

again that I cannot even maintain where I am. I do not think it is fair, you are not treating me fairly, and I am going on strike, which I am allowed to do under the law.

It amazes me why we are even having this fight. When is the last time any of the people in this Chamber picked up a paper and read about how unions and organized labor have taken such horrible advantage of people? All they have done for the last 10 to 12 years is given concessions and increased their productivity. And now, we have reached the point that—to steal a phrase from Mr. Stockman, who commented on the Reagan tax policy—these folks are like pigs in a trough now. They not only want them to continue to give at the office, but they want to take away the last thing they have under the law. I, quite frankly, did not ever think this would be a debate we would be having on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

Again, look at all the strikes that are taking place nationwide. Look at the effects of the strikes taking place nationwide. Look at what is being requested by those strikes that are taking place nationwide. I will lay you 8 to 5 that 85 percent of the people would say what is being asked is reasonable. They may or may not agree, but it is reasonable.

No one is even making the claims anymore, I say to my friend from Massachusetts, that this is some muscle-bound organized labor, who is just out there ripping off everyone and intimidating companies. This is just people who are just trying to be in a position where they can—to use the expression of my friend from Massachusetts—“keep their heads above the water.” And now they are being told they do not even have a right. What prompted me to say all this was the word used by the Senator from Connecticut: Fear. Can you imagine the fear and intimidation of an individual who, in today's circumstances, thinking that after roughly 60 years of practice under the NLRB, they are going to be put in the position if they even stand up and try to stop further erosion, that the alternative for them in an environment where there are no other jobs is that they lose their job permanently? That is simply not fair.

Our former colleague from California, the present Governor of California, ran an ad I remember seeing. He was talking about immigration, but I will take the words he used and apply it here, because I disagreed with his view on immigration. He said something like this: Some people are playing by the rules. They are doing it the American way. Other people are not playing by the rules and they are being rewarded for it. That is not the American way.

Striker replacement in circumstances where there is no evidence that there has been a violation of the labor laws is not the American way.

It is a reflection of greed, the greed and avarice of those who want to make a fundamental change that working women and men are put into their proper place, from their perspective. I think it is, quite frankly, outrageous.

The Senator said, “Who is going to stand up and fight for them?” Well, I know of no two people who have been better champions of their cause in making sure they are never left unspoken for than the Senator from Massachusetts and the Senator from Connecticut, and I compliment them.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Delaware for his comments and for his historical perspective. I think the Senator has, in his brief but I think pointed comments, reflected what this issue and what this battle is really all about. In the last day or so, as we focused on it, there have been those who say, We do not understand why we are talking about these broader themes of equity, about fear, about the real America. This is really just an Executive order.

The Senator has stated very clearly and effectively what really is at issue on the floor of the U.S. Senate and why this battle is so important. I thank the Senator for his statement and for his excellent support for working families, which has been a trademark of his career in the Senate.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to go into morning business for the purposes of discussing an issue totally unrelated to this, the introduction of a bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAIG). Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I thank you.

(The remarks of Mr. BIDEN pertaining to the introduction of S. 564 are located in today's RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I plan to speak about the striker replacement amendment that is before the Senate. But before I do, I ask unanimous consent that I may speak on another matter for about 15 minutes without losing my right to the floor.

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

Mrs. BOXER. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

THE CALIFORNIA DISASTERS

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, before I get into the issue that my colleague, Senator KENNEDY, and others have addressed for the past few legislative days, I felt it is important to discuss briefly the disasters that have hit my State of California. I will tell you that one wonders when we are going to stop seeing these floods and these earthquakes, fires, and droughts. It seems as if our State is for some reason just get-

ting much more than its share of these natural disasters. But it was interesting today that the Senate task force presented its report on disaster funding. I am a member of that task force, and we have been working hard to come up with some solutions as to how are we going to deal with these future disasters.

I want to say that the President moved very quickly to declare 39 counties disaster areas eligible for both individual and family emergency grants, and for infrastructure repairs. Federal Emergency Management Director James Lee Witt once again has proved that he is someone who wants to cut through the redtape that used to accompany FEMA wherever it went in this country. The President sent him out along with Acting Agriculture Secretary Rominger, and with Leon Panetta, the Chief of Staff who is so familiar with California. They saw for themselves the damage that we are facing.

I have to say that when Leon Panetta saw Monterey County, which he represented in Congress for many years, I am sure his heart stopped for a minute because so much damage greeted him. We have infrastructure problems there. We have communities shut off. We have crop damage to fruits and vegetables which is going to cause a lot of financial harm to the farmers. But also we are going to feel it in our pocketbooks—as consumers when we go to the stores.

We have already seen 2,900 applications for assistance from the storms that started on January 3. That was the first one, and then we had the one February 10. Those resulted in 90,000 applications for assistance. More than \$51 million in emergency housing assistance checks have been mailed for the first disaster. In addition, \$40 million in Small Business Administration loans have been approved for 2,000 people for losses to homes and businesses.

I cannot count how many times I have stood in this U.S. Senate and in the House telling my colleagues about these disasters. It just does not get any easier.

Interstate 5, a major north-south economic artery in the West, is still closed. I think many people saw the tragic photographs of cars that plunged into the waters and were swept away when a bridge failed. And we are trying very hard to get a temporary bridge constructed there.

We are looking at crop losses of about \$300 million or more. This storm was very, very harsh on the crops. I talked about the fruits and vegetables. To be specific, the severe losses are lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, almonds, and strawberries. California is the salad bowl of our Nation, and we got hit very, very hard. We have had damage to vineyards of \$11.5 million. I have spoken to local elected officials in Monterey County, in Napa County, throughout the southern California region, and the Los Angeles area.