

haven't already left—the people who got us where we are today.

I am amazed when I look at the fact that we are providing such a different standard between those on Wall Street, who got us into this mess—AIG and others receiving taxpayer money—and what I see happening with my own auto industry in Michigan, employing directly or indirectly 3 million people. Where is the equivalent of the auto task force? I can tell you that every single line in every single budget, every single management plan, every part of the auto companies that has received a small fraction of what AIG has received has been gone through and is continuing to receive great scrutiny. I support that. They certainly are willing to do that. But where is the scrutiny on AIG? Where is the scrutiny on the other companies that have taken huge amounts of money from taxpayers?

I find it incredible when they say they can't renegotiate contracts. Somebody should tell that to the United Auto Workers, who are renegotiating contracts right now, who have opened their contracts over and over again, with workers taking more and more cuts, paying more and more in health care. Yet we hear from this company and these executives with AIG that they have contractual agreements and they can't reopen contracts? I don't think there is anybody in my State who believes that is not possible, given what our families have gone through over and over again, with people who thought they had jobs, thought they had contracts but suddenly do not.

Why is it the people who got us into this mess—with their complicated leveraging, the tools they put together that created this house of cards that has fallen and affected not only everyone in America but around the world—can't be asked to step up and reopen contracts? I don't understand that at all.

We are going to do everything we can in order to get that money back for the American taxpayers. We have seen bills introduced, and I am proud to be co-sponsoring one of those bills through the Finance Committee. Our leader, Senator REID, has asked us to move as quickly as possible, and I know the Speaker of the House has as well, as has the President of the United States, and we are going to do everything we can to be able to recoup those dollars.

When we talk about what is moral in this country, whether it is the budget, whether it is bonuses of millions of dollars for people who have hurt so many, caused so much damage, created such a crisis around the world or whether it is looking at what is happening to families every day, this is a moral issue. This is a question of right and wrong. It is a question of our priorities. The budget the President has proposed focuses us back on what is important for this country, and it is critical we get that budget passed. We have middle-

class families across the country right now, and really all families, who never thought they would have to worry about trying to decide whether to buy groceries or to buy medicine; worrying about what happens tomorrow—will there be food tomorrow. People are going to food banks who never thought they would have to go to a food bank. People who used to donate to the food bank are now going to the food bank, and others who have been relying on the food banks for a long time find it is getting tougher and tougher and tougher.

More than 11 percent—in fact, close to 12 percent—of the people in my State do not have jobs right now. They are unemployed. That is only the official number. That doesn't count those who have been long-term unemployed, unable to find work and are no longer counted. It also doesn't count the number of people who are working one, two, and three part-time jobs trying to hold it together. That is a moral issue.

The reason we tackled this recovery plan and so quickly brought it forward—to create jobs that we create in America, jobs in a green economy, focusing on job training and education and health care for people who have not been able to find a job so they will be able to keep health care going for their families—is because we understand what this is all about in terms of our values and priorities. Millions of families are in danger of losing their homes or have already lost their homes which is why we are focused on doing everything we can to help families, neighborhoods, and communities address the housing crisis. We know that education is the key to the future for all of us, for our children and our grandchildren. Keeping education a priority and investing in the future, in education and access to college, is a critical part of our budget because it is a critical part of the American dream.

Yes, I am outraged about AIG giving away millions in bonuses—absolutely. I am outraged about other injustices going on, about the focus over the last 8 years on those who are doing well and policies that made sure they were doing even better, oftentimes at the expense of middle-class Americans, at the expense of the majority of Americans in this country. I am outraged that billions of dollars are going to companies that do not have accountability attached to them. I know the people in Michigan are as well. But I also believe it is critical that we not only get the money back from these bonuses and provide the accountability but we redirect back to the priorities of the American people. That is what this budget is all about.

We need jobs. We need jobs in this country because, if people have money in their pockets and they can pay their bills and keep that mortgage and invest in their families' education, this country is going to turn around.

The budget the President has proposed, the budget the people with

whom I met this morning are so encouraged about, is, in fact, a moral document. It changes the way this country has been operating—from a culture of greed, where somehow bonuses for AIG made sense to somebody somewhere in AIG, to a situation where we are focused again on what is important for the majority of the American people, what will allow us to be strong as a country: putting people back to work; making sure we have access to health care, which is not only the moral thing to do but brings down costs; education and investing in a new energy economy that is not dependent on anybody else but American ingenuity. That is what is in this budget, and it is a budget that reflects the priorities and the values of the American people. We need to come together in a bipartisan way to pass this as quickly as possible.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNET). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF RONALD KIRK TO BE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Ronald Kirk, of Texas, to be U.S. Trade Representative.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 90 minutes of debate on the nomination, with the majority controlling 30 minutes and the Republicans controlling 60 minutes.

The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, as you noted, we will consider the nomination of Mr. Ron Kirk as the next U.S. Trade Representative.

With some reluctance, I will vote to confirm Mr. Kirk's nomination. I think it is pretty obvious Mr. Kirk has been less than forthcoming on a number of trade issues that affect this country, and some of the positions he has articulated are very dangerous for this Nation's future. I have come to this floor on numerous occasions and argued against the provisions that have