

to protect a firefighter, other than to quote Fire Chief Edward Croker, who was with the New York Fire Department almost 100 years ago. Here is what he said:

I have no ambition in this world but one, and that is to be a fireman . . . Our proudest moment is to save lives. Under the impulse of such thoughts, the nobility of the occupation thrills us and stimulates us to deeds of daring, even of supreme sacrifice.

This is as we learned from South Carolina last week upon the death of those nine firefighters. We will keep an eye on this blaze and give the States of California and Nevada—the blaze is burning on the California side at this time—give the States of California and Nevada all the resources we can help them with.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT OF 2007—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed on H.R. 800, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to H.R. 800, an act to amend the National Labor Relations Act to establish an efficient system to enable employees to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to provide for mandatory injunctions for unfair labor practices during organizing efforts, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 7 p.m. shall be equally divided between the Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. KENNEDY, and the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. ENZI, or their designees.

Who yields time?

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I yield myself such time as I might use.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, over the period of these last few days, we have had a number of our colleagues on this side who have spoken, and spoken very well, about the Employee Free Choice Act. We have had Senator DURBIN, Senator BROWN, Senator CLINTON, Senator SCHUMER, Senator MURRAY, Senator LAUTENBERG, Senator MENENDEZ, Senator KLOBUCHAR, Senator

WEBB, Senator CASEY. I have spoken myself. We have a number of additional Senators. I see my friend from Maryland, Senator CARDIN, will be addressing the issue this afternoon.

I think we have had some excellent presentations about this issue and about the importance of this issue, about the fact that there are about 60 million men and women across this country who wish to be able to participate in the trade union movement, but because of the realities of the current election process are denied the opportunity to do so.

There are millions of people across this Nation who are enormously concerned about the growing disparity which has taken place in this country between the explosion of wealth in terms of the top one-tenth of 1 percent of our population and the fact that those at the lower end of the economic ladder most recently had to wait 10 years to get an increase in the minimum wage.

I can remember going back to a period of time when the increase in the minimum wage was a bipartisan event. People understood at that time they were trying to make the minimum wage about half of what the overall national wage was going to be, to say to American workers: If you worked at the lower end of the economic ladder in our economic system, we still appreciated your work and you would not have to live in poverty here in the United States of America.

We have in recent years seen where millions of our fellow citizens have had to live in poverty because we have failed to get the increases in the minimum wage. It has become a more partisan issue here in the Senate and also in the House of Representatives, regretfully. I am basically suggesting that we are seeing America growing apart. That is a matter of enormous concern to Americans everywhere. It does not have to be this way. It was not this way when I think America was at its best. It was not this way.

What we are seeing now is the increasing factor that those who have the resources and have the wealth and have the superwealth are accumulating it more and more; those who are at the lowest end are falling farther and farther behind, and the great middle class that is represented by workers and used to be the trade union movement is being constantly challenged.

For many in that middle class, they feel they are slipping farther and farther behind, and they are slipping farther and farther behind. They were not slipping farther and farther behind when we had a strong trade union movement. They weren't. They were moving ahead with the rest of the country. But now, they are falling farther and farther and farther behind. They know that. The option before the Senate now is to at least give American workers an opportunity, if they so desire, to be able to participate in a union so that their economic interests,

their health insurance interests, a decent retirement, can be addressed, because as we have seen, working families, increasing numbers of those working families, are losing health insurance, are finding their deductibles and copays are on the rise, and it is getting more and more difficult for them to continue to afford this. An increasing number of retirees, who thought they had commitments to health insurance, are being dropped. We are finding an increasing number of those Americans who rely on a defined benefit system losing out on their pensions.

We are finding out that the costs across the spectrum for working families are going up through the roof—the price of gasoline, the price of health care, the price of prescription drugs, the price of tuition, the price of any kind of retirement income.

Books have been written about this great shift from the kind of common responsibilities and common involvement Americans had with each other, commitments we had with each other, to a different perspective and a different paradigm where everyone is sort of effectively on their own.

That means you are on your own with regard to retirement, health insurance, and education in the workplace. That is happening increasingly. You are on your own when the employer won't give you a raise. You are on your own when you are put in working conditions which may very well jeopardize your health.

I wish to review exactly where we have come as a country on the issue of growing apart and growing together. Most of us remember clearly the Mayflower compact that was signed a few miles off Provincetown, MA, when extraordinary men and women had sailed the seas to escape religious persecution and, after 6 long weeks and the loss of a number of those who had set sail on the ships, before they got off the ship, they gathered on the deck and made a compact between each other about the importance of working together for the common good as a community and as a society. The Federal Constitution talks about the general welfare and about moving ahead together as a country and a society. We have seen that when America has been at its best.

Here we have a chart that shows the years 1947 to 1973. It is titled "A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats." What this chart shows is income for five different sectors of our economy—this is from the Economic Policy Institute—the lowest 20 percent, the second 20 percent, the middle, fourth, and top 20 percent. This chart shows clearly from these colors that from 1947 to 1973, America's income moved along together. Those in the lowest sector of our economic society moved along. As a matter of fact, they moved along a little higher than those at the very top. But America was moving along together.

It is interesting that this is a period of time when we had the trade union