

FLORIDA VOTING ROLLS

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I call to the attention of the Senate the potential disaster in the making with regard to the Presidential election in the State of Florida. Everyone in the country knows what we went through 4 years ago in the Presidential election. It ended up being the difference of 537 votes that then cast Florida's electoral votes to decide the national Presidential election.

To the great surprise and dismay of many registered voters who arrived at the polling places ready to cast their votes 4 years ago, they were told their names had been struck from the voting rolls because they were convicted felons, when, in fact, they were not. They had a similar name, like John Doe or Jane Doe, that was on a list of 100,000-plus convicted felon names that had been sent out to the 67 county election supervisors. They had struck these names.

Members of the Senate, we have a disaster in the making again. The State of Florida has now sent out a list of 48,000 convicted felons whose names are to be struck from the voting rolls when, in fact, the matches are not guaranteed. To the contrary, several election supervisors have already received the list and noticed, in fact, they have employees in their own offices who were to be struck. They are not convicted felons.

We simply cannot allow this to happen. This raises questions about our ability to cast our vote in a Presidential election.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I certainly yield to the distinguished Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. I appreciate very much the Senator bringing this matter to the attention of the Senate and the country.

I have strong views that if someone has been convicted of a crime and has fulfilled the terms of the sentence by that court and completed their probationary period or period of parole, that person should be able to vote. If a sentence is too short, give them longer sentences. But if someone, in effect, has been punished and completed their terms of punishment—retribution, call it whatever you want—that person should be able to vote.

It should be a national law that when someone completes the terms of their imprisonment, parole, probation, they should be able to vote. It is unfair to people who are trying to get back on their feet to not be able to be part of the American system. That is what we want them to do. We send them to prison to be rehabilitated. Part of their rehabilitation is the ability to vote.

Would the Senator acknowledge there is some merit to my statement?

Mr. NELSON of Florida. The Senator has pointed out an underlying principle of fairness. Florida is only one of seven States that has a process whereby a

convicted felon has to restore their voting rights.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, 1 additional minute.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I thank the Senator.

I conclude by saying to the Senator from Nevada, it is important. This is another principle that is about to be violated; that is, the principle of the right to vote—that if you are a registered voter, and you get to the voting precinct, you find you cannot vote because your name has been mistakenly struck because it happens to be a match with the name of a convicted felon under another Florida law.

So what I have done is filed a friend of the court brief, an amicus curie, along with the CNN suit against the State of Florida that says the public ought to have a right to inspect those voting rolls and those lists of 48,000 names to be struck.

The State of Florida says, under a law, the public cannot inspect those records and copy them. I hope the suit will be successful in declaring the law unconstitutional and remove this cloud from our ability to vote.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator's time has expired.

The Senator from the great State of Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, how much time do I have?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has 8 minutes.

Mr. HARKIN. I thank the Presiding Officer.

HAMMERING THE MIDDLE CLASS

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, what we see happening in America today, after 3½ years of this administration, is what I call the middle-class squeeze, a squeeze which has been tightened incredibly by the policies of the Bush administration. The truth really is, it is not so much they are being squeezed, the middle class is actually being hammered.

Think about it. Since Mr. Bush took office in January of 2001, nearly 2 million private sector jobs have been lost, putting downward pressure on wages and salaries. There has been some job growth over the last couple of months, but just since the passage of the 2003 tax bill, 11 months ago, our economy created 1.2 million fewer jobs than the President's own Council of Economic Advisers predicted would be created without the tax bill. We have 2 million fewer jobs than what they predicted if they passed the tax bill.

Now, again, there have been a few jobs in the last couple months. Of course, when the glass is dry, a drop of

water seems like an ocean. That is what we have had. We have had a couple drops of water. We have had a couple months of job growth, but you don't judge an administration by 2 months, you judge it by 4 years, and over 4 years we have lost almost 2 million jobs. That is not even the half of it.

Family income has fallen 2 percent. Housing prices have increased 18 percent. Health insurance premiums are up 50 percent. Utility bills are up more than 15 percent. Credit card fees have doubled. And, in large measure, because of the Bush tax cuts and their negative impact on our State budgets, college tuition, under the Bush administration, is up a whopping 35 percent.

Do you know who pays college tuition? The middle class. Meanwhile, as the middle class gets squeezed, Mr. Bush's base has never had it so good. I refer my colleagues to an article in yesterday's Wall Street Journal titled "U.S. Led a Resurgence Last Year Among Millionaires World-Wide." This article, in yesterday's Wall Street Journal, reports that the number of North Americans with over \$1 million in financial or liquid assets increased by 13.5 percent last year, and their assets increased by 13.6 percent. At the same time, the wealth of the ultra-high net worth individuals—those with over \$30 million in assets—grew to a total of \$2.5 trillion.

In the last 3 years, corporate profits are up over fourfold—62 percent over the past 3 years—but private wages are actually down. When we look at all compensation, private wages are less than one-third of normal growth.

It says in this journal article that the number of millionaires in the U.S. is up, as I said, 14 percent—actually 13.6 percent—and that "the U.S. and Canada together added more new millionaires last year than Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East combined."

Well, so much for the Bush tax breaks for the wealthy. That is exactly who they are helping. Clearly, the President's policies—tax cuts for the rich, lower taxes on investment income—are working for those at the top, but it is not working for those on Main Street. This administration is ignoring Main Street. It might be listening to Wall Street, but it is ignoring Main Street. Quite frankly, what Main Street is telling us, loudly and clearly, is that their No. 1 concern is economic security.

In the State of Iowa and across America, despite all the happy talk about the economy, people fear losing their jobs, their retirement, their health care. They are also worried about losing their right to time-and-a-half overtime. With the Labor Department's new overtime rule, people will be obligated to work 45, 50, 55, 60 hours a week with zero additional compensation. That is what is happening to the middle class.