

manufacturing jobs have been lost in the last few years. These are jobs that are good paying jobs, provide good health benefits and good retirement security. We simply cannot afford to let these jobs leave our country or be lost for good.

In the meantime, while we are fighting the battle for manufacturing jobs, we should not go home for the holidays having failed to act to maintain the very modest Federal unemployment benefits program. I know there are many in this body who are determined to see us have the opportunity to act to extend this program before we leave for the recess.

I thank the Chair and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—
S. 1839

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I rise to echo the comments of the Senator from Michigan. I think it critically important that Congress not adjourn for the year without addressing unemployment benefits for Americans who, unfortunately, have been out of work for some time now.

The Senator from Michigan is very conscious of the fact that his State, with 7.6 percent unemployment, has not seen much economic relief in this jobless recovery. I can tell him that the State of Washington has seen very little relief, as we are at 7 percent unemployment rate. The States around us—Oregon is at 7.6 percent unemployment; Alaska is at 7.3 percent unemployment—also continue to suffer.

The Pacific Northwest has been very hard hit by the downturn in our economy. While some people would like to say that is part of the process, I would argue that losing jobs in the aerospace industry after 9/11—35,000 jobs just at Boeing alone—is no fault of individual workers.

I guarantee you, individual workers in my State would rather have a paycheck than an unemployment check. But if they are not getting an unemployment check, if they do not have the ability to take care of mortgage payments and other bills, it affects our overall economy. That is why for a long period of time, not only have people believed that those who pay into unemployment benefits should get a package for taking care of them during downturns in our economy but they also think unemployment benefits are a great stimulus for an economy that is sagging.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle continue to refuse to bring up an extension of unemployment benefits. That means by that December 31 of this year, some 90,000 unemployed people per week will exhaust their regular benefits. That means in the first 6 months of 2004 there may be as many as 2 million people affected by this loss of benefits.

This issue is so important to me because we were in this same situation last year. This side of the aisle said, given that this country has lost so many jobs, we must do something to take care of laid off workers. We must extend the Federal unemployment benefits program. We were successful in convincing the Senate, with Senator NICKLES' help, to pass a bill out of the Senate extending unemployment benefits, but the Republicans in the House refused to take up the measure and people in my State were without unemployment benefits at the end of the year.

If somehow my colleagues think that people didn't make very tough decisions because we left them without any guarantee that the program would continue, they did. I had constituents who took money out of their pension plans—at a 30 percent penalty—at the end of December to live on because they thought their benefits had been exhausted. They were forced to trade off long-term security for short-term economic need, only because the Federal Government did not stand up and do its job.

We had a similar situation in the 1990s in which we had high unemployment. What did we do to act responsibly? For 30 months, the Federal program offered to unemployed Americans a richer benefit than we are offering today—20 weeks in the 1990s, compared to 13 weeks today. Well, guess what was different in the 1990s. During that time period, 2.9 million net jobs were created. Since this recession started, we've lost 2.4 million jobs.

The 1990s recession covered both a Republican administration—the first Bush administration—and a Democratic administration. Both those administrations committed—for 30 months, and with a richer Federal program of 20 weeks—to take care of Americans until this economy recovered. As the economy recovered and 2.9 million new jobs were added, then we ended the program.

How do our actions today compare to that recession? Well, we have only had 22 months of this program, so it has not lasted as long as the previous program of Federal unemployment benefits. It has been 8 months shorter. The benefits are less, only 13 weeks instead of 20. So it is not as rich a program.

The bottom line is what has happened to our jobs during the time period. In this time period, instead of adding 2.9 million jobs, we have actually lost 2.4 million jobs. So if the argument is that it's time to stop the Federal extension program when new jobs have been created and Americans are going back to work, then obviously 22 months has not been enough. People are not going back to work. We have lost 2.4 million jobs. If somebody thinks it is time to cut off this program, they are dead wrong. To do this, going into the holiday season, is just like giving American workers a lump of coal in their stocking. It's like say-

ing, no, thank you, for the hard work you have provided to American companies in the past and for paying into the unemployment insurance system.

It is totally irresponsible for us, as a legislative body, to pass all of these tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, do all of these programs for special interests, give subsidies, and then leave American workers without the benefit program that was designed to help them in economic downturns.

This is not a Republican or Democrat issue. We have had a Republican administration and a Democratic administration—the first Bush administration and the Clinton administration—who said this is a great policy, but somehow this policy is now falling on deaf ears. During the 1990s, when we ran this program for 30 months at richer benefits, we had an improvement in the unemployment rate of 1.2 percent before we ended the program. It was yet another sign, in addition to the 2.9 million net jobs added that it was time to end the program.

As I said earlier, we have lost 2.4 million jobs during this time period and the unemployment rate has improved less than 1 percent—only .4 percent. So we do not have the data, we do not have the evidence that things are getting better. And yet somehow now, even though we cannot demonstrate that things are really getting better for workers, some people on the other side of the aisle want to hedge their bets and say, too bad for you. And they want to say this at the end of the year the holiday season, when people are making some of their most important financial decisions and expenditures.

I think it is outrageous. It is outrageous that this body is so cold hearted to the hard-working men and women of America. Let's remember how we got into this situation. Through no fault of their own, and in particular for New York and Washington State, resulting from the unfortunate circumstances of 9/11 and downturns of specific industries as a result of that—laid-off workers are being left high and dry.

Somehow we want to put American workers out in the cold just because a very tragic event happened to us at the national level? We do not want to say to those companies and to those individuals, we understand the hard economic times they have fallen on? That is what the Federal unemployment extension program is about.

There are additional reasons we are crazy not to extend this program. One is that we have yet to see the economic results we want. Unemployment insurance is an economic stimulus. For every dollar spent on unemployment benefits, it generates \$2.15 of economic stimulus. I argue that one of the best economic stimulus programs we have had in the last 22 months has likely been Federal unemployment benefits. These benefits have allowed millions of Americans to make their house payments, to pay their medical bills, to

pay for the various essentials they need to do to exist. And that is what they are basically doing. They are just getting by. They are just getting by until new jobs are created.

I say to the administration: Where are all of these new jobs? The bottom line is still 2.4 million jobs lost. If the administration wants to curtail this economic program, at least stand up and be as responsive as the last two administrations were and create the new jobs. In that recession, 2.9 million jobs were created and so, of course, Americans could go back to work and, of course, they could get off the Federal program.

We have a big challenge before us. And although this bill does not directly address this, we must recognize that parts of our economy are retooling. Parts of our economy are demanding a more creative approach to jobs that are lost as industries are transitioning. It will take almost 2 years to regain the jobs we have lost. Why not prop up our economy by adding needed stimulus? Why not give American workers a return on a program they paid into, and why not honor them by admitting they would rather have job creation than unemployment checks and get about going back to stimulating our economy with real job creation?

None of that is happening. We are all now about ready to adjourn to some date uncertain. I do not know if it is January or a sooner time, but America was listening last year. At the holiday season, as December 31 rolled around, Americans were furious that this program was being curtailed. People made very serious decisions. Why make them live through those circumstances again and then come back in January or February? After we have all made it clear this was a program that was much needed, why not do the responsible thing now and pass these unemployment benefits.

I ask unanimous consent that the Finance Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1839 and that the Senate then proceed to the immediate consideration of that legislation; that the Cantwell amendment, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that the bill, as amended, be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). On behalf of the leadership, in my capacity as the Senator from the State of Idaho, I object.

The objection is heard.

Ms. CANTWELL. I do not know how many more objections we are going to hear before we give American workers their right to unemployment benefits. We need to own up to the fact that this body cannot pass tax cuts for the wealthiest, incentivize other programs, and then not take care of our obligation to workers in America—all of whom would, in the end, certainly rather have a paycheck.

I hope this body will come to its senses, address this very important issue, and not leave any Americans at the end of the year without the resources to pay their bills and without helping them be an effective part of our economy.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE 101st AIRBORNE AIR ASSAULT DIVISION OF THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to honor the Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne, Air Assault Division, based at Fort Campbell, KY. As you all know, two Black Hawk helicopters from the 101st Airborne collided in the night sky over Mosul, Iraq on November 15, 2003. Tragically, all 17 soldiers on board the helicopters perished in the incident. This last Saturday, two additional soldiers from the Division were killed while they patrolled the streets of Mosul.

These tragic incidents bring the total number of Screaming Eagles lost in Iraq to 55. My prayers and deepest sympathies go out to the families and friends of these brave Americans.

Last month, in one of the most moving experiences of my career, I met with some of these soldiers in Mosul, where the 101st is responsible for keeping the peace in the northern part of Iraq.

These heroes shared with me their thoughts about America's struggle to bring peace and security to a long-oppressed nation, and their patriotism and passion for their mission shone through the dust and grime that accumulates with sustained operations far from the comforts of home.

Truth be told, I did not expect to encounter the extraordinary high levels of dedication and morale I witnessed in Mosul and elsewhere in Iraq. Throughout that country, I conversed with soldiers who witnessed first-hand the reality of war, and who knew friends injured or killed in combat.

It was obvious that the thoughtful young men and women I met in Iraq have spent long hours coming to grips with these harsh realities, yet remain committed to their mission and deeply believe that what they are doing is right and just. An example: at the 101st Airborne's headquarters in Mosul, I witnessed a video that detailed the Division's operations in Iraq. The moving video is dedicated to—and features footage of—Screaming Eagles who have lost their lives during the liberation of

Iraq, and it is clear these lost heroes are never far from the thoughts of the soldiers of the 101st. Indeed, these heroes remain a source of poignant motivation for their comrades.

For our Armed Forces, sad memories of fallen colleagues are inescapable, but so too is the evidence that the Screaming Eagles are on the right side of history. From water coolers in Washington, DC to New York City newsrooms, many of us forget that our troops were present at the moment Iraq was liberated from the tortuous grip of Saddam Hussein. They have since witnessed firsthand the birth of a democratic process and the reawakening of a people enslaved for generations by fear and oppression. The Screaming Eagles have worked side by side with Iraqis to help rebuild a shattered country, and their joint success in this regard is truly remarkable.

The brave soldiers I met in Mosul know America is in Iraq for the right reasons, and that despite setbacks and tragic incidents we are winning the peace in Iraq, just as surely as we won the war.

At one point during my visit, one of the Screaming Eagles came up to me and introduced himself as a captain who hailed from my hometown of Louisville. In the entryway of one of Saddam's former palaces—now serving as the 101st Airborne's division headquarters—he presented me with a flag of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and recalled how he brought it with him as the division left Fort Campbell and fought north from Kuwait, up through Baghdad, and on to Mosul.

This captain spoke with well-earned pride about the role he and his fellow soldiers played in liberating the Iraqi people and winning the war. And he spoke of the progress they were making in winning over the hearts and minds of these newly free people by treating the Iraqis with a level of dignity and respect they have not received for generations.

While in Mosul, I met with the newly elected governing council of Iraq's Nineveh Province, and I can tell you that the respect and appreciation these democratically elected leaders have for the U.S. efforts is ample evidence the Screaming Eagles are indeed winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people.

Indeed, both this democratically elected new government and that young captain would want us all to understand that America did the right thing to help 25 million Iraqis to realize a life without fear. I can assure you that this captain and his fellow soldiers—although mindful of the great risks and danger inherent in their work—are committed to finishing the job by winning the peace and helping the Iraqis to get back on their feet.

I keep this soldier's flag—still covered in dust and dirt from its historic travels—in my office as a reminder that when America sets out to accomplish a difficult task, it finishes the