . to or from a foreign country." Hence, in reviewing an application for a Presidential permit, the DOS, takes into account the impact the proposed cross-border facility (i.e., pipeline, bridge, road, etc.) will have upon U.S. relations with the country in question, whether Canada or Mexico, and also on the impact it will have on U.S. foreign relations generally. While the DOS also takes into account the various environmental and other domestic issues

mentioned above, DOS does not have, and has never had, authority over facilities, including pipeline, bridges, roads, etc., located entirely within the United States that do not cross the international border with either Canada or Mexico. For these reasons, the Department does not believe that the scope of the permit it issues in this case should extend any further than necessary to protect that foreign relations interest. The permits the DOS issues under Executive Orders 11423 and 13337 routinely include provisions permitting DOS to take possession of the facilities at the border for national security reasons or to direct the permittee to remove the facilities in the immediate vicinity of the international border if so directed by the DOS. Since that is the case, the DOS has concluded that a limitation of the scope of the permit in this case to those pipeline facilities within the United States up to and including the first mainline shut-off valve or pumping station would adequately protect the DOS' foreign relations interest in implementing Executive Orders 11423 and 13337.

8.0 NATIONAL INTEREST DETERMINATION

Pursuant to the authority vested in me under Executive Order 13337 of April 30, 2004, as amended, Department of State Delegation of Authority No. 118-2 of January 23, 2006, and Department of State Delegation No. 245-1 of February 13, 2009, and subject to satisfaction of the requirements of sections 1(g) and 1(i) of Executive Order 13337, I hereby determine that issuance of a permit to Enbridge Energy, Limited Partnership, a limited partnership organized under the laws of the State of Delaware, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Enbridge Energy Partners, L.P. ("Enbridge Partners") which is a Delaware master limited partnership headquartered at 1100 Louisiana, Suite 3300, Houston, Texas 77002, to construct, connect, operate and maintain facilities at the border of the United States and Canada for the transport of crude oil between the United States and Canada across the international boundary at Cavalier County, North Dakota, would serve the national interest.

The Presidential Permit issued to Enbridge shall include authorization to construct, connect, operate, and maintain at the border of the United States facilities for the transport of crude oil between the United States and Canada across the international boundary as described in the Presidential Permit application received from Enbridge by DOS on May 15, 2007, as amended, and in accordance with the mitigation measures described in the Environmental Mitigation Plan (and other similar mitigation plans) contained in the FEIS, as amended. No construction or other actions shall be taken by Enbridge prior to Enbridge's acquisition of all other necessary federal, state, and local permits and approvals from agencies of competent jurisdiction. Enbridge shall provide written notice to the Department at such time as the construction authorized by this permit is begun, and again at such time as construction is completed, interrupted or discontinued.

This determination shall become final fifteen days after the Secretaries of Defense, Interior, Commerce, Energy, Homeland Security and Transportation, the Attorney General, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency have been notified of this determination, unless the matter must be referred to the President for consideration and final decision pursuant to section 1(i) of said Executive Order.

Date: 03 August 2009.

JAMES B. STEINBERG,
Deputy Secretary of State.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Some of the things the Alberta Clipper line pro-

vided were increasing the diversity of available supplies. It shortens the transportation pathway for a sizable portion of our crude imports. It increases crude oil supplies from major non-OPEC countries. It allows our country to cooperate on best practices in technology. And then, finally, approval of the permit would send a positive economic signal, in a difficult economic period, about the future reliability and availability of a portion of U.S. energy imports.

These are not from the Keystone XL Pipeline. This is coming from the Alberta Clipper Pipeline, approved back in 2009, for exactly the same reasons that President Obama should sign off on the Keystone XL Pipeline and sign off now. It is in the country's best interests. It is clearly in the best interests of our friend and ally and neighbor to the north, Canada.

I think we recognize there is so much opportunity for us. But we need to get out of the way of the stops and the hurdles that have been placed by this administration—limiting our jobs, limiting our economic opportunities, and truly working to restrict our energy independence.

With that, I yield the floor, as I know several other colleagues wish to speak in the time remaining.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise today to again express my great disappointment about a matter of importance to our Nation—the administration's decision to put off a decision to start building the Keystone Pipeline so they can do a little more study and review—again. It is getting to be like watching a rerun of the same show—over and over and over again.

How many times have we been through this? I have lost count. Time after time momentum seems to build to finally approve this project so we can reap the benefits that will come from the pipeline—namely, the jobs that will be available to people who need them and the boost to our Nation's energy supplies that will help to bring some certainty to our energy policy.

Well, we can forget about those benefits in the near term. The administration has once again spoken with certainty that they aren't certain about what they want to do—they just know they don't want to do it now. If one is supportive of the pipeline one can still hope it may happen someday. If one is opposed to it, one can be assured that "someday" won't happen anytime soon.

I think there is more of a political reason than a practical reason for this delay. After all, there have already been 5 years of studies that have reaffirmed the benefits of building the pipeline now.

That isn't all. The State Department reviewed the proposal and found that it was the safest way to transport the oil. Most pipelines require a presidential permit that is issued after an 18-to 24-month review process. We did that. In

fact, the first leg of the Keystone XL pipeline took 21 months to obtain approval. Most times that would be a cause for optimism. Not this time. We are 5 years down the road and we are still awaiting the start of construction.

Instead of spending this week on misguided legislation that will actually discourage new hiring and harm the job prospects of long-term unemployed individuals, we should be doing everything we can to encourage the creation of new jobs and the growth of new business opportunities. According to the State Department, the Keystone XL has the potential to create 42,000 jobs with good wages that will help to get the economy going again, strengthen our energy supplies, and put those 42,000 individuals further along the road of living the American dream and supporting their families. What is not to like about that? Plus, it will accomplish all that without raising taxes or increasing our crushing national debt. In fact, this would increase revenues—jobs increase revenues, sales increase revenues. More people driving to work also creates more money for highways.

Getting this massive private sector job creator moving into high gear is a win-win for all Americans. Unfortunately, it hasn't happened yet and the White House has decided to step in again and once again delay the project for political reasons. Instead of supporting a job creator, the administration is putting up a job barrier. We deserve better. We deserve an administration that is willing to work overtime to lead us out of this dismal time of long-term unemployment—a slump that shows no signs of ending soon.

That isn't the only reason why we need to take action on this immediately. Haven't we all spoken time and time again about the need to do something to reduce our dependence on sources of energy from unstable countries? This pipeline will help us to do that.

The administration's own Department of Energy stated in a June 2011 memo that Keystone XL would lower gas prices in all the markets in the United States. Flipping the XL switch from "standby" to "on" should have been done years ago. It is a no-brainer that calls for action—not more thought, reflection, meditation, consideration, review, and planning—and who knows what else.

The record is clear. We have been told time and time again that a decision on the pipeline was "in the pipeline" and would be coming our way shortly. In March of last year the President told us that the final decision as to whether or not he would approve the pipeline would reach us by year's end. We never heard from him.

Before that, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made a promise that we would have a decision on the status of the pipeline by the end of 2011. We never heard from her, either.

That is unacceptable for so many different reasons. We need the jobs. We

need the energy. We need the certainty that comes from knowing whether this project will be completed or not.

The resources this pipeline is intended to carry will be developed whether the administration approves it or not. Doesn't it make sense by having the United States of America receive the benefit of all that energy instead of our competitors?

We have an alternative before us. The senior Senator from North Dakota has a new bill that I am cosponsoring that would recognize the final supplemental environmental impact statement and give approval to the Keystone XL Pipeline. It will put the Senate on record and recognize the need for the pipeline and all the benefits it will provide. It has strong bipartisan support and should move forward with all deliberate speed.

There is an old saying that reminds us that he who hesitates is lost. We have been hesitating for years and have nothing to show for it but lost time. We have a chance to change things and put ourselves on the right side of this equation. It is time to do it—now! Let's leave yesterday behind and move forward to tomorrow by taking action instead of putting it off again for another round of thoughtful gazing and reflection while our problems grow more serious and our options start to diminish.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I have conferred with the good Senator from Illinois and beg his indulgence. He has offered 3 minutes for each of our remaining speakers. I thank him for that and ask for the Chair's indulgence.

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

Mr. HOEVEN. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I again thank the Senator from Illinois and turn to the Senator from South Carolina for his thoughts on this important issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DURBIN). The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I thank you.

I have been to the Canadian oil sands that I would recommend every person in this body go visit. The Canadians are being very environmentally responsible when it comes to extracting the oil sands product. This is an equivalent to a Saudi Arabian oil find from our Canadian friends.

Here is the choice and here is the debate: They are going to sell the oil to China or they are going to sell it to us. How many people in America really have a hard time figuring out what we should do? It is not as though the oil is not going to be sold and extracted from the ground. It is going to be sold to us or the Chinese. If we buy oil from Canada, it is like buying oil from your cousin. We trade with the Canadians. They are very reliable partners. It is less oil to buy from Russia and Venezuela, and you can go down the list.

What is at stake here is that the people who object to this pipeline—I do

not doubt their sincerity—would not allow us to buy oil from anybody or explore for oil here at home. The people objecting to this pipeline do not have an all-of-the-above approach when it comes to American energy. If you left it up to them, we would be doing windmills, solar, no nuclear power.

So the President of the United States has turned this issue over to the most extreme people in the country when it comes to politics. They are trumping the unions. They are trumping the former Presiding Officer. They are locking down developing an energy source that we need as a nation. I really regret that the President has let them take over this issue at a time when we need more oil from friendly people and less oil from people who hate our guts.

Dirty oil to me is buying oil from people who will take the proceeds and share it with terrorists. This oil content from Canada is slightly greater in carbon content than Mideast sweet crude, the same level as oil we find off the coast of California, and has less sulfur. So the environmental argument does not bear scrutiny.

At the end of the day, we are not going to get this oil from our friends in Canada because of the upcoming elections. President Obama is afraid of turning off environmental support so he has turned off the pipeline—very bad for America.

I yield.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from South Carolina and turn to the esteemed Senator from Georgia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from North Dakota, and I acknowledge and thank the distinguished majority whip for allowing us extra time to talk about a subject he would probably prefer us not to talk about, but I appreciate it very much. So I will be very brief and succinct.

For this administration and our country not to build the Keystone Pipeline or delay it is at best professional malpractice. There are three reasons for that.

We are a country that 40 years ago was held hostage by OPEC. We had our parents waiting in line to fill up their cars. Businesses closed because there was no oil supply, and prices went through the roof.

With the Keystone Pipeline and its capacity added to the Marcellus and the Haynesville shale, America will truly be independent in its energy and never be held hostage again by someone like OPEC. That is No. 1.

No. 2, it is important for our diplomacy around the world. Soft power is always preferable to hard power. And one of the best soft powers you can possibly have is having energy. Think about it for a second.

If Russia were not a factor in Ukraine because America could supplant their natural gas, think what

that would do to what is happening right now in that part of the world. We need it for our soft power and for our diplomatic power.

Lastly, it is environmentally the thing to do. That oil is going to be refined somewhere in the world, and it is going to be delivered in some way. The safest and most environmentally sound way to deliver it is in a pipeline, No. 1. The best country in the world to refine it is the United States of America, No. 2. And, No. 3, and most importantly, it is environmentally sound because you keep trucks off the road, trains off the track. The oil goes underground. It does not generate any carbon and go into the global warming or any other part of our environmental threat.

It is the right thing to do, and it is professional malpractice for us not to be doing it for our people, for our country, for our diplomacy, and for peace around the world.

I thank the distinguished Senator for the time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MANCHIN). The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I thank the good Senator from Georgia, who is putting forward common sense.

I would like to turn, in closing, to the Senator from Wyoming, who is a senior member of the energy committee and truly understands energy issues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, it seems the President's decision is absurd, to delay the Keystone XL Pipeline. That is not just me saying that. That is the Washington Post, Thursday morning, April 24: "Keystone XL's absurd delay. President Obama should approve the pipeline project now." They say:

If foot-dragging were a competitive sport, President Obama and his administration would be world champions for their performance in delaying the approval of the Keystone XL pipeline.

They go on to say:

The administration's latest decision is not responsible; it is embarrassing. The United States continues to insult its Canadian allies by holding up what should have been a routine permitting decision amid a funhouse-mirror environmental debate that got way out of hand.

They conclude by saying:

The president should end this national psychodrama now, bow to reason—

Think about that: "bow to reason"—approve the pipeline and go do something more productive for the climate.

That is not just the Washington Post. We see also the Wall Street Journal, on Wednesday: "Keystone Uncensored." They talk about a labor leader calling the administration "gutless," "dirty," and more.

So why would a union leader—who endorsed President Obama in 2008 as a candidate, endorsed him again in 2012—why would he say this? He actually went on to say: "It's not the oil that's dirty, it's the politics."

To get an answer to that, you have to look at an article that Politico ran last Thursday called “The left’s secret club.” It said:

Some of the country’s biggest Democratic donors—including Tom Steyer . . . —are huddling behind closed doors next week in Chicago to plan how to pull their party—and the country—to the left.

The meeting will be held in the ballroom of the Ritz-Carlton. Politico describes the group as “a secretive club of wealthy liberals.”

So who is Tom Steyer? Well, he is a hedge fund billionaire who has said he is hoping to spend at least \$100 million to defeat candidates who support the Keystone XL Pipeline and who oppose his extreme environmental agenda.

I want to be absolutely clear. There is nothing wrong with legal participation in elections. If a hedge fund billionaire like Mr. Steyer wants to spend his money talking about his views, he is free to do it. I disagree with his views, but I would never come to the floor of the Senate and denounce him as un-American. But that is exactly what the majority leader, Senator REID, has done, repeatedly coming to the floor to criticize and demonize people who do not share his views. I have not heard Senator REID demonizing Tom Steyer or any other wealthy liberal donors.

According to Politico, the majority leader was actually scheduled to attend a fundraising dinner at Mr. Steyer’s home a few months ago.

So the coincidence, to me, of the administration’s announcement right before this big liberal political event remains suspicious. The silence of the majority leader about one person’s spending when he has been so outspoken about the spending of other people is certainly suspicious as well.

Maybe that is what the union head meant when he said: “It’s not the oil that’s dirty, it’s the politics.” Whatever the reason, the important thing is that President Obama continues to turn his back on thousands of middle-class families in desperate need of jobs.

That is what needs to change. The administration and this body, controlled by Senator REID and the Democrats, can no longer put politics ahead of policy substance. It is time for the administration to do the right thing and to approve the Keystone XL Pipeline no matter what the Democrats’ secretive billionaires say.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I will close.

It is time for the Senate to vote on this important issue.

With that, I will turn to the Senator from Illinois and again thank him for the additional time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I have listened, as my friends—and they

are my friends—and colleagues have come to the floor to talk about the Keystone XL Pipeline.

It turns out that what America needs more than anything else—more than an increase in the minimum wage, more than paycheck fairness so that men and women are paid fairly in the workplace—more than anything else, we need one more pipeline coming in from Canada.

If you listen to the other side, you would think the jobs that will be created by the Keystone XL Pipeline will finally turn this economy around.

How many jobs are we talking about? Madam President, 2,000–2,000 construction jobs? That is at the high end of estimates I have heard. How many jobs at the refineries in Texas to process this oil and ship it overseas? It is not for sale in the United States. I am not sure. But it really is amazing to me that they continue to focus on Keystone XL as if it is the only issue when it comes to the American economy.

Here is what I find particularly curious. For the record—and I am glad my friend, the Senator from North Dakota, is still in the Chamber—the Keystone XL Pipeline is not the first Keystone Pipeline. The first Keystone Pipeline, from Alberta, came into the United States and ended up in Wood River, IL, at the Conoco refinery. It is shipping Canadian tar sands down to be refined at the Conoco refinery. And then, after it is refined, in a pipeline it is distributed all across the United States.

If no Keystone XL Pipeline is ever built—and I do not know whether it will or will not be—there will still be a steady flow of Canadian tar sands into America for refining.

Just this week, Senator KIRK and I met with the North American president of BP. They have a huge refinery in Whiting, IN, at the south end of Lake Michigan. They are refining Canadian tar sands into oil that can be sold in different products.

I asked the head of the North American operations for BP what is going to happen to that refinery when it comes to Canadian tar sands? He said: We are going to triple—triple—our capacity to deal with Canadian tar sands. He did not say contingent on the Keystone XL. Because, you see, there is a vast network of pipelines moving Canadian tar sands to the United States already, and they are already going through a refinery—many of them—even the BP refinery in northern Indiana.

So this notion that we are somehow turning off the Canadian tar sands coming into the United States—if someone is suggesting that, I would ask them to bring proof to the floor. We are not.

What the President is doing is trying to make a decision on what is best for this country and our economy. He is trying to weigh it in a thoughtful manner. There is an element that needs to be part of this record. The President is trying to take into consideration the environment. I think he should. I think it is his responsibility.

We had a debate several weeks ago on the floor of the Senate. It was about global warming and climate change. It went on through the night. Many of my Democratic colleagues stayed up all night to talk about it. BRIAN SCHATZ of Hawaii, SHELDON WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island spoke at great length with their colleagues about the issue.

I came up early in the debate and simply made one point. I believe the Republican Party of the United States is the only major political party in the world—in the world—that denies climate change and global warming. I have asked my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to give me an example. Tell me where I am wrong. Somebody said there may be a party in Australia. That is where they have to reach to find any other political party in the world that agrees with their position on global warming and climate change. So it is no wonder when we discuss energy and the future they do not want to talk about what is happening to our environment, the extreme weather situation we are even seeing this week, the devastation from storms in a magnitude we have never registered since we kept records.

What the President is trying to do is to take into consideration not just energy but also our environment, so ultimately we leave a world to our children and grandchildren which is safer and cleaner than the one we have today. My friend the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. BARRASSO, came to the floor and talked about what he called a highly secretive, high-level meeting in Chicago, and then he proceeded to say at what hotel it was being held. It is not much of a secret if he knows where it is being held.

It is true there are meetings of people who oppose the Keystone Pipeline and support candidates who oppose it, as there are meetings of those who support the pipeline and support the candidates who join in their position. That happens to be the nature of the political scene. He even suggested that the person opposed to the pipeline was going to put \$100 million into this campaign.

I, for one, would like to see an end to big money in our political campaigns. I would certainly like to see transparency and where it is coming from and how it is being spent, but the reality is, the Citizens United decision from the Supreme Court across the street changed the rules and people can play with big money now, a lot of their own.

What he did not mention were the Koch brothers. I would like to mention them for a moment because they are relevant to this discussion about Canadian tar sands and the Keystone XL Pipeline. The Koch brothers are very wealthy, billionaires. They come to play when it comes to the American political scene. In the last cycle, we were able to identify over \$248 million these two brothers spent on political causes and campaigns around the

United States, and we are told they are going to spend considerably more than that this time around.

Do the Koch brothers have an agenda when it comes to this issue? Let me give an illustration. It was about 3 months ago that I went into the southeast corner of the city of Chicago, an old steel mill neighborhood, which happens to be in the neighborhood where Barrack Obama, fresh out of college, was a community organizer. They are modest homes, frame homes, primarily Hispanic and African-American populations.

They called me down to this section, the southeastern section of the city of Chicago, to show me something. What they wanted to show me were piles of black soot. It is called petcoke. Petcoke is what is left after you take the Canadian tar sands, ship them through the pipeline to a refinery, making diesel fuel, aviation fuel and gasoline. What is left over, this black gunk substance called petcoke.

It turns out that the BP refinery was selling the petcoke to a company owned by the Koch brothers. The Koch brothers were shipping this petcoke into the neighborhoods of Chicago. The mothers with their kids were calling me to their homes and schools to show me what happened when the wind blew. When the wind blew, this nasty black stuff flew through the air. It was all over windowsills and buildings, nasty as can be.

The city of Chicago is doing something about it. They are kind of changing the equation in terms of petcoke and what you have to do to store it. But if the other side is coming to the floor and saying our people are pure of heart, they just want to see the Keystone XL Pipeline, the fact is, the largest benefactors to the Republican Party in the United States today, the Koch brothers, have a financial and commercial interest in these Canadian tar sands, at least in the disposal of this petcoke. The way they were doing it in the city of Chicago was the height of corporate irresponsibility—just pile it and let the wind blow it across the neighborhood. It is going to be criminal when it is all over after the city of Chicago changes its laws to prohibit this kind of conduct.

But those are the things that are at stake in this conversation. I hope at the end of the day the President makes the right, thoughtful decision, not just in terms of energy but in terms of our environment, does the best thing for America. I hope we also understand that if we do nothing with the Keystone XL Pipeline, we are still going to face the challenges with Canadian tar sands, coming down through the United States, being refined and sold in our country and around the world. It is a challenge we have to face honestly.

I may disagree with some of my colleagues on the other side. I believe that if we want to leave a world for future generations—our kids, our grandchildren—that is a cleaner and safer

world, we have to accept some responsibility in our generation, in our time, to clean up the mess of this environment. It may call for some sacrifice as individuals, as families, as businesses, but I do not think it is too much to ask.

God gave us this great world and asked us to keep an eye on it for the next generation. Are we going to do it or will we ignore it and say: If there is money to be made, we can start bringing in any source you wish. That to me is irresponsible.

TRIBUTE TO DR. JERRY UMANOS, JOHN GABEL,
AND GARY GABEL

Madam President, Robert Kennedy once said, "The purpose of life is to contribute in some way to make things better." Around the world and here at home, dedicated American citizens are living by this principle, trying to improve the lives of those in greatest need. Sadly, on April 24, we lost three Americans from my home State of Illinois who were killed at the Cure International Hospital which focuses on maternity and pediatric care in Afghanistan: Dr. Jerry Umanos, John Gabel, and his father Gary Gabel.

Both John Gabel and Dr. Jerry Umanos were working to help the Afghan people receive health care. In a country still coping with the legacy of decades of terrible conflict that devastated the medical infrastructure of Afghanistan, they were helping by volunteering to address the real needs of the Afghan people and improving the lives of those whom they assisted.

This is Dr. Jerry Umanos. His picture is an indication of this young, dedicated, idealistic man who lost his life. He was dedicating to helping kids. After he finished his residency at the Children's Hospital of Michigan, he could have made some money with his training, but instead he decided to help those who needed a helping hand.

He worked for years at an amazing place that I have visited, the Lawndale Christian Health Center in the city of Chicago. It is one of those neighborhood health centers which makes you feel good about the world, where great professionals, such as Dr. Umanos, give of their time, make very little money, and help the poorest of the poor.

He was an important part of that community. They loved him, not only his patients but his colleagues as well. He worked to help so many in Chicago who otherwise did not have a chance for quality health care. He followed this calling to Afghanistan where the needs of people were even greater. He was dedicated to making a difference there by helping the Afghan people, by teaching, by making certain that the next generation of Afghans had a better life. The breadth and depth of his work is a testimony to his love for and commitment not only to the people of Afghanistan but to the needy. What a loss that his life was taken from us.

John Gabel was a man who cared for others and made a real difference in the lives of those he touched. He used

his skills to run a health clinic in Afghanistan and to help address the glaring needs of health care with the Afghan people. John was working in other ways to help build a better tomorrow for the people of Afghanistan. He used to teach at Kabul University, where he was remembered as a great teacher and a great friend.

He used his expertise in computer science, not to enrich himself but to teach others. Perhaps it is not surprising that John was so focused on helping those in need when we consider the example of his parents Gary and Betty Gabel, who also dedicated their lives to others. Tragically, Gary Gabel, who was visiting his son and his family in Afghanistan, was lost as well in the senseless shooting.

Gary Gabel helped his community in and around Arlington Heights, IL. He was an active member of his church. He had a commitment to helping those most innocent and vulnerable members of society, our children. He worked with church youth groups. He provided a strong model to his community and his family of a man committed to helping others. I am sure my colleagues join me in expressing our heartfelt condolences to the families and loved ones of those lost and injured in this tragic attack, as well as the countless people whom they helped, all of whom join us in mourning their loss. They represent the best of who we are as a people and make this world a better place.

MINIMUM WAGE

Tomorrow, we are going to have an important vote. It is a vote that is going to be watched carefully by over 1 million workers in the State of Illinois and millions across our Nation. The question is whether the United States of America and its government will increase the minimum wage for workers all across the country.

It is an important vote. It would raise the Federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 in three steps of 95 cents each. If we pass it this year, the final increase would occur in the year 2016. This is a 39-percent increase in the minimum wage, roughly the same percentage as the last minimum wage bill we enacted over the same period of time. It provides for automatic future increases in the minimum wage based on the cost of living so we do not have those lurches from one level to \$2 or \$3 above it.

It raises the minimum wage for tipped workers for the first time in more than 20 years. People find it hard to believe that under Federal standards, tipped workers receive \$2.13 an hour as their base wage. They are expected to make up the difference with their tips. We raise it to 70 percent of the minimum wage, phased in over 6 years. We extend some business expensing rules to help businesses invest in their equipment and what they need to grow the business. We do this in a fashion to incentivize small businesses to grow.

This increase in the minimum wage brings us down to a very fundamental

question as Americans. The fundamental question is this: If someone is willing to get up and go to work and work hard every single day, should they receive a compensation that lets them get by so they do not have to survive from paycheck to paycheck or should they be put in a position where the only way they can survive is with government assistance—food stamps, SNAP program, child care subsidies—things that we provide as a government to people in low-income categories?

Keep in mind, we are talking about workers. You see them in Chicago early in the morning. They are the blurry-eyed travelers on those buses heading off to the workplace. They are the ones we see on the trains, quietly moving from their homes to where they work and repeating the reverse journey every single day as they head back home at night.

Can you imagine the frustration of going through that day after weary day and never, ever catching up, living paycheck to paycheck, falling further and further behind? That is what is happening to too many of them. It is amazing to me when we hear the critics of minimum wages step forward. In our State of Illinois there are two prominent politicians, both of them happen to be multimillionaires. Their views on minimum wage are amazing to me. One of them, who made \$53 million last year, said he adamantly opposes raising the minimum wage. He made \$53 million last year. He adamantly opposes raising the minimum wage.

Another one of them who is worth millions of dollars himself has said: I will agree to raise the minimum wage but only for people over the age of 26.

He just eliminated half of the people earning the minimum wage in America today who happen to be under the age of 26.

Let's think about the people whom he wants to keep on a subminimum wage. It would include all college students under the age of 26 trying to work their way through school. He would want to give them a subminimum wage. It would include single moms raising their kids—the moms being under the age of 26, they would get a subminimum wage—and it would also include veterans coming back, struggling to find a job. If they haven't reached the age of 26, he would give them a subminimum wage.

I have one basic question: What are these politicians thinking? Have they ever left where they live and where they work and met up with some people who are struggling paycheck to paycheck to get by?

Tomorrow we have a chance on the floor of the Senate to raise the minimum wage, but we cannot do it with Democratic votes alone. If there will not be five, six or seven Republicans who cross the aisle and join us in this debate, it will fail—and that will be a sad day—because for a lot of these workers this is their only hope that

they will get a decent increase in the minimum wage through the law.

I hope my colleagues on the other side will take into consideration that so many of these workers are women and so many of them are even over the age of 35 and still rely on minimum wage jobs. These are not lazy people. These are hard-working people, people who are working hard every single day for a paycheck that they know is not going to cover their expenses every single week.

It is time we give them a chance and give them a break. It used to be—and I can remember it very well—a bipartisan issue to raise the minimum wage.

President Ronald Reagan, when he was President, raised the minimum wage. He understood it. If you value work and you value working people, you should give them a wage which respects the integrity and decency of work. That is what this is about. That is what this minimum wage is about tomorrow.

Without the help of Republicans, it will fail. If it isn't done on a bipartisan basis, it will not go forward.

I might add one other item. A minimum wage is injecting into the economy literally millions of dollars of purchasing power. People who are living paycheck to paycheck spend those checks as fast as they can for food, clothing or shoes, paying the utility bills, paying for a cell phone, putting gas in a car. That money goes right back into the economy.

I ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, tomorrow break with some of the extreme people in your party, join us in a bipartisan fashion and raise the minimum wage. It is only fair.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. BEGICH. Before the Senator leaves I would like to ask him a quick question if I could. I know he talked toward the end of his comments—and I am going to speak on minimum wage also—but he mentioned President Reagan. I think the last time minimum wage passed was under President Bush, again a bipartisan approach; is that correct? I wasn't here during those times, but I know the Senator has served in Congress a long time.

Mr. DURBIN. I respond through the Chair to the Senator from Alaska.

There was a time when there wasn't that much controversy associated with this. We knew that we waited too long. People had fallen behind in their earning potential. We had to pick the right number. We came up with it and moved forward on a bipartisan basis. But now things are so partisan and so poisonous in the Senate that even something as basic as raising the minimum wage for hard-working families turns out to be a political lift.

Mr. BEGICH. The \$10.10 wage is just getting to the poverty level. That is what I understand and why I cosponsored this legislation.

Mr. DURBIN. It basically does for some, but what I found though is if you

are a family with two kids, for example, you have to make almost \$15 an hour to get beyond the poverty level. We are talking about \$10.10 phased in, and many of those people will still qualify for a helping hand from the government because they are still in very low-income categories.

Mr. BEGICH. Thank you for giving me a moment to ask those questions.

I rise to address an important issue—just as we were asking some questions back and forth—that would help 49,000 Alaskans, raising the minimum wage. The bill before us would increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour.

The minimum wage, as mentioned by my colleagues a little earlier, has lost its purchasing power by one-third over my lifetime. The increase will lift millions of Americans out of poverty, reduce their reliance on the safety net, and literally pump billions more into the economy.

I know I look at this a little differently. I come from the business world. I come from the small business world. My first business was at the age of 14. I have been in it ever since in some form or another. You can probably name the business—retail, real estate. I have been a publisher. I have owned different companies, and I have even owned a small, very small, percentage of a restaurant. I felt like I was a 100-percent owner at one point because it is a tough business. I was in there moving the slop buckets and doing a remodel to the kitchen on a Saturday night. I am there like everyone else working double time and trying to make sure we get the job done.

My wife is a small retailer. Her business is selling smoked salmon on a counter or a cart—no bigger than two of these desks—and building her business now to 5 retail stores, 30-some employees. I might note none of our employees are paid minimum wage. They are paid above minimum wage.

I know some people are concerned minimum wage will cut into their business. There is no question in my mind what it does; that is, when we increase the minimum wage, it is actually good for business because we help consumers have more resources to put into the economy that then churn back into the business world.

Along with this bill another provision a lot of people don't realize is the minimum wage is one piece, a pretty significant piece but also a provision that I requested be put in this bill, what they call a 179. It is a business tax deduction, something that is important for businesses that are growing, expanding, building new business, small businesses mostly.

This is the No. 1 priority of the business community that I talk to, not the politically driven business communities but the ones that actually do business and actually work with small businesses, the ones that look at their local communities and try to figure out what is important in legislation. One is to make sure they can write off

some of their improvements in an expedited way which, in turn, puts more money into the business for reinvestment. That is another piece of this bill.

So it not only has an important part for the hard-working folks who are making minimum wage to raise that amount, but it also helps the hard-working small businesses ensure that they can continue to put money back in their business, grow their business, expand their business, and then receive some benefit from that.

As we know, we look at the whole issue in Alaska a little differently. Our minimum wage is 50 cents higher than the Federal level, \$7.75. There is a reason: Because it is very expensive, similar to the Presiding Officer's State. It is not cheap in our two States, Hawaii and Alaska. The cost of living is much greater. In order for folks to have a decent living, we pay a little bit more, and we play it off of the Federal legislation, but still it is a problem in keeping the wage competitive to the cost of living.

When we look at Alaska and we look at the cost of living in Alaska—Anchorage specifically is 30 percent higher than the average cost of living in this country and Fairbanks is 40 percent higher. Again, having this higher ratio for us is very important.

It doesn't mean all the time that a dollar still goes far. When we look at the whole country, in terms of buying power, what you can buy for the dollar you earn, Alaska has 3 of the cities in the bottom 11. When you look at the whole list, there are 11 at the bottom. Alaska has three of them: Juneau, Kodiak, and Fairbanks, because their dollar can't go far enough. That is why raising the minimum wage will help them be able to purchase more and enjoy a better quality of life.

I will say Alaskans, similar to Hawaiians, know challenges, and we have tough jobs because we are kind of isolated lots of times and sometimes forgotten that we actually exist in the Union. And we have to make that point more than once. But it doesn't matter if we are doing the drilling in the Arctic, which is a great challenge, or fishing for crab in the Bering Sea, which is an unbelievable test of someone's capacity and ability, but we know how to overcome challenges. We just don't want more challenges.

A minimum wage increase will help reduce some of those challenges. The minimum wage is truly, at the rate it is today, an obstacle to try to get people moved forward because we don't have it at the rate it should be. The \$10.10, in a lot of minds, is an easy step over a 2- to 3-year period, and it is honestly one we can fix. We can fix it tomorrow. We just need a bipartisan approach as it happened under the Reagan administration, it happened under the Bush administration. Again, to remind folks who may not be familiar with those two Presidents, they were Republicans. We did it, and I wasn't here, but Democrats and Repub-

licans sat down and said: Let's figure this out because it is important for the working people of this country who are working hard every day.

Another group it impacts in my State of 49,000 Alaskans is 1,700 veterans—veterans in our country, veterans in my State who will get a boost.

What does that mean? When you calculate by family members, it is about 3,000 families of veterans will benefit from raising the minimum wage. As I said earlier, it is 49,000 Alaskans, and this is one subset. More than half of the Alaskans are women. About 5,000 Alaskans will be boosted right out of poverty with this change, and it means they will be on less government programs such as food stamps.

I would think we are all here to try to make government run more efficiently, improve the economy, and create jobs. That is what we do every day, we attempt to do every day, and we do every day. If we can get people above poverty, that means fewer government programs, which means fewer government tax dollars, which means they are living on their own and they have their own capacity to make it in this world.

One would think this is a unique opportunity for Democrats and Republicans to be joined together. Why wouldn't we want fewer people on food stamps because they are making a living now and able to take care of themselves? That is what we all work toward, to have the American dream to buy that home or live that quality of life, have that great education, all the pieces to the equation.

Again, I cannot believe we are having a struggle trying to get just a few votes. We don't want them all. We get there are some who are opposed to anything about the Federal Government, but why not support this effort to raise people up as President Reagan thought about and President Bush thought about.

It is this moment, giving these people a fair shot, a fair shot to have their American dream come true; \$10.10 doesn't seem like a big stretch, but it seems today it is by some politicians.

In fact, when we look at this—and I know the complaint on the other side is this will hurt business. Again, as I said earlier, this is good. You are talking to someone who is a small businessperson, who pays above minimum wage. I understand the value of making sure my employees, my wife's employees, have a good, decent wage, because when they leave the workplace, when they get their paycheck, they will spend it in the economy. That will help grow the economy.

I know some will talk about the CBO report and all of these government reports, but let me put it this way. The last two times the minimum wage has been raised, the economy didn't collapse, people weren't fired—actually, the economy grew. So I don't understand that comment and debate.

I know they will whip out these reports, and I am appreciative of those

and the work CBO does, but I can only go by history and what has happened. If we raise the minimum wage, jobs are great, economy grows, and the next issue is businesses are reinvesting because they have more customers, which means more customers more profit. More profit means more investment. This is not only a fair shot for the people working, it gives an opportunity for small businesses and businesses across this country.

To put it in perspective for my colleagues who have never been in small business or have not run a business, the reason you hire people is because you have demand. Demand is created by expenditures, expenditures by consumers.

The reason you lay off people is because demand has gone down because there are not expenditures by consumers. Raising the minimum wage gives more opportunity, more investment, more people making money, and more return.

Let me give some national statistics. Again, this is about making sure we give every American, especially those making a minimum wage today—a raise in their minimum wage, to give them a fair shot to be part of the American dream.

The bill will help 30 million Americans earning an additional \$51 billion to put back into the economy over the next 3 years by this raise—huge. The family who today can't afford the new car can now maybe look at a new car or maybe they are choosing between groceries and paying their heating bill. Now because you are raising the minimum wage they have an opportunity to pay these bills and enjoy life a little bit more.

The higher minimum wage will also help 12 million people in our country to get out of poverty. It could lift 4.6 million out of poverty immediately.

This is about empowering families, giving them a fair shot, a chance again to achieve the American dream, helping parents to make ends meet and to raise children in a healthy home and an opportunity for them. More than a one-fifth of all children in our country have a parent on minimum wage; 56 percent on a national level are women making the minimum wage.

Right now, thousands of Alaskans work full time—maybe extra work on the side—but still struggle to put food on the table. It is wrong. That is why raising the minimum wage will be helpful to those families. It saves the government money by helping people get off food stamps. Also, higher wages would cut, as I said, food stamps, they estimate by \$4.6 billion a year. We have been very good at moving the deficit down—a \$1.4 trillion deficit annually, down a little over \$500 billion and continuing to go down. I think we all want to see that deficit go to zero.

The way we do that is with programs such as this that engage the private sector and their responsibility, at the same time lowering costs for the government. Also, an interesting statistic

is that it also increases the wages, obviously, by the minimum wage going up. So it increases and strengthens Social Security because now they are paying into Social Security. Social Security contributions from an extra \$51 billion in wages would go right to the trust fund. Since benefits are tied to lifetime earnings, workers will earn larger checks when they retire. Right now an average minimum wage worker with 40 years of paying into the system receives only 900 bucks, give or take a few bucks, at the age of 65. That is well below the poverty line.

So why wouldn't we want to raise the minimum wage, move people out of poverty, get more people off of food stamps, save the government some money, and, by the way, help strengthen Social Security and give families and individuals a fair shot to meet and reach the American dream? Why wouldn't we want to do that? Again, under the Reagan administration and the Bush administration, they seemed to think it was a good idea.

I agree with the Senator from Illinois who was on the floor a little while ago. If we weren't in this toxic political environment where everything has to be politicized until the last man is standing, we would probably do this. We would be down here together talking about how it would help our folks in our different States and in our communities and in the country overall. Instead, everyone wants to just kind of even the scorecard. This is not about a scorecard; this is about giving a fair shot to Americans, to Alaskans, so they have a chance to make a living and meet and reach the American dream.

This is a simple thing for us to do, and we could do it tomorrow. I don't know what the House will do, but maybe if we act in a bipartisan way here, the House will see that. Maybe they will wake up and see this is a good thing to do because if we want to build the economy, if we want to make a difference, as I said—and I am talking as a small businessperson—if we grow the amount of money consumers spend by making sure they make a good living, the net result will be that every businessperson benefits because they have more consumers, more people buying products. In turn, everything from manufacturing, to shipping to the retailer, to the large business, the small business—all benefit.

Again, it is amazing to me that we debate this issue. Actually, I was not planning to come to the floor until last week because I thought this should be easy. Why are we not doing this? Republican Presidents saw it as a good idea. Now that it has been a long time coming, it is time.

I know some don't like the current President. I have my issues with him, I can tell you that. The list is long. But we should not get caught up in the personalities. I tell my staff all the time—when I get a piece of legislation a Member is proposing, I say: Don't look

at who is sponsoring; look at the content of the bill. If we like the bill, we sign on. We participate. Too much time is spent here worrying about who is sponsoring what, who is on the list, who made the comment. Who cares? If it is a good piece of legislation, then we should do it.

In my State we will have raising the minimum wage on the November ballot because Alaskans signed an initiative—35,000 or 40,000 people—saying this is the right thing to do for Alaska. I think it is the right thing to do not only for Alaska but for this country. It is important that we do this because it is our obligation to make sure for Alaskans and for all Americans that we don't create obstacles in their ability to reach the American dream, that we make sure they have a fair shot at anything they want to do.

I hope tomorrow we will have a different outcome than the pundits are predicting. They think it will fail tomorrow. I hope not. But if we fail tomorrow and don't get enough votes from the other side, it is not that we lose the battle today but that the American people lose. Alaskans lose. The 49,000 Alaskans I mentioned will lose. The 1,700 veterans in my State will lose. Let's try to do something to make them winners and give them a shot.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I think many of my colleagues feel very at home with this image, which is a reminder of a household name—Ramona and her father. It is a great story written by Beverly Cleary. In fact, it is a prize-winning story, part of a series, and my favorite of the series, *Ramona the Pest*, was written in 1968.

In 1968 and in this story Ramona's dad is struggling, along with his wife Dorothy—his name is Robert—to get by and keep the family together on a minimum wage job, which in 1968 paid \$1.60 an hour. Today the minimum wage, if it had kept pace with inflation, would be \$10.71 an hour.

We know, many of us—and probably many of my colleagues who have read this story—that Robert and Dorothy Quimby are engaged in a quiet struggle to make ends meet. Even as Ramona is engaged in all kinds of antics and play, he is working as a grocery bagger at a local store. Ramona's mother is working too—an early example of a two-family household and two-income family. They are able to keep their family afloat on that minimum wage in 1968—\$1.60 an hour in 1968.

For millions of Americans who read Ramona's story today, the idea of a minimum wage enabling a family to stay afloat, keep a roof over their heads, and food on the table is a storybook fiction. It is very difficult today to believe that Robert Quimby, as a bagger in a grocery store, could enable his daughters, Ramona and her sister,

to have the life they did then. In fact, it would be impossible because today the minimum wage has failed to keep pace with inflation. The minimum wage today is \$7.25—nowhere near what it would need to be to keep pace with the rise in the cost of living.

That is why we are here today—to raise the minimum wage to \$10.10, which is still below the \$10.71 it would have been for Robert Quimby, making minimum wage in a grocery store, if it had kept pace with inflation. In fact, it is well below what is necessary to enable families to continue a normal life. That is why they are living in poverty—working men and women living in poverty—despite being paid the minimum wage. That is a travesty and a mockery. It is a moral outrage. It is bad for our economy, it is bad for our families, it is bad for the fabric of our society, and it is bad for America.

I am proud to support an increase in the minimum wage. I am proud Connecticut has decided it will raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour—still below that \$10.71 that is needed to get by today.

We know the impact on families. We know the impact on children. We see them in our schools—millions of children, 14 million children—in families who are paid less than a minimum wage. We know the impact on our veterans. Half a million or more are paid less than the new minimum wage our bill would establish. That is itself an outrage. Men and women who have served and sacrificed for our country come back to civilian life to be paid less than what they need to stay out of poverty. They are working and working hard but still making less than a minimum wage. These are veterans who have served our country, who have put their lives on the line, have put themselves at risk, coming back to a society that rewards them—rewards them—with less than what they need to survive.

I have talked to a lot of businesspeople. Some of them are apprehensive, no question about it, but a lot of them say: Our workers are more productive because we pay well above the minimum wage.

Many who will be impacted by this law if it is passed say it is the right thing to do, and they support it. I am talking about, for example, Max Kothari. For 25 years he, along with his wife Parul, has owned and operated Star Hardware in Hartford—one of the oldest hardware stores in the State of Connecticut. He supports this measure to raise the minimum wage to \$10.10.

So does Doug Wade, who operates one of the oldest dairy companies in the State, started by Doug's great-grandfather in 1893—Wade's Dairy in Bridgeport. He supports raising the minimum wage.

A thousand businesspeople have signed a statement and petition—we mentioned it this morning—that supports raising the minimum wage. They say it is a fairness issue. It is simply a

way to give folks a fair shot at the American dream, a fair shot at a quality of life that is good for their families and children, good for our society, and, by the way, also good for our economy.

We know that \$35 billion would be added to consumer demand because folks who make minimum wage, if it is raised to \$10.10, are not going to put the difference under their mattresses. They are going to spend it. They are going to buy more food, clothing, and gas for their cars. They are going to buy things that drive the economy. They are going to purchase stuff that creates demand and more jobs and business for Max Kothari at his hardware store and for Dough Wade at his dairy.

This kind of reasoning is not advanced economic theory; it is basic common sense. Americans understand it. That is why Americans support raising the minimum wage as a matter of fairness and enlightened self-interest economically. It is the right thing to do.

The arguments made against it are without basis rationally and economically. The ones who suffer from the minimum wage as it exists right now are not teenagers. I know there is a myth that they are part-time workers or teenagers. That is just not true. Nearly ninety percent of minimum wage workers are adults. They are disproportionately women and people of color and workers with disabilities, and they will be helped disproportionately by raising the minimum wage. But they are not teenagers or part-time workers. They are deserving, for the hard work they do, of fair pay and a fair shot. That is all the minimum wage would really do, is give them a fair shot at economic opportunity.

And those veterans, they deserve more than a fair shot. They deserve a hand up, not a handout. There is nothing about the minimum wage that is an entitlement. It is simply fair pay and a fair shot. We have trapped half a million of those veterans in poverty—3,800 veterans in Connecticut alone who will benefit from the \$10.10 minimum wage.

But we should guarantee that in this great land—the greatest in the history of the world—people such as Ramona's dad, Robert Quimby, and Dorothy Quimby and her sister are being paid at least what they were getting back in 1968 in today's dollars. That is the way to keep families together. That is the way to keep faith with the dream all Americans have that they will have a fair shot.

No one who works full time should live in poverty. No one who works should be so poor that they can't put food on the table or provide clothes for their children, or give them the erasers that Robert Quimby gave his daughters as a gift.

To enable 14 million children in America to have a better life, let's pass this measure. And let's make sure that if it fails this week—and it shouldn't,

but if it does, we bring it back, and we continue to bring it back as long as necessary to ensure a fair shot for all Americans who work hard and play by the rules.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for up to 2 minutes as if in morning business.

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

TRIBUTE TO BILL CATHCART

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, this Friday, May 2, a gentleman from Georgia will retire after 29 years of service.

William—Bill—Cathcart, with WTOC for 29 years as general manager and 2 years with the firm, will be saying goodbye to his leadership with WTOC, one of the leading media stations of the coast of Georgia and one of the leading media stations around our State—a station I have dealt with often, and a station I have found to be professional, fair, and thorough.

In fact, even as I speak on the floor of the Senate today, my State of Georgia has already had a bad shooting incident this morning, terrible tornadoes this afternoon, and bad weather coming in this evening. It makes me appreciate the broadcast network and the people who come together to let our citizens know about things happening, giving them early warnings about bad weather and reporting the news fairly and straight.

Bill Cathcart is a great Georgian and a great American. He has done a tremendous job for our State and for WTOC. I wish him the best upon his retirement. I hope he will always call on me if I can ever be of help, and I thank him for all he has done for me.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, tomorrow about noon we will be voting on something in the Senate that I dare say a lot of Americans will be paying close attention to. The reason they are going to be paying close attention is because that vote will affect them and their families in the future in a very big way. That vote will be on whether we will actually bring debate to a close and vote on increasing the minimum wage in America.

If we were to bring that to a vote, we could pass it, the President would sign something like that into law, and in 6 months the minimum wage would go up by 95 cents an hour; then next year it would go up by another 95 cents; and the year after another 95 cents from where it is now at \$7.25 an hour.

What we are going to vote on tomorrow will have a drastic effect on millions of American families—and it is going to have a big effect on our economy, because it will boost our economy and get the wheels going again, because people will have more money to

spend. They will spend it on Main Street. And that is what is lacking right now—consumer demand—consumers with enough money to spend on Main Street. All the economists will basically tell you it is the lack of aggregate demand that is keeping our economy from moving ahead. Tomorrow at noon we will have a vote on that.

Tens of millions of American families are struggling, trying to make ends meet to give their kids a little bit better life. And, quite frankly, a lot of them on low wages are on public assistance which is costing American taxpayers nearly \$250 billion every year—in food stamps, earned income tax credits, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, and Medicaid. Add all those up and it is about \$243 billion a year.

Taxpayers are subsidizing a lot of these companies that are paying very low wages. Many of the companies that pay such low wages are large, multibillion dollar companies raking in big profits and showering their CEOs with wealth. The average CEO pay of a Standard & Poors 500 company was 21 percent more last year than in 2009. In other words, from 2009 until the end of last year, CEO pay at these 500 companies went up an average of 21 percent. However, since 2009, the minimum wage has not increased 1 penny. The CEO pay averages now about \$11.7 million a year, while a minimum-wage worker today makes \$15,000 a year. That is working full time, all year, no time off.

It was pointed out to me that a CEO earns that \$15,000 by about 11:30 a.m. on the first day of work of the year. Imagine that. By 11:30 a.m. on January 2—assuming they don't work on January 1—they make \$15,000. The minimum-wage earner has to work the rest of the year to make that \$15,000. And many of these companies are paying the minimum wage.

It is the families who are getting hurt. This is wrong. This is not what America is about. We want people who get up and go to work every day to be able to rely on that work to support themselves. Working families want that, too. They want a paycheck which supports them, gives them a fair shot at being a member of the middle class, and a fair shot of achieving the American dream.

So now we can do something about it. We know that raising the minimum wage will help tens of millions of workers. When we raise it to \$10.10, as our bill does, the bottom fifth of the workforce—nearly 30 million workers—will get a raise.

By the time this fully phases in at \$10.10 in 3 years, nearly 7 million people will be lifted out of poverty. If we want an antipoverty program, we have it tomorrow when we vote on raising the minimum wage. Seven million people will be lifted out of poverty, and it won't cost the American taxpayers one single dime, and taxpayers basically

will save money because we won't be putting as much money out for public assistance such as food stamps.

I thought it was kind of interesting that the Ryan budget the House passed cuts more than 3.8 million people off of food stamps. In raising the minimum wage, our bill would save billions of dollars—about \$4.6 billion a year—not by cutting people off of food stamps, but by getting their income up so that over 3 million people don't have to rely on food stamps. So under the Ryan budget, people are kicked off of food stamps and they still get minimum wage. Under ours, you get a raise in the minimum wage and you don't have to rely on food stamps, and you save about the same amount of money.

Again, I am mystified by how vehemently my Republican colleagues oppose raising the minimum wage. Certainly they must know the polling data, that the vast majority of Americans support raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour. But it seems my friends on the Republican side are sort of locked into some philosophy or ideology that says there shouldn't be a minimum wage. In fact, some of my colleagues on the Republican side actually believe there should be no minimum wage. None. Nothing. Well, we got over that 70 years or more ago, in 1938, when we first passed a minimum-wage law in America.

Again, we hear from the other side that by raising the minimum wage there will be this massive loss of jobs. That is simply not true. It is a myth. But it is brought up every time.

I have been in Congress now 40 years. We have raised the minimum wage several times during that period of time both under Democratic and Republican Presidents. Every time it has come up, we hear that same old song: It is going to cost jobs. Guess what. Every time we raise the minimum wage, there has been no big loss of jobs. So there are no historic facts my Republican colleagues can point to to show that raising the minimum wage costs jobs.

They do refer to the Congressional Budget Office study. Actually, that is wrong. It was not a Congressional Budget Office study. They didn't do a study themselves. What they did is looked at the literature out there going back many years on potential job losses. Some of the old studies showed there would be a job loss; under a new study they said there wouldn't be. What CBO did is they averaged them all and said: Here is the average. They didn't say specifically 500,000 jobs would be lost. They said somewhere between zero and 1 million jobs will be lost, so we will pick the midpoint at 500,000. But, again, there is no historical evidence for this in terms of looking back.

We can go back and look at what happened to our economy every time we raised the minimum wage, and there has not been a massive job loss. There has been shifting of jobs. People have been raised out of poverty. Working families do better. But there has been no massive job loss. So this is another myth.

As I said, the historical evidence is there has not been any job loss generally—not among teenagers, not among restaurant workers. In fact, this year there has been more job growth in the 13 States that raised their State minimum wages at the start of this year than in the States that didn't raise their minimum wage. Let me repeat that. There has been more job growth in States that raised their minimum wage beginning in January of this year than in the States that didn't raise their minimum wage. A lot of businesses are now understanding this. They understand that, as economists will tell you, it is the lack of aggregate demand: not enough customers. People don't have enough money.

My Republican friends want to give more money to the top, more tax cuts for the wealthy. They get more money—millions more—a year. They don't necessarily spend that on Main Street. They may go to Paris, they may buy a new jet, a new big yacht. They do things like that, but it doesn't really put money right on Main Street.

What small businesses and most economists know is that when you raise the minimum wage, those people who get that raise aren't going off to Paris. They aren't buying a private jet. They are spending it on Main Street in their local stores and local businesses, and that gives a great economic boost to our whole economy.

So when we focus on the best research, the latest research that has been done, it unequivocally shows that raising the minimum wage does not cause a job loss. Again, 600 economists, including 7 Nobel prize winners, have endorsed a minimum wage hike of \$10.10 an hour. Six hundred economists, including 7 Nobel prize winners, signed a letter supporting \$10.10.

We urge you to act now and enact a three-step raise of 95 cents a year for three years—which would mean a minimum wage of \$10.10 by 2016—and then index it to protect against inflation . . . these proposals will also usefully raise the tipped minimum wage to 70 percent of the regular minimum.

The evidence now shows that increases in the minimum wage have had little or no negative effect on the employment of minimum-wage workers. Even during times of weakness in the labor market research suggests that a minimum-wage increase could have a small stimulative effect on the economy, as low-wage workers spend their additional earnings raising demand and job growth and providing some help on the job front.

So, again, forget about the job loss. That is not going to take place. What will take place is we will lift 7 million people out of poverty and 14 million children in America will be in families who will get a raise. That will be good for our kids.

We also hear from Republicans that some of the people who are going to benefit from a raise in the minimum wage aren't the poorest of the poor. It is not just people below the poverty line, but a lot of other people will make more money, so therefore it must not be a good policy.

First of all, I want to dispel the myth that raising the minimum wage does not affect poverty. It does. Whether

you use the CBO estimate of close to 1 million workers lifted out of poverty or the results of more sophisticated economic research showing that up to 7 million workers will be lifted out of poverty by the time the bill is fully implemented, the evidence unequivocally shows that raising the minimum wage is an effective poverty-reduction tool.

But I will be the first to admit—and gladly, proudly—that this bill doesn't just help people in poverty. It also helps low-income families who are above the poverty line, and that is a good thing. That is a good thing. A lot of low-income working families will get a raise. Here is basically the breakdown: 52 percent of those who will get a raise have family incomes under \$40,000; 31 percent, \$60,000; and 17 percent, \$40 to \$60,000. So, again, it is for the people. Families making \$40,000 a year will actually get a boost. How could that be? One person may be making \$20,000 and the other person may be making \$15,000 or \$18,000. They get a boost in the minimum wage, and they benefit. Is that wrong? I don't think that is wrong at all. These are still struggling families, struggling to make sure they get enough for their kids, make sure they put a little away for a rainy day, help their kids get a good education.

Evidently, our friends the Republicans are saying: Look, we should only have something that benefits those who are in extreme poverty. Then they turn around in the Ryan budget and cut food stamps. What are they saying? You know what they are really saying: Tough luck. You are on your own. If you are a minimum wage worker, tough luck, and we don't want to raise your minimum wage.

Well, 69 percent of the workers who would get a raise under this bill have incomes that are under \$60,000. So, yes, not everybody who is going to get a benefit from this is in poverty, but it will raise nearly 7 million people out of poverty and will also help some of our lower and middle-income families in America. I say that is a good thing, and I am proud that it does.

Consider an example. Jane and Joe—those are not their real names—are from Buchanan County in Iowa. They have two young boys. She is a waitress and earns a few dollars an hour plus tips. He works at a gas station for \$7.25 an hour. They rely on food stamps and Medicaid. They have applied for assistance through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. They work opposite shifts, so they don't have to pay for childcare—and it is difficult to find adequate care for their younger son's medical needs—but this means they hardly ever see each other. A minimum wage increase would allow them to be together more as a family.

David is a pizza cook in Iowa. He is getting married soon and has a child on

the way. He earns \$9 an hour at his pizza job. So what did he do? He took on another job framing houses. He is working about 65 hours a week, no overtime. He has two jobs, so he is working 65 hours a week. That is still not enough. If he worked an entire year at 65 hours a week, he would only earn \$30,400 a year. He is working 65 hours a week. That is technically above the poverty line, but no one would say he is making plenty of money and he couldn't use a raise. He is starting a family.

When we raise the minimum wage, David will get a raise at both of his jobs. At one job he is making \$9 an hour, and at the other job he is making \$9 an hour. He gets a raise at both. He told the Quad City Times that a minimum wage raise would mean quite a bit to improve his life and help his growing family. So, yes, he is making 30,400 bucks a year working 65 hours a week—two jobs.

You say: No, he shouldn't get this minimum wage increase.

That is what I hear from my Republican colleagues. But these are the types of families who are struggling. They need a boost, and we want to give them a boost. We want to help them earn more money—not get more in food stamps or government programs but earn more money to provide for their families and build a better life and have a fair shot at the American dream.

My Republican friends are not only opposing a raise, they are proposing drastic cuts to programs that low-wage workers must rely on to survive. As I said earlier, the Ryan budget cuts more than 3.8 million people off of food stamps, leaving them without any lifeline to put food on the table. By contrast, raising the minimum wage would reduce the food stamp rolls by almost the same amount—as many as 3.6 million people—because it would allow them to earn enough money to buy food for themselves. Both proposals save the taxpayer money, but under our proposal people get to eat. They get to put food on the table.

I have a hard time giving a lot of credence to people who say the increase of the minimum wage doesn't really help people who are in poverty. It is untrue. The professed concern about the poorest of the poor stands in stark contrast with a Republican agenda that would increase poverty and sacrifice a program that helps low-wage working families survive.

Now I want to dispel another myth—that it would hurt small business. We hear about this all the time, but every small business I have talked to says their biggest problem is not payroll costs; it is lack of demand, lack of customers. They don't have customers with money to spend. So raising the minimum wage would help their bottom line.

A lot of small businesses I talk to also tell me they are frustrated, infuriated by the fact that their competi-

tors—the Walmarts and McDonalds and other big businesses—pay rock-bottom wages that force their workers into public assistance. Well, this places responsible small businesses at a competitive disadvantage. It forces them to subsidize their competitors' low wages through their tax dollars. That is not fair. It is bad for workers, small business, and our economy. Small business owners understand this, and that is why the majority of them support this bill. Again, opinion polls—small businesses support the minimum wage 57 percent to 43 percent because they understand that a raise in the minimum wage means their customers are going to have more money to spend on Main Street.

That is why today I received a letter from Business for a Fair Minimum Wage, and 1,000 businesses, large and small, across the country support raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour—1,000 all across America. I ask unanimous consent to have this letter printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

So this letter and the polls show that most small businesses get it. They know that increases in the minimum wage will increase consumer demand. They also know they will have loyal, productive workers who will stay longer and save businesses from having to constantly hire and train new people. Experienced workers who have been on the job longer are more efficient and deliver great customer service that keeps customers coming back.

Finally, some of my Republican colleagues have suggested that we shouldn't raise the minimum wage because they are better served by the earned-income tax credit. I support the earned-income tax credit, and, unlike many of my colleagues on the other side, I actually want to see it expanded so it better serves young and childless workers. Right now, if you are under the age of 25 and you are making the minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour, you are making too much money to qualify for the earned-income tax credit. If you are over age 25 and you make the minimum wage, \$7.25 an hour, and you have one child, you get \$3,250 in earned-income tax credit, plus your childcare tax credit. That gets you up to 19,300 bucks a year. What a deal. But if you are childless, you get no earned-income tax credit.

The veterans who were mentioned earlier—let's say a vet went into the military when he or she was age 18. They got out after 3 years, 21 or 22, and they went out and got a job, a minimum wage job. They do not get the earned-income tax credit.

I am for expanding it. Let's expand the earned-income tax credit to cover childless workers under the age of 25. My Republican colleagues won't support that. They won't support that.

The earned-income tax credit does provide some good support, but think about this: It only does it once a year. The only time you get the earned-in-

come tax credit is after you file your taxes—then you get a refund. That is once a year. Families don't live like that, especially low-income families. They have a budget month after month for heating, for electricity, for fuel, for car repairs, for clothes for the kids. They cannot count on what is going to happen next year. Their income tax credit is good, but it only happens once a year. That is not very good for budgeting purposes for any family. After all, the gas company will turn your gas off in the winter even if you are going to get an earned-income tax credit next April or May. They don't take that into account. They take into account the fact that you cannot pay your bill then. So the best way to help low-income families—minimum wage-earning families plus low-income families—the best way to help them throughout the year is to increase the minimum wage.

Again, all the arguments we hear from the other side of the aisle don't hold water. Today, while what I heard from the other side of the aisle is more talk about the Keystone Pipeline—as if that is going to solve all our problems—all we have to do is build the Keystone Pipeline, and that solves all of our problems. It does? The restaurant worker in Maine, the hospital orderly in South Carolina, the parking lot attendant in Mississippi—they are all going to benefit from the Keystone Pipeline? I don't think so. Somehow that is going to take the place of raising the minimum wage.

So they are trying a little diversion on this Keystone Pipeline. We will provide some jobs, yes, for a couple of years, and when that is over, then what are you left with? And those kinds of jobs are not the kinds of jobs low-income workers would get, which would be pretty high-skilled, high-paying jobs for the Keystone Pipeline. So it doesn't really hold water that the Keystone Pipeline is going to be the end-all and be-all for the economy. It just won't.

Raising the minimum wage is the most commonsense, practical thing we can do right now to help low-income families, give a boost to our economy, and save the taxpayers money. So I hope all my colleagues will do the right thing.

So I hope all of my colleagues will do the right thing tomorrow, allow us to proceed to debate, and vote on increasing the minimum wage. Millions of American families will be watching this vote tomorrow. If they are working hard during the day, they won't be tuning in to C-SPAN, but they will read about it, and they will know what this Senate did about their paychecks and what we did about their desire to have a better life for their families, for their kids, and for their future.

I will also say this. If my Republican colleagues will join with us—at least five or six of them because we need 60 votes to get over the filibuster—if we get five or six, then we can move to the bill. I hope we will get 5 or 6 or 8 or 10 Republicans who will join us. If not, we

will be back. This issue is not going away. I can guarantee we will be back. We will be back again and again and again.

The American people need a raise. CEOs are getting their raises: a 21-percent increase since 2009—a 21-percent increase, an average CEO is paid; zero increase for minimum wage workers. It is now time to play a little catchup ball and provide fairness for low-income workers in America. So that is the vote tomorrow—a values vote, American values, family values, sound economic values. That is what the vote is about tomorrow. I hope and I trust that some of my colleagues on the Republican side will join with us so we can move ahead to give working Americans a raise and a fair shot at the American dream.

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

BUSINESS FOR A FAIR MINIMUM WAGE
FEDERAL SIGN ON STATEMENT

As business owners and executives, we support raising the federal minimum wage to strengthen our economy. The minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour amounts to just \$15,080 a year for health aides, childcare workers, cashiers, security guards and other minimum wage workers. With less buying power than it had in the 1960s, today's minimum wage impoverishes working families and weakens the consumer demand at the heart of our economy.

Raising the minimum wage makes good business sense. Workers are also customers. Minimum wage increases boost sales at local businesses as workers buy needed goods and services they could not afford before. And nothing drives job creation more than consumer demand. Businesses also see cost savings from lower employee turnover and benefit from increased productivity, product quality and customer satisfaction. Increasing the minimum wage will also reduce the strain on our social safety net caused by inadequate wages.

A recent national poll shows that 67 percent of small business owners support increasing the federal minimum wage and adjusting it yearly to keep pace with the cost of living. The most rigorous studies of the impact of actual minimum wage increases show they do not cause job loss—whether during periods of economic growth or during recessions. The minimum wage would be over \$10 if it had kept up with the rising cost of living since the 1960s instead of falling behind.

We support gradually raising the federal minimum wage over three years to at least \$10.10 an hour, and then adjusting it annually for inflation to keep up with the cost of living. A fair minimum wage makes good sense for our businesses, our workforce, our communities and our nation.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I rise today to address the idea of raising the Federal minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour to \$10.10 an hour. But first I wish to spend a few moments talking about the state of the Senate and why the latest push for a higher Federal minimum wage isn't an issue that appears to be driven by solving the underlying economic problems our Nation faces.

Over the past few weeks, the Senate majority leader has relished in making personal attacks on two private citizens, David and Charles Koch, on this Senate floor. He has used the Senate floor for the purpose of attempting to assassinate their character. They have committed no crimes, although the majority leader appears to treat it as a crime that they don't support him politically. Many political observers can see this for exactly what it is: a desperate political strategy designed to distract from the economic misery that is being visited on the American people by a failed economic agenda. The Senate majority leader is using the Senate floor to run a political campaign against entrepreneurs and philanthropists who have dared to stand and speak out against the failed Obama economic agenda. The reason he is doing so should not surprise anyone. On substance, the record of this administration cannot be defended. They can't talk about how great ObamaCare is working because millions of Americans have lost their health insurance plans and lost the doctors they like, despite the President's repeated promises to the contrary. Health insurance plans have skyrocketed in States all across this country, especially for young people in the individual market who are seeing their rates sometimes double or triple. And they certainly can't talk about the state of the economy.

Today, we have the lowest labor force participation since 1978. The official unemployment rate is 6.7 percent, but that doesn't capture the millions who are underemployed. When we include them, the number rises to 12.7 percent. The rates of poverty in the United States are right now at historic highs—15 percent. As CNN recently noted, this is “the first time the poverty rate has remained at or above 15 percent 3 years running since 1965.”

Among full-time workers, there are more than 3.8 million fewer employed today than there were before the recession. The number of people not in the labor force today is at its highest level since 1978. Over 91 million people are not in the American workforce. Roughly three of five working-age Americans have jobs today. This is a travesty. It is a denial of the American dream to millions of people across this country.

Long-term unemployment persists. Nearly 36 percent of the unemployed are long-term unemployed. When President Obama took office, the average number of weeks that an individual was unemployed was 19.8. Today, the average duration is 35.6 weeks.

It is also a good thing the President has begun to talk about income inequality. It is a good thing because income inequality has increased dramatically under President Obama. Today, the top 1 percent in our economy earn a higher share of our income than any year since 1928, and those who are being hurt the most in the Obama economy are the most vulnerable

among us—the people who are struggling. The working class Hispanics, African Americans, and single moms are the ones paying the price for the great stagnation in which we find ourselves.

According to Gallup, the percentage of Americans who describe themselves as middle or upper class fell 8 points between 2008 and 2012. President Obama's terrible economy doesn't discriminate. It hurts Americans from every demographic. On the President's watch, women have lower incomes today. The median income for women has dropped by \$733 since President Obama took office, and, indeed, poverty among women has gone up markedly under President Obama. The poverty rate for women has increased from 14.4 percent when the President took office to 16.3 percent. In real terms, that means 3.7 million more American women are in poverty today than when the President took office.

The President is not responding to any of this. Instead, we see the President, we see the Senate majority leader shifting to the topic of a mandated Federal minimum wage in an effort to change the subject. But the undeniable reality, the undeniable truth is that if the President succeeded in raising the minimum wage, it would cost jobs for the most vulnerable. The people who have been hurt by this Obama economy would be hurt worse by the minimum wage proposal before this body.

In 2013, the President, in his State of the Union address, proposed raising the minimum wage to \$9. A year later, the request has magically changed to \$10.10. There is no economic justification. The only reason is politics. I suppose if the approval ratings of Democratic Members of this body continue to fall, in another month we will see a proposal for \$15 an hour and then maybe \$20 or \$25 an hour.

But I think the American people are tired of empty political show votes.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says that raising the minimum wage could cause the loss of 500,000 to 1 million jobs. I want the American people to realize, and every Member of this Senate, that votes for the minimum wage is voting to tell up to 1 million Americans: Your jobs don't matter to me because I am voting to take away your job.

By the way, this view is not only the view of the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. On March 12, 2014, over 500 economists, including three Nobel Laureates, sent a letter to Congress that said the minimum wage is a poorly targeted anti-poverty measure. I will give one example from my home State. GO-Burgers, which is a Texas company with six Burger King restaurants, analyzed the effect of the minimum wage increase on their employees and their businesses. The last minimum wage increase we have seen was from \$5.85 an hour in 2007 to \$7.25 an hour in July of 2009, and 2010 was the first complete calendar year that GO-Burgers had to analyze the impact

on their workers. GO-Burgers discovered that raising the minimum wage by 23.93 percent caused these Burger King restaurants to reduce the available hours worked by 24.98 percent, for a net sum loss in hours and wages for the typical employee.

Let me repeat that. The experience in these Burger King restaurants was the employees were worse off after the minimum wage was raised because their hours got cut in direct response to the increase. These six restaurants eliminated over 40 jobs and reduced the average number of hours worked per employee. In total, these six Burger King restaurants reduced the man-hours allocated by over 60,000 hours in 2010. Sadly, the people that bear the brunt of that are not the rich and powerful. They are not those who walk the corridors of power in Washington, DC, and have gotten fat and happy under the Obama administration. The people who would bear the brunt if this bill were passed would be, to a substantial degree, young African American teenagers and young Hispanic teenagers. Right now, young minorities, if we look at unemployment rates by race—just looking at the official unemployment rates, Anglos have an unemployment rate of 5.8 percent; Hispanics, 7.9 percent; African Americans, 12.4 percent—nearly double that in the white community. It is even more heart-breaking among teenagers. White teens currently have an unemployment rate of 18.3 percent, but African American teenagers have an unemployment rate of 36.1 percent—36.1 percent. Every Senator who votes yes is voting with an absolute certainty that hundreds of thousands of workers, including a great many African American teenagers and a great many Hispanic teenagers, will be laid off as a consequence of their vote. I would challenge any of the Senators in this Chamber to look in the eyes of those African American teenagers, those Hispanic teenagers who are looking for a better opportunity.

If my colleagues detect a note of passion in my voice as I discuss this, it is because in my family this is not an abstract, hypothetical situation. Fifty-seven years ago, when my father fled Cuba and came to Texas at the age of 18, penniless, not speaking English, his first job was working in the restaurant industry as a dishwasher making 50 cents an hour. The restaurant industry had been such a terrific avenue for climbing the economic ladder, for achieving the American dream. My dad washed dishes at 50 cents an hour to pay his way through college to go on and start a small business to work toward the American dream. If the majority leader had his way, if the minimum wage were jacked up, if back in 1957 the restaurant where my father worked were forced to pay every worker \$2 an hour, the odds are very high that restaurant would have fired my dad and bought a dishwasher instead. It was that entry-level job that gave him the grip on the first rung of the

economic ladder that led him to pull to the second and the third and the fourth. This bill, if it were to pass, would hammer those on the bottom of the economic ladder and would take away jobs from the most vulnerable among us.

So what should we do instead? We can talk about the problems we have in this country, but we need to talk proactively about better solutions. Fortunately, we are on the cusp of a great American energy renaissance.

I have introduced legislation to remove the barriers to developing the abundant energy resources we have in this country—barriers that, if removed, would allow the creation of millions of high-paying jobs.

The discussion before this Chamber is whether to raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour. But even if it passed, that is not the Obama minimum wage. Rather, the real Obama minimum wage is \$0.00 an hour. We have right now the lowest labor participation rate since 1978.

To the millions of Americans who have lost their job because of \$1.7 trillion in new taxes, because of crushing regulations, this is the Obama minimum wage: \$0.00—not the political window dressing of \$10.10; the reality, the hard, brutal reality.

Last week, I was in Nebraska at a rally. A woman named Barb came up to me. She hugged my neck. She said: TED, I am a single mom. I have six little kids at home. My husband left me, and he is not paying child support. I am working five jobs, trying to keep my kids fed, trying to keep them with clothes on their backs. Barb had tears in her eyes.

One of the most brutal consequences of ObamaCare is it has forced millions of Americans like Barb into part-time work because the threshold for ObamaCare is 30 hours a week.

So instead of having one or two jobs, Barb and millions of other single moms are going from one job to another, to another, to another, and they are not spending the time with their kids. This is the brutal reality of the Obama minimum wage.

But, Madam President, I am happy to tell you, there is a better alternative. The better alternative, I would note—far better than zero, far better than the promise of \$10.10 an hour—is \$46.98. Madam President, \$46.98—that is the average hourly wage in the oil and gas industry in the State of North Dakota.

Every one of us should want to see millions more jobs at \$46.98 an hour, and we should want millions rescued from the Obama minimum wage of \$0.00 an hour. That is the choice before this body—of expanding this American energy renaissance, creating opportunity.

Let me tell you, in the State of Texas—Texas is an incredible example—there is a reason why 1,400 people a day are moving to Texas, moving from high-tax, high-regulation States, represented by many of our friends on the Democratic side of the aisle. They

are coming to Texas because Texas is where the jobs are and Texas is where the salaries are.

Oil and gas industry jobs in Texas paid, on average, 150 percent more than other private sector jobs in Texas—\$128,000 a year compared to \$51,000 a year—in 2012.

In the 23 counties atop the Eagle Ford shale in South Texas, average wages for all citizens have grown by 14.6 percent annually since 2005.

The top five counties in the Eagle Ford shale region have experienced an average 63-percent annual rate of wage growth.

How many millions of Americans would love to see 63 percent annual wage growth?

In Texas, the average pay for an entry-level truckdriver ranges from \$36,000 to \$45,000, but it rises to \$50,000 to \$70,000 in the oilfield. These are kids straight out of high school making \$70,000 a year.

As reported in an AP story from March 28, 2014: “James LeBas, economist for the Texas Oil and Gas Association, said the industry directly employed 416,000 employees in 2013 and they averaged \$120,000 a year in wages.”

As a separate nation, Texas right now would rank as the ninth largest oil-producing country in the world.

Not only can energy development bring good-paying jobs, it can also help our children and schools. Cotulla, TX, was once one of the poorest districts in Texas, but now—because of the Eagle Ford shale energy development—it is one of the richest. The taxes that are coming from the energy development mean money for fixing schools, for hiring teachers, for paying them more, and for purchasing technology in the classrooms.

One thing that is striking is what has happened across the country. If you look, this is a map I have in the Chamber of changes in median household income by county from 2007 to 2012. Madam President, 2007 to 2012 is a long time.

On this map, green indicates that the median household income has gone up; yellow indicates no statistically significant change; and red indicates it has gone down.

Overlaid on this map is an overlay of the geological shale formations in this country. What is striking about looking at median incomes in the United States is where median incomes have gone up. This is almost exactly a geological shale map of the United States.

You can see median incomes have gone up up here in the Bakken shale in and around North Dakota. You can see the Permian Basin shale, the Eagle Ford shale, the Barnett shale. You can see the Marcellus shale. Green, green, green, green—median income going up—for everyone in the county median income going up where energy production is occurring.

Now, strikingly, the Marcellus shale extends north to New York, and yet for

the entire State of New York, you can see there is not a county in the State of New York where median income has gone up. Why? Well, one of the main reasons is the Democratic politicians in New York have prohibited developing those natural resources because they ban fracking.

So in Pennsylvania, Pennsylvanians apparently would like jobs, would like higher median incomes. They are seeing the benefits. But in New York, New Yorkers are not because Democratic politicians in New York have prohibited developing those resources.

I would note that one of the most promising areas is the Monterey shale in California—abundant resources—and you would note, in the entire State of California there is not one green county. That is because California, likewise—even though they have those resources, the Democratic politicians there have concluded Californians do not want jobs, they do not want higher incomes, and they are going to prohibit developing their natural resources rather than providing for the very real suffering that is being caused.

I would note, there is one striking exception from this pattern being largely a geological shale formation of this country, and that is the bright green on the map that is located right here where we are standing—the District of Columbia and the surrounding areas.

Let me tell you, it is a good time to be in and around government. The lobbyists, the consultants, those who make money on the growing and growing and growing Federal Government spending and debt, are getting fatter and happier every day. You look at the rest of the country, and you see stagnation, you see median income falling.

Rather than engaging in political games—driven by polling done by the Democratic Senatorial Committee on this minimum wage bill that, if passed, would only hurt low-income African-American and Hispanic teenagers—instead, we ought to come together with bipartisan unanimity to say: We will stand with the American people to bring millions of jobs. We will stand with the American people to raise median income. We will stand with the American people to make it easier for people who are struggling to achieve the American dream.

Therefore, I have proposed an amendment to replace the text of S. 2223, the minimum wage act, with the text of the American Energy Renaissance Act that I have introduced, S. 2170.

We should all come together and vote on removing the government barriers, opening new Federal lands and resources, developing high-paying, promising jobs that expand opportunity.

In conclusion, let me say this debate comes down to two numbers. It is not a complicated debate. This debate comes down to two numbers. On my left, the real Obama minimum wage: \$0.00 an hour. I am sorry to say, in this Democratic Senate, this Chamber is largely empty. There is no discussion of funda-

mental tax reform or regulatory reform, of removing the barriers that have caused the lowest labor force participation since 1978.

Instead, we are debating a bill to increase unemployment. This minimum-wage bill—the nonpartisan CBO has told us more people would be paid \$0.00 an hour under the bill before this Chamber. No wonder Congress's approval rating is 8, 10, 12 percent, when you take the greatest challenge facing Americans right now—the need for economic growth and jobs—and the U.S. Senate in Democratic control will not even talk about providing real relief there. No wonder people are disgusted with the U.S. Congress.

You want to know what this debate is about? Compare \$0.00 an hour to \$46.98 an hour. I want to see millions of Americans making \$40, \$50, \$60 an hour, providing for their kids, having a better future.

As I travel this country, over and over again, men and women come up to me. They look me in the eyes and say: Ted, I am scared. I am scared that we are bankrupting this country. I am scared that my kids and grandkids are not going to have the future, the opportunity, the freedom we have been blessed to have.

This U.S. Senate has an opportunity to address that. We should pass the American Energy Renaissance Act. We should stop making it harder for working Americans, but, instead, we should come together for jobs and economic growth.

Thank you, Madam President.

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

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF THEODORE DAVID CHUANG TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

Mr. REID. Madam President, I now move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 591.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Theodore David Chuang, of Maryland, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maryland.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented

under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Theodore David Chuang, of Maryland, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maryland.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Elizabeth Warren, Robert Menendez, Barbara Mikulski, Jack Reed, Richard Blumenthal, Carl Levin, Christopher Murphy, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Sheldon Whitehouse, Patty Murray, Thomas R. Carper, John D. Rockefeller IV, Jeff Merkley, Richard J. Durbin, Benjamin L. Cardin.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call under rule XXII be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. I now move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF GEORGE JARROD HAZEL TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

Mr. REID. I now proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 592.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of George Jarrod Hazel, of Maryland, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maryland.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of George Jarrod Hazel, of Maryland, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maryland.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Elizabeth Warren, Robert Menendez, Barbara Mikulski, Jack Reed, Richard Blumenthal, Carl Levin, Christopher Murphy, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Sheldon Whitehouse, Patty Murray, Thomas R. Carper, John D. Rockefeller IV, Jeff Merkley, Richard J. Durbin, Benjamin L. Cardin.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call under rule XXII be waived.