

slashed State education funding below previous session levels. Any additional cuts will place thousands of Nevada teaching jobs at risk. School districts in Nevada have already made difficult cuts: laying off teachers, eliminating programs, and reducing the number of hours children spend in school.

The State has delayed expansion of all-day kindergarten, eliminated resources for gifted and talented programs, cut a magnet program for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. All around schools have been eliminated.

Further cuts will affect the basic pillars of American education. Already the school board in one county, Lyon County, a rural part of Nevada, has considered moving to a 4-day school week. Students in the United States already spend much less time in school than students in other countries, including those with whom we compete for jobs. Most American people spend a month less in the classrooms than those in South Korea or Japan, whose students are among the highest performing in the world.

At a time when Nevadans are competing for jobs with graduates from countries around the world, as well as those in neighboring States, school districts should not be forced to make decisions such as the one facing Lyon County, NV. The Teachers and First Responders Back to Work Act, filed last night and led by Senator MENENDEZ, will ensure the Lyon County school district will not have to choose between laying off teachers and reducing the school year.

It will protect gains made by school districts such as the one in Washoe County, which increased its graduation rate from 55 percent to nearly 70 percent in a period of less than 2 years. Budget cuts would threaten that progress. The district cannot expect to improve on these gains if it has to jam more students in every class and lay off literacy and math specialists.

The teachers legislation I introduced last night will stem the loss of education jobs and help districts such as Washoe to continue to improve. This legislation will provide Nevada with an additional \$260 million to keep teachers in the classroom and maintain class sizes. It will support 3,600 education jobs in the State and give the economy a jolt.

It will not increase the deficit by one penny. It asks millionaires and billionaires to contribute a tiny fraction more to help turn our economy around. That is an idea two-thirds of Americans and a majority of even Republicans support. This Nation's schools have already been hit hard by State and local budget cuts. We cannot afford to lose more teachers or lay off more police or first responders.

In Nevada, local governments have already made the difficult choice to cut almost 9,000 jobs. These unprecedented layoffs have extended the recession and slowed the recovery in Ne-

vada. And further budget shortfalls threaten thousands more jobs. Nationwide, State and local budget cuts will cost as many as 280,000 teaching jobs next year unless we do something about that. This teachers and first responders legislation will invest \$30 billion to create or save nearly 400,000 teacher jobs; that is, those who are going to be laid off this year, plus those who have been hurt and laid off in past years. That money will help State and school districts stop more layoffs and rehire tens of thousands of teachers laid off since this severe recession began.

We will also invest \$5 billion to retain and rehire the police, firefighters, and first responders to protect our communities throughout this tough economic time. That is why it is so important that the Senate move to this as quickly as possible. Teachers out of work through no fault of their own and students who desperately need a good education are relying on us to act.

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. MCCONNELL. Madam 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

SOLVING THE JOBS CRISIS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, it is no secret that the vast majority of Americans are not happy with Washington right now. They say 13 percent of the public approves of Congress, and I have not met any of those people.

It is also no secret that the President of the United States is trying to use the displeasure of Washington for political gain. I think that is a pretty sad commentary on the state of affairs over at the White House lately. As the only person elected to represent every American, the President should speak for all Americans, especially in times of crisis, not divide them for short-term partisan political gain.

But it is perfectly obvious why the President would find the path of division appealing, because on the No. 1 issue we face, jobs and the economy, the President's policies have not worked as advertised. After nearly 3 years in office, he has failed to make any progress on his promises to turn the jobs crisis around. I think we can pretty much sum up that failure with a single number, 1.5 million. That is how many fewer jobs there are right now in America since the President signed his first stimulus, according to the Obama

administration's own Labor Department—1.5 million.

So what is the President trying to do? Well, he is trying to change the topic. He wants to deflect attention from that 1.5 million job loss. He wants to think the problem is not his policies, it is those mean Republicans in Congress who oppose them. But the President leaves a few things out of the reelection script he brought along on his bus tour.

First of all, it was not just the Republicans who defeated his latest stimulus bill last week. The only reason a majority of Democrats voted to debate it is they knew they would not have to vote on it. That is why the majority leader repeatedly moved to block a vote on the measure itself, the actual proposal.

Second, we are now living under economic policies that President Obama himself put in place. This is not something you will hear on the bus tour, but let's be clear. The President got everything he wanted from a Democratic-controlled Congress during the first 2 years of his presidency. He owned the place.

Now we are living with the hard realities that those policies have brought to bear on the American worker. So at this point, anytime the President says "pass this bill," people have a very good reason to be skeptical, because this is not the first time President Obama demanded that Congress pass what he calls a jobs bill. But if this one were to pass and it worked as advertised, then it would be the first one that did.

Again and again, the President's response to America's ongoing jobs crisis has been to insist that Congress pass some urgent piece of legislation right away or an even worse calamity would result. Those bills were supposed to create jobs and prevent layoffs as well.

But he keeps coming back for more. I guess the President is counting on the American people to forget that part. He is counting on us to forget about the other stimulus legislation he has already signed into law and that has failed to live up to its hype every single time.

Again and again the President has demanded that Congress do something to create jobs, and the only thing we seem to end up with at the end of the day is more debt, more government, and fewer jobs. So let's review the record for a while.

Two and a half years ago, President Obama went down to Florida and said the first stimulus—the nearly \$1 trillion government spending bill he signed shortly after taking office—would save or create millions of jobs, including jobs for firefighters, nurses, police officers, and teachers.

Well, what happened? The States got their bailout, the national unemployment rate didn't budge, and a year and a half later the President was back asking for another one. That is right, a year and a half after the first stimulus,

the White House was back last August saying they needed another \$26 billion right away or else 160,000 teachers would get pink slips and police and firefighters across the country would literally be off the job. What happened then? Well, the States got another bailout. The unemployment rate didn't budge. And now the President is riding around on a bus saying that if they don't get another one, teachers, police, and firefighters will lose their jobs again.

Does anybody notice a pattern? We have been doing this for nearly 3 years now—3 years. It doesn't work as advertised. Bailouts don't solve the problem. In fact, they perpetuate it. Yet all we get from the President and Democrats in Congress is do it again, do it again, or else.

We have been mired in a jobs crisis for 3 long years now, and all the Democrats ever want to do is throw more taxpayer money at it. It never works the way they claim it will. Yet they want to keep on doing it—with other people's money. Just throw another bailout together, slap the word "jobs" on the cover page, and dare people to vote against it. That is, apparently, the Democrats' governing philosophy—3 years into this jobs crisis. It would not be irresponsible to oppose an approach such as this; it would be irresponsible to consider it. It didn't work the first time. It didn't work the second time. The third time won't be a charm. That is why Republicans and a growing number of our Democratic friends want a different approach. There is a growing bipartisan opposition to trying the same failed policies again.

There is bipartisan opposition to raising taxes, especially at a time when 14 million Americans are out of work. If there is one thing we should agree on now, it is that we should be making it easier for businesses to hire, not harder. So the President should drop his obsession with raising taxes, and if he really wants to create jobs, maybe he should consider doing something different.

We have tried the bailout approach. We have tried more regulations, more debt, and more taxes. Why don't we try a new idea for a change, one that has bipartisan support, one that isn't a two-time proven failure? Let's try something that might actually work because the American people didn't send us here to kick our problems down the road. They certainly didn't send us here to repeat the same mistakes over and over and then stick them and their children with the tab. That might be how you maintain a sense of urgency—by failing to solve the problem the first two times around—but it is not how you solve a jobs crisis. The American people simply deserve better than this. They deserve better than the false promises they have been getting.

The President got everything he wanted from a Democratic Congress for 2 years—everything he wanted: a

health care law designed to take over one-sixth of the entire economy; a financial reform bill that punishes businesses that had nothing to do with the financial crisis; out-of-control regulations that are forcing otherwise healthy businesses to shut down, businesses such as Smart Papers in Hamilton, OH, a paper mill that said last week it is shutting down because of onerous new Federal regulations that make it too costly to do business; and a trillion-dollar stimulus that was supposed to solve the jobs crisis 2½ years ago.

For 2 years, when the President said: Pass this bill right away, Democrats did it. Here is what they got, despite all that: trillions in debt and more than 1½ million fewer jobs. And that is after the President got everything he wanted for 2 whole years. We don't need any more of that. We can't afford more of the same.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ addressed the Chair.

Mr. DURBIN. Will the Senator yield for a unanimous consent request?

Mr. MENENDEZ. Yes.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak following the remarks of the Senator from New Jersey.

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

JOBS-TEACHERS/FIRST RESPONDERS BACK TO WORK ACT

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I rise as the lead sponsor of the Teachers/First Responders Back to Work Act. I rise in favor of jobs, in favor of teachers, in favor of police officers and firefighters, keeping our communities safe, and the promise we made to first responders after September 11.

We have a choice. I listened to the distinguished Republican leader, but it is interesting how history can be viewed through different lenses. What I failed to hear were the challenges this President and this country inherited from 8 years of policies that led us, in 2008, to the verge not of the great recession we had been referring to but on

the verge of a new depression, where the Chairman of the Federal Reserve and the former Secretary of the Treasury, under President Bush, came before Members of Congress and said: We have a series of financial institutions on the verge of collapse, and if they collapse, it will create systemic risk to the entire country's economy, and every American will feel the consequences of that.

The result of that 8 years of largely unregulated process created excesses where large entities made decisions that ultimately became the collective responsibility of everybody in this country because a failure to have met those responsibilities would have meant a collapse of this country.

Now, there are those in the Senate who are advocating we go back to those very policies. They talk about stopping each and every regulation. Those regulations ultimately—the lack of it and the lack of enforcement of it is what gave us the excesses we had.

Additionally, we had the two wars abroad, which are totally unpaid for, and fiscal responsibility went out the window there. Tax cuts were totally unpaid for, and fiscal responsibility went out the window there.

The culmination of all of that brought us to January of 2009, when the new President took office and had already inherited millions of jobs that had been lost prior to then. Around 7.5 percent unemployment was the starting point already. In the first quarter of 2009, before he could even do anything—he took the oath of office in late January, swore in a cabinet in February, and sent a plan up in March—another 2 million jobs were lost.

I find it interesting how we forget all of that, at least as a starting point.

We have had 19 months of private sector growth—a little over 2 million jobs. That is good news. But where we have been shedding many jobs is in the very essence of those in the public sector who teach our children, who prepare for the next generation and the competitive future of America, and who protect our communities—police officers, who protect us from crime, and firefighters, who respond when there is an emergency in our communities.

With the Teachers and First Responders Back to Work Act, we can fulfill our duty to educate our children and keep our communities safe or we can gamble our future on the political games we have seen here that disinvest in the future of our children and the safety of our communities.

Almost 300,000 education jobs are on the chopping block this year in this country. At a time when other countries in the world are increasing their educational workforce, we are in the process of decreasing it. New Jersey, my home State, is facing a \$10.5 billion shortfall in its 2012 budget. That means more cuts in State and local spending for education, and that hurts our children.