

and women of this reserve unit who were called on to run this prison represented a military police unit without training in detention and corrections.

There is never an excuse for this inhumane and barbaric conduct but the fact is, time and again since we invaded Iraq, we have given assignments to our men and women in uniform, assignments that they were never trained to do. We have asked them to establish civil order in Iraq when they were trained to invade and defeat an enemy. We asked them to be traffic cops and university security. We have asked them to guard museums. We have asked them to do things that were beyond their skill and beyond their training, and this is another example.

Second, let me tell you this. We cannot ignore the reality that the people we are still holding in detention, because of the war on terrorism, are the next questions to be asked by the world. If this happened in Iraq at the Abu Ghraib prison, what is happening at Guantanamo Bay? We have to be prepared to answer those questions. We have to be transparent and open in our treatment of these prisoners, and we have to accept the obvious. We have held and detained hundreds of people without charge, without benefit of counsel, and without communication, in some cases for more than 2 years. There reaches a point where the United States needs to either charge these people with wrongdoing or release them.

We are going to be asked by the world: If Abu Ghraib was a scandal, how are you treating the other detainees and the other prisoners who are involved as well?

We should accept the reality, too, that what happened in this prison, sadly, is going to make our mission in Iraq that much more difficult and that much more dangerous for the brave men and women in uniform who still serve our country so well as I speak. It has become a recruiting poster, the photos of this abuse and torture, a recruiting poster for those who hate us around the world. Some would say we need to condemn it by resolution; we need to tear down the prison. All of these are important words and important symbols. But we need to do more. We need to try to establish bridges of communication and bridges of understanding with Arab States and Muslim states and the people who live there who, in these images of torture, will believe they see the real United States. That is not who we are. We are a caring people, and we need to demonstrate that.

Beyond tearing down buildings, can we talk about building things up? Can we talk about investing our resources and talents in the United States, to reach out, as the President has asked, in the global AIDS fight, to Muslim nations that are struggling, to reach out to struggling countries, Muslim and otherwise, to provide school feeding programs for children, to once again

demonstrate to the world who we really are? Blowing up a building is one thing, but building a life and building a school and building a health clinic is another. It is clear evidence of who we are as an American people.

I look at the situation in Iraq today. It is much more troublesome than it was even a week ago. In April, the bloodiest month in this war for America since our invasion, we lost more troops, we suffered more injuries than in any single period. I make it my responsibility to try—and sometimes I cannot—to call every Illinoisan who has lost a soldier. God bless them, every single one of them, so proud of their son or daughter, husband, wife, killed in this conflict. And they should be proud. They have served our country. They should be proud of the contribution a member of their family has made to this country.

However, this situation is getting perilously complicated and so far from the resolution we hoped for when we made the invasion of this country. Our war on terrorism is going to be complicated as well. We need to develop a sound strategy for the Iraqi situation and for our war on terrorism. We need to concede that many of the things that seemed so obvious and so easy have failed us so far.

We heard predictions early on that the Iraqis would greet us with open arms, move toward democracy, and we would start turning over control of the nation to them. It sounded like a great goal. Clearly, we were wrong. It has not happened. It is not likely to happen soon.

The administration will ask for more money—\$25 billion—to support our troops. Although I voted against this war, I will continue to vote for every dollar this administration asks for to keep our troops safe and to bring them home safely. We must continue to ask the hard questions: What is the strategy? What is the plan? Where is the leadership? How can we bring our troops home from Iraq with a mission truly accomplished?

Sadly, today we are further from that goal than we were just a few short days ago. I hope that during the course of the debate on this important resolution on the scandalous activity at the prison we can find Senators of both political parties coming forward, trying to find common ground to reach our goal in the Middle East.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I take it we will be voting on a resolution with respect to the Saddam prison.

It strikes me, what I have just heard in the last few minutes, as a typical

copout from responsibility. We hide the deficit. We do not pay the costs of the war. We hide behind all these other things. Now all we have to do is remove the building, and if they cannot be aware of it, they will not care.

This thing happened in January. What we have on foot is the exact “torture-gate,” I guess you would call it. From January to May, we have not heard anything about it. This Senator has not heard anything about it. Now we have all of these “whereas” clauses, and this is what Saddam did, and it did not bother us. We did not put in a resolution about it. In fact, we went there and spent good money to clean it up and we put a prison there.

Maybe after we take some responsibility, then maybe this kind of resolution would be in order. The first act and the first reaction officially of the Senate is going to be, let’s tear down the building. The building is not at fault. It is the people in the building who are at fault.

I will not be able to vote for this nonsense. I have never seen a crowd that absolutely will not accept responsibility for the war, for the costs of the war, the cost of government, and now the responsibility here. Their first reaction is a lot of “whereas” clauses about Saddam and nothing about us, other than that is not our way of life, and everything else of that kind. Let’s find out that is not our way of life by fixing some responsibility in this Government. Once that is done, bring on the “whereas” clauses about Saddam’s prison.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

EXTENSION OF EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the unemployment trust fund issue that has us basically stalled on Senate business; the fact that several weeks ago we had an unemployment benefit amendment that was part of the UC request for amendments to the FSC/ETI bill done, and yesterday it was in the queue to be considered; then after it was actually offered on the floor, after 10 minutes of debate and discussion, basically the amendment was pulled. Somebody objected to scheduling a vote on it.

For weeks we have been assuming there was a finite list of amendments and it was agreed that this amendment was going to be voted on. I don’t even

know that we need to have more time to discuss it.

I know now that there are those on the other side of the aisle who don't want to have a vote on it. Maybe leadership will be able to work out an agreement to have a vote. But when we have moved toward giving the American people some hope that we were going to discuss unemployment benefits in support of those millions of workers who have lost their jobs, they find out now there may not be a vote at all.

I don't think it is surprising that the Dayton Daily News last month basically said the GOP leaders were still dodging the jobless. That newspaper, in a State with high unemployment, thought we were not doing our job here, that those on the other side of the aisle were still trying to dodge the issue. I can tell you we are not getting a vote. It certainly feels at this point in time as if somebody is dodging the issue.

I wonder if my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, or my colleagues in general, have thought about the circumstances of the individuals in this country and the tough times they are facing. I know we see the face of the Iraqi people every night on television. Maybe it is too hard to put 1.5 million Americans who are unemployed on the 6 o'clock news. But they still exist. They, too, are still struggling. They, too, are looking for our support and help.

I want to share with you a letter I got from a constituent. It is posted to our Web site because we have had so many people responding and telling their stories. This one individual from my State said:

I am a 41 year old, recently divorced, with a 5-year old daughter. I had worked for Nordstrom for over 22 years, when I was suddenly without a job last August, and my unemployment benefits just ran out, which put me into a bankruptcy position. I only have minimal child support and no other income at the moment.

I was earning \$47,000 annually prior to my job elimination, and had existing responsibilities based on that income, which I can no longer pay since my benefits have been eliminated. Being a single parent with a home and a 5-year-old to take care of, I have never been in a more desperate position in my life.

I want to work very badly. However, I have not been successful in getting hired back at Nordstrom or any other company. The IT market has declined, and my job was eliminated due to 7-year restructuring of the IT Department, which included the company's initiatives and achievements in job elimination and head count reduction. Their objective was to bring in contractors from India and use offshore outsourcing IT services as well. In fact, for the last 3 years, I have had to work with the offshore folks from India that took the place of hundreds of my fellow employees who were laid off over the last 7 years.

I don't understand how a company or a Government can say that they are compassionate for the climate, but create it by having Americans eliminated and replaced by foreign workers in the U.S. workplace.

My constituent says:

If the benefits are not reinstated, then I will have to seek getting other assistance until something comes up. All the jobs I have applied for, I have either not been called back, am under qualified, or over qualified.

This shows the humor of my constituent:

Most of the time, there are no numbers to follow up on, since they are handled via an automatic online HR recruiter. So I am not even sure if there are real people out there really looking for someone to fill a position. I have between 2 and 3 viable job opportunities per week that I apply for. So far, I have been interviewed only 5 times. At the time of my unemployment, I thought it would only be a temporary position. However, the jobs are just not out there and I am required to make at least \$30,000 annually, even after my bankruptcy, to maintain my home and my daughter's day care responsibilities.

I live in a small house that was built in 1947 and pay roughly \$1,100 in monthly payments on the mortgage. My car is 15 years old and in need of repair. My average bills are \$2,000 a month, which are hard to keep up with, health care being so expensive. I don't want to lose my home, since that would not be in the best interest of my daughter. Besides, I don't think I could get much cheaper rent than what my current mortgage is. My property is my retirement.

I am scared to death that I won't have anything to fall back on after working this hard for the last 26 years of my life. I don't quite understand why I can't get the extended benefits until there are more jobs available, or at least until the Government puts an end to the outsourcing of jobs to foreign countries. I have even pursued reeducation to a different field, but was told that I made too much income last year, and it would take a cost of \$10,000 for retraining in the health care field.

Now, without unemployment benefits, because my benefits have been exhausted, a student loan would not be funded. Do you have any suggestions how I can get food stamps or aid or, in the meantime, how I can find any kind of time line when we might actually get a vote? I don't understand why the President would not want to help his own first, before those suffering in other parts of the world.

I think that letter sums it up. This is not somebody who hasn't been in the workforce. She was in the workforce 20 some years. This is not a person who didn't have skills and didn't help her company actually try to modernize and improve productivity. She did that. It is not somebody who is sitting around not trying to find a job. She is doing that, too. As she clearly stated, she cannot find a job. So now she has been forced into a bankruptcy situation, is being threatened with losing her house, all because we are sitting on the Federal unemployment benefit account of \$13.3 billion and basically saying, even though this is a fund paid into by employers for this very purpose, in strong times of economic downturn, we are not going to give her the assistance.

We are going to pass a FSC/ETI bill instead and give other tax breaks to a whole bunch of things—\$2 billion for a green bond initiative that I say still probably will end up getting used for a Hooters Restaurant. There is over \$2.8 billion in here for another incentive program, a credit for synthesized coal,

which is a tax credit that is under investigation by another Senate committee—\$2.8 billion. That is roughly the cost of what it could take to extend the unemployment benefit program for another 6 months—a little more than \$5 billion. Yet we are very comfortable today in making a decision to give all these tax cuts and tax breaks away, but we are not going to help the American workers with a fund they have paid into. We are going to hold that hostage as some sort of mark against our deficit, when it is a trust fund they have paid into and, instead, we are going to pass a bill called a "jobs" bill without actually taking care of people that have not gotten the support.

I am amazed we are in this situation. I think the Dayton paper had it right. People are dodging the jobless. They are dodging this issue.

Let's talk about the specifics. There are 1.5 million Americans who are certainly without help and assistance. This is 1.5 million Americans who, as of December 31, exhausted their benefits such as the constituent I just mentioned. They are going through the same situation she is going through. They are trying to figure out, now that the State benefits have expired, and there are very few jobs created—certainly not in a fast enough time period—that they are going to have to be like my constituent; they are making very tough choices. Because we don't see those choices on the 6 o'clock news doesn't mean they are not happening.

Let's look at some of the toughest parts of the country that have had to deal with this issue. You can say maybe not every State is in this situation. Certainly different regions have been hard hit. Certainly the Midwest has.

This chart shows the number of people in these States that have exhausted State benefits. They are still unemployed and they would be helped by our Federal program. They would be helped by the \$13 billion that exists in a Federal account—if only this body and the other body would say, yes, you can have access to it.

Illinois has almost 70,000 people, who are like the constituent I read a letter about, who need help and support. In other parts of the Midwest, Michigan has 66,000; Ohio, 42,000; Pennsylvania, 69,000, almost 70,000 workers who qualify for health and assistance.

I do not even know that these people understand that the debate on this proposal is being considered. I know many of my constituents do because they write to me all the time. These are not invisible people, and their problems are not invisible. In fact, the Presiding Officer's State of Texas has 95,000 exhautees. That is the number of people in that region of the country. In my part of the country, the Northwest, we have one of the hardest hit economies, the highest unemployment rates for the last several years. We have 33,000 people who would qualify right now for this program if this body would just say yes.

What we really want to say is we know that job growth is going to happen. In fact, last month there were 300,000 jobs created. The bottom line is, we have lost over 2 million jobs, and it takes a while to recreate them. By that I mean it takes a while for the economy to recover.

The Center on Budget and Policy Analysis says it will take several months more of robust growth to whittle down the number of unemployed to a more typical size. The truth is, I think a lot of people are saying: Oh, well, gosh, Friday we will have new numbers. Maybe we will have another 300,000 jobs. Maybe we will have another 500,000 jobs, maybe another 600,000 jobs created. To me, it does not matter if there are 600,000 jobs created in the month of April. It simply does not matter if we have 1.1 million people who have already exhausted their benefits.

Even if we have 600,000 jobs created in April, we will still have a million people who will not have access to the benefits they deserve. To me, it is an issue of what are we going to do to sustain the economy while we are waiting for the job creation engine to restart.

A lot of people say: Oh, gee, the economy is actually getting better; productivity has gotten better. My constituent helped her company be more productive. Guess what. That, I am sure, added to the bottom line of that company. It probably added to the bottom line that got passed on to shareholders. But did it help my constituent actually get a job or get a new career? No, it did not. She is not asking for us to give her a job. She is only asking for what she and her employer already paid into, an account that was created for these tough economic times only to get some of those funds in the interim until new job growth and new job availabilities are out there. I do not think it is an unreasonable request.

Some people have said: If you have 1.5 million people, and they have exhausted their benefits, what is the rate by which those people will actually find jobs? The Joint Economic Committee and the Center on Budget and Policy Analysis came up with a formula. Basically, they said about 3 percent of those 1.5 million people would find a job each week.

Some people say: Maybe we will think about unemployment benefits for 7 weeks. Maybe we will say let's give people 7 weeks of benefits for another 60 days, and let's figure out how that helps. We did the calculation. After 7 weeks, using this 3 percent of people finding a job each week, which is the number that is used in both good and bad economic times, it is an average, after 7 weeks of benefits, 458,000 people would find jobs. So after 7 weeks, those 1.5 million exhaustees—those are people who have already exhausted their State support but are still jobless—how many of these people would have a job? Basically, 450,000 of them would have a job.

The issue is, after 450,000 of them would get employed after 7 weeks, we still would be looking at 1.1 million people without a job, without support, being in the same situation as my constituent of bankruptcy, potentially losing her home and in a desperate situation.

Let's be realistic. We are not going to solve this by saying here is 7 weeks of unemployment. It is not going to happen. This economy will get better. It will. But it is going to take a while. You cannot recreate 2 million jobs overnight. You cannot.

The good news is, when you have a Federal program, which the UI trust fund is, at \$13 billion, you can use a little bit of those funds to help those people in the meantime and actually generate stimulus in the economy. For every dollar we give these unemployed workers, it generates \$2 of stimulus. Who is helped by my constituent basically having to declare bankruptcy and maybe not able to make mortgage payments? Who is helped by that? She is not, but neither is the bank and not the businesses with which she does business. Certainly her 5-year-old daughter who would rather have a home is not receiving any benefits.

If we adopted my proposal, a 6-month extension with 13 weeks of benefits, after that 6 months, the account, which was \$13.3 billion, would still have \$9 billion in it. So the account will be a very healthy account at the end of that period. Yes, we would pay money out to those individuals, but the account is continually paid into by other employers. That is the way it works. That is why it is a healthy account today, and it will remain healthy under the Cantwell-Voinovich proposal.

This is a bothersome debate to me in the sense of why are we having this discussion when we have a healthy account? We know what the individual problems are. We know people need to have support and assistance. We know even after a short plan, 1.1 million people will still be unemployed. Why don't we just do this? Is it because we are using the money for something else, and we do not have it available to us? Is it that we believe the economy is so much better that even a few trickling of jobs at 300,000 or another 300,000 announced on Friday is somehow going to solve our problem?

I do not think that is what other people have said. In fact, Alan Greenspan said recently before two different committee hearings that the unemployment extension benefit is a good idea largely because of the size of the exhaustees, the number of people who exhausted the benefits, those 1.5 million people. We have the chief economist for our country basically saying this is a good idea based on the fact we have 1.5 million people, and they are not going to be back in the workforce tomorrow. They are not going to be back in the workforce from the April numbers or the May numbers or the June numbers. So who are we kidding?

The economy is not going to be that red hot to take care of 1.5 million people tomorrow.

The question is, What do we want to do about it? I think BusinessWeek said it best. They basically said the Senate must act. The Senate must bridge the gap that will help the economy cross over this extended valley of almost nonexistent hiring. They just said that on March 22—nonexistent hiring. Let's not fool ourselves. Americans know it; that is, if you poll them and ask them the question, Is the country going in the right direction or the wrong direction, they say the wrong direction because they know that we do not have job creation happening.

So it is up to us to make a decision. I know my colleagues are saying we do not want to have a vote. Somebody, in one of the afternoon journals, basically said, on the GOP side, that even having a standalone vote on my amendment is a nonstarter.

I am hoping wiser heads will prevail and that people will come to their senses and say: Let's have a vote on this issue. Let's find out where the Members of the Senate stand on getting their constituents' support in tough economic times.

Let us see where the Members of the Senate stand on following the advice of Alan Greenspan who says doing unemployment benefits would be a smart idea given the number of exhaustees. Let us find out where the Senate stands on having a solution to the issue of whether individuals should have access to the money they have paid into a \$13.3 billion account through their employers.

Let us find out where the Senate stands on giving a solution on whether they think the economy is recovering fast enough or whether they want to help people in the times when economic recovery is still slow.

I hope we come to some resolution of this issue. I hope my colleagues will listen to their constituents and heed the words they are saying about the tough economic times we are seeing. It may not be on the 6 o'clock news, it may not be on the front page with four or five other stories as is the situation in Iraq and the Middle East, but there is still a struggle for Americans and their struggle deserves the help and support of the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). Who yields time? The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. We are not under any controlled time now, are we? Is that right?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I rise to address some of the comments that

were made by the Senator from Washington State. The proposal to extend unemployment insurance benefits is something the Senator from Washington has been attempting to have passed for some time now. The arguments have been that there are a lot of people unemployed in the country who have been unemployed for long periods of time and therefore we need to have not just normal unemployment benefits but we need to have extended unemployment benefits.

For the last several months, I have gotten up on the Senate floor to refute some of the arguments that have been made by the Senator from Washington, and I want to not only reiterate some of those points but I want to go a little bit further today.

One of the points I have been making is that back when the Democrats controlled the House, the Senate and the White House, the unemployment rate in the country was almost a full percentage point higher than it is today. At that time, the three bodies working together, in control, once again, by the Democrats, thought that the economy had come out of the recession and had recovered to the point where the extension of the unemployment benefits was not necessary. So they terminated the program.

Well, the unemployment rate in the country is almost a full percentage point less today—now when Republicans control the House, the Senate, and the White House. We have recovered from a recession and today, enjoy an unemployment rate that is almost a full percentage point lower than what it was back in the 1990s when the Democrats were in control, when they stopped the temporary extension program. That is the situation we are facing today.

Nationwide, unemployment is 5.7 percent. Economists used to argue that this kind of an unemployment rate was full employment. I am one of those people who believe we can do better than we are doing today. In fact, in my State we are at about 4.4 percent. In some of our counties in our State we are at about 3-percent unemployment. So I think we can do better. In fact, in the JOBS bill that we have before us today, we have provisions in the bill that would create a couple of million jobs.

The one I authored, called the Invest in the USA Act, according to independent economists, will increase the GDP of this country by 1 percent and will produce 660,000 jobs. This is a conservative estimate. So I believe in creating jobs. It is not that people do not feel bad that people are unemployed, but instead of giving them a check for being unemployed we want to give them a job so they are no longer unemployed.

The Senator from Washington has an amendment that she has been trying to get enacted, and she changed her amendment slightly. Her State was one of the highest unemployment States in

the country. So my colleagues could understand why she was pushing for this. In the last couple of months, her State's economy has improved. Her State's unemployment rate has been dropping precipitously, so much so that to qualify as a high unemployment State for some of the extra funds under her amendment, she had to re-draft her amendment to adjust the figures in such a way that her State would qualify. Under her previous amendments, the State of Washington would not qualify because the economy is improving in her State.

When President Bush was elected, he inherited an economy that was in recession. There is no argument about that. We had three straight quarters of negative growth. By anybody's definition, that is a recession. It takes time to come out of that. We have had economic policies put into place, including two rounds of tax cuts, that have helped spur our economy onward to where we are creating jobs and to where the economy is starting to fire on all cylinders.

We still have work to do, and I think all of us in this body would agree that. But let's look at some of the employment figures.

This chart shows what I was talking about earlier in the State of Washington. Starting in April of 2001, their unemployment rate was a little above 6 percent. We can see, over the last couple of years, it has gone up fairly significantly. It plateaued in October 2003, and since then it has fallen drastically. This is the home State of the author of the amendment, and that is why her State, under her old amendment, would basically no longer qualify as a high unemployment State.

I want to address the issue of the two surveys that measure unemployment. One is called the household survey and the other is called the payroll survey. The household survey measures not only people on payrolls but it is a better measure of the economy because it also measures those who are self-employed.

For instance, in the last 2 years we have seen this incredible phenomenon known as eBay. I think most people are familiar with eBay. There are 430,000 people who now make a full-time living on eBay. Try to conceptualize that. Ten years ago, we could not even have imagined it. The payroll survey, the most common one that people quote about jobs being produced or eliminated, does not reflect a single one of those people who are now supporting themselves full time by doing business on eBay. The household survey does count them.

Anybody who goes out and starts their own business, once they hire somebody that individual is counted in the payroll survey. Well, even a lot of the small businesses are not counted for some time under payroll but they are counted in the household survey. It is a more accurate reflection of the current employment situation in our country.

In the past, the payroll survey and the household survey, the reason we did not worry about really talking about the differences between them is because they paralleled each other. For the last 20, 30 years they literally went up and down at about the same rate. Over the last 2 to 3 years, though, our economy has been changing. Today we are living in a high-tech information age. Things such as eBay didn't exist before. Thus, over the last 12 to 24 months the payroll survey has showed a loss of jobs while, according to the household survey, a couple of million jobs have been produced.

We hear the other side saying under President Bush a couple of million jobs have been lost. Well, that is if you include only the payroll survey. If you include the household survey, we are at the highest level of employment in the history of the United States—the highest level of employment in the history of the United States. We have the most people actually employed, self-employed or employed by somebody else, that we have ever had in the United States.

Unemployment insurance was set up to be a hand up. The longer and the more generous the benefits are, the less incentive there is for somebody to go out and get a job. We know that and can prove that.

During times of high unemployment, during times of recession, we extend the Federal program so those who have fallen on hard times in a tough economy, can get assistance. Those jobs may not be out there, so we extend the program an extra 13 weeks, sometimes 26 weeks, and we allow the States to extend it even further.

But when the economy is growing, is it really necessary to extend those Federal unemployment benefits? Not only is it not necessary, does it, in fact, inhibit somebody from taking the initiative, No. 1, to either create their own job, to become that entrepreneur on eBay or wherever else they are going to create the job, or, No. 2, to do what it takes to go out and find a job?

By the way, sometimes that requires moving. We have a very fluid economy today. Sometimes it requires changing careers. Today, the average American changes careers—not jobs, careers—three times. Again, a reflection of our changing economy. That is one of the reasons, if the other side of the aisle is so interested, as they say they are, in helping people, let's make sure the Workforce Investment Act that was passed unanimously in the Senate actually is finalized into law instead of using procedural maneuvers to block it. That would train an additional 900,000 people in the United States to help find those new jobs that are being created.

In most places that you travel around the United States, if you would ask how the economy is, a year ago there was a lot of pessimism. People were really unsure. You go out there now and there is a lot of optimism.

People are hiring and manufacturing orders are up. All the economic indexes we see in virtually every category are up, including the payroll survey for the last 3 months, and we expect to have fairly good employment numbers coming out tomorrow. The jobless claims that came out today were the lowest level we have seen since the year 2000, again, another good piece of economic news.

That is why I think it is the right thing to do, to not further extend the temporary extended unemployment benefits program. It already expired in March.

We have heard a lot from the other side of the aisle about deficits and how much of a threat deficits are to the current economy and the future economy of the United States. I agree with that. In fact I, by the National Taxpayers Union, was rated No. 1 as the biggest deficit hawk in the Senate. I am very concerned with deficits. My votes match my rhetoric.

Extending the unemployment insurance benefits cost \$1 billion a month, which is added to the deficit. That is deficit spending. A few of the proposals we have heard from the other side would make it a \$2 billion-a-month program. So if people care about the deficit, if they believe that it is something we should not be adding on to, as the Senator from Washington is trying to do by adding back in the extension of the unemployment benefits, then they should not support her amendment.

To sum this up, the facts are, the economy is growing, and growing strongly. Yes, we can do better. I will admit that. I want to see us do more. Pass the JOBS bill that is in front of the Senate today that the Senator from Montana, the ranking member on the Finance Committee, and the Senator from Iowa, the chairman of the committee, have put together. They put together a bill that will create jobs in America. That is part of doing better. There are many other things we can do.

I believe it would actually do harm to the economy, by adding \$1 billion a month to the deficit and discouraging those people who are currently on unemployment, if we were to continue extending the TEUC program for weeks and weeks, and months, instead of giving people the incentive to go out and find the jobs that are being created in America.

I yield the floor and yield the remainder of my time.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, earlier today, during the Negroponte debate, a number of my friends from the other side of the aisle expressed concern that some ambassadors were pending on the Executive Calendar. I think concern is a very light word. I think we could use words such as they expressed outrage—concern. I wish to comment on this because I think it was misguided. Perhaps they didn't have the right information.

One of the most unfortunate charges I heard was that the Democrats have ensured that there were vacancies in U.S. Embassies in countries representing 700 million people.

Another unfortunate charge was that we were hamstringing the war on terrorism by not having confirmed ambassadors that the Foreign Relations Committee just found time to report out last week.

Again, we were criticized because we were hamstringing the war on terrorism because, after action taken by the committee last week, we didn't do floor action within the next few days. I think anyone who understands Senate procedure knows acting on work of a committee within a very short period of time doesn't happen very often. What I mean by that is a matter of weeks.

I hope if these Senators think these people were needed so urgently, the Foreign Relations Committee should have moved a little faster—or a lot faster.

But this really is not the issue, because all my colleagues know the record does not support these accusations—and that is what they are. Later tonight we will confirm 20 ambassadors. We have already voted for Ambassador Negroponte. His nomination was completed with nearly record speed, given he was only nominated by President Bush last week.

As to the charge the Democrats have kept several American Embassies vacant, we have been told there are 10 embassies the State Department has said are currently vacant. Of these 10, the President has chosen to fill only 5 of them. Out of 10, half of those the President has not sent names.

Tonight, we will confirm ambassadors to fill Nigeria and Serbia. The only reason we have Serbia tonight is last week Republicans objected to confirming this qualified Foreign Service officer. We also wanted to confirm the new Ambassador to Nepal tonight, but there was an objection, I am told, by our Republican friends that would prevent the Senate from ensuring that this very qualified career Foreign Service officer will not be confirmed. The remaining two vacancies, Sweden and Finland, need to be filled, of course. These are going to be political appointees because they did not fill out the term they committed to serve.

The facts that were propounded by my friends on the other side of the aisle about ambassadors not being ap-

pointed simply is without any basis of fact. We will confirm two tonight. We have 10 that are unfilled. The President has not even sent five of the names to us. I repeat: Two of them we are going to fill tonight. We have five vacancies. A third we will fill tonight, we would not have needed to do that but for an objection by the Republicans last week over that very qualified person. Then, of course, I indicated the person to go to Nepal is being objected to by the Republicans also.

We have two vacancies, then: Sweden and Finland. The reason those are vacant is because they were political appointees and the people decided they wanted to come home early.

We are doing the very best we can. There are a lot of places that people could place blame, but certainly not in the case of appointment of ambassadors because the facts do not support the allegations that we have been slowing up the ambassadors.

I am happy to see the two managers of the bill in the Senate. We are cautiously optimistic we will be able to complete in the near future the very important FSC bill, the JOBS bill. While the two Senators are in the Senate, I say publicly how much I appreciate their work on this piece of legislation. This committee they are responsible for running, the Finance Committee, is as important if not more important than any other committee in the Congress. They work well together. This is a very complicated bill. There have been a lot of political sideshows that have gone on during the pendency of this legislation, as happens in all complex bills. We might get lucky later tonight and work out an arrangement to complete this bill in the near future, probably early next week.

Again, I express my appreciation to the two Senators. They are both experienced. Both come from relatively sparsely populated States, like the State of Nevada. The Founding Fathers set up the Constitution so that the Senate was not determined by how many people are in a State but, rather, that it is a State. There is no better example of what the Founding Fathers had in mind than these two fine men who run this most important committee. I express my appreciation for the good work they do and have done on this bill.

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

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

EXTENSION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, I am rising this evening in support of S.