

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

#### PAYROLL TAX CUT

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the urgent need to prevent a tax increase in the year 2012 if the Congress does not act to extend the payroll tax cut from last year. This is fundamental when it comes to working families across the country. Some 160 million working Americans are depending upon the Congress to do its work, to do its duty, and conclude this year on a couple of matters.

The principal focus of most people's attention right now, in addition to making sure we have a budget in place for the next couple of weeks and months but also, most urgently, is to make sure we are doing everything possible to bring about a cut in the payroll tax again as we did last year. So we should be voting today. We should not be waiting. We know the House has acted. I would guess that what they passed in the House will not pass in the Senate, but we should vote. Vote today. Get that done. Then both sides can sit down and work out a compromise on the payroll tax cut so we can give those 160 million American workers some measure of certainty as they begin to celebrate the holidays and prepare for our new year.

When I talk to people in Pennsylvania, they say to me basically two things: Do something to create jobs or to create the environment or the condition that job creation will flow from and, they say, do it in a bipartisan way. Work together as we, meaning Americans back home, have to work together. They have to work together at home to meet a budget. They have to work together at their worksite to be able to move a company or their agenda forward for an employer.

What we need is a very simple agreement on a very basic bill, and it should be a bill that would extend and, I would argue, expand. I wish to go beyond the payroll tax cut of last year. What we should be doing is cutting it in half. I know there might be others who do not want to go that far. But what we have now from the House is a 350-page bill loaded with all kinds of provisions that have nothing to do with the payroll tax cut and nothing to do with moving the economy forward. It is kind of a political game they are playing.

For example, the Keystone pipeline will be the subject of a lot of debate and discussion. But that has nothing to do with providing 160 million working Americans with a payroll tax cut, so we should set that aside and focus on cutting the payroll tax. Some of the provisions in the Republican bill will do substantial harm to families individually but also to the larger economy. Cutting 40 weeks—let me say that again—cutting 40 weeks from unemployment insurance is one provision. That is the wrong thing to do when

have you between 13 and 14 million Americans out of work, in Pennsylvania over half a million people out of work, at last count 513,000 people out of work. They are telling us that we should cut unemployment insurance by 40 weeks.

Does that make any sense at all? Oh, by the way, what they leave out in that debate is what unemployment insurance does to the wider economy. You spend a buck on that, you get a lot more than a buck in return in terms of the economic impact. So unemployment insurance, when it is provided to people who lost their jobs through no fault of their own, helps the larger economy in addition to helping an individual worker or his or her family.

When it comes to the issue of the payroll tax cut itself, what we are talking about here is not something complicated and theoretical. We are talking about take-home pay, what goes in your pocket from your paycheck. We have got a choice here. If we go the right way and we extend the payroll tax cuts from last year, there is as much as \$1,000 in take-home pay as a result of that.

I had a bill which we worked to try to compromise and change—we changed our bill in order to compromise, I should say. I thought it would be better if we cut the payroll tax for workers in half. That would be as much as \$1,500 in your pocket for 2012. The other side objected to that. They wanted no payroll tax cut, apparently, for businesses, which I thought was a good idea. Then they also wanted to scale back what we could do for employees. But we are where we are. We will see what they are willing to do now. But let's not lose sight of what this is all about. If we do the right thing, we will have \$1,000 extra in take-home pay for 160 million American workers, but if we go the way of some people here in Washington and play political games, it will be zero extra dollars of take-home pay. Very simple. It is a very simple choice.

I would hope our friends on the Republican side would allow us to vote today on the Republican House bill.

It is not going to pass, but it does provide clarity so that both sides can then sit down. They have rejected my compromise. Now the House version will come over here. But we will have some clarity about where both sides stand.

We can sit down and negotiate and get a payroll tax cut done, but we cannot do that until they let us vote on what the House did. We need to have that vote today. I don't know why the Republican side would want to hold it up in the Senate. We should vote on that. It is about take-home pay and also about peace of mind. I think a lot of Americans would like to know now that they can celebrate the holidays and move into 2012 with some peace of mind, knowing they are going to have some money in their pockets they might not have otherwise. It will have a tremendous impact on the economy.

We know that from the data and from what happened in the first few months of 2011.

If the Congress fails to act, here is what it means for a State such as Pennsylvania. You can replicate this, I am sure, in other States as well. Mark Zandi, a respected economist on both sides of the aisle in Washington, looked at Pennsylvania and the impact of not extending the payroll tax cut for 2012. He said it would cost our State a little shy of 20,000 jobs in calendar year 2012—in a State, by the way, where in 2011 we created—or I should say the increase in jobs in Pennsylvania was more than 50,000 in 2011. That is not enough, and we need to do more, but certainly when you are creating jobs at that rate—and possibly in 2012 it could go above 50,000 jobs created in Pennsylvania. But not to act on the payroll tax and reduce that 50,000 or more by 20,000 jobs—and that is just one State—if you don't pass the payroll tax cut, that is the adverse impact on 1 State—20,000 jobs, according to Mark Zandi. That is a big mistake. We cannot afford to make those kinds of mistakes at this moment, which is very precarious in our economy, just when we are getting some—although not enough—good news about the economy.

We need to kick-start, jump-start job creation across the country. We can do that in large measure—although not completely—by a payroll tax cut.

It is time to move forward and time to move on. We should get this vote done on the House version, and then we can go to the negotiating table. While we are doing that, we can get some other things done. To hold up a vote on the House bill doesn't make any sense at all. We only have 17 days until the end of the year. We have other work to do as well. But the main thing we have to do right now is come together to protect 160 million American workers so that they can conclude the year and go into the holiday season and begin a new year with peace of mind to know they are going to have that payroll tax cut in their take-home pay and also to give those who are out of work and their families, their communities, and the country some assurance on unemployment insurance.

It is not time to play politics in Washington. This is the holiday season. If there is anytime in the year when people expect us to work together, it is at this time when we celebrate the holidays. We need to come together and compromise. I have compromised a couple of times in my legislation. I will not review that now, but I did that on my version of the payroll tax cut. We can all compromise more. We need to come together and stop putting up roadblocks to voting on measures that will lead us to a compromise.

The simple message for today is this: Let's vote on the House bill. If that doesn't pass, then we can go to the negotiating table and come up with a compromise to cut the payroll tax and put more take-home pay in the pockets of 160 million American workers.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### LIHEAP

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I am here today to talk about the importance of sustained funding and support for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, better known as LIHEAP. I know it is something my colleague, the Presiding Officer, cares very much about as well.

LIHEAP helps households pay home heating costs and targets funds for those families with the lowest incomes and the highest energy costs. In 2010, nearly 165,000 families in Minnesota used this critical lifeline.

As the Presiding Officer knows, our home State may be known as the land of ice hockey and ice fishing and other winter sports, but our tough winters can be downright dangerous to families struggling to pay their utility bills and trying to keep the heat on.

Even as Minnesota's economy has weathered the recession better than most, we have seen a great increase in need for assistance with heating bills. From 2008 to 2010, there was a 30-percent increase in families who needed energy assistance. Without sustained funding for LIHEAP at current levels, we risk pushing these 38,000 families out into the cold.

This October, I joined with Members from many cold weather States, as my colleague did, in a letter that urged the Department of Health and Human Services to release LIHEAP funds as quickly and at as high a level as possible. We must follow up on this action by fully funding LIHEAP.

On October 28, the Department of Health and Human Services released \$1.7 billion for LIHEAP. This is a start, but we need another \$3 billion to ensure we sustain level funding from last year. Depending on how and what the final appropriations are for fiscal year 2012, it is important to recognize we will need over \$1 billion to fully fund LIHEAP.

I believe seniors should not have to choose between paying for medication and their heating bills; that families should not have to choose between putting food on the table or keeping their furnaces on at night, and children should always have a warm home to sleep in at night. LIHEAP is targeting those families who are most in need. In fact, the average household served by LIHEAP in Minnesota had an income of \$16,000, and 85 percent of the homes served by LIHEAP included at least one senior, a person with a disability, or a child under the age of 18. These

families are struggling. Now is not the time to pull the rug out from under their feet.

LIHEAP is supported by nonprofit organizations such as Community Action of Minneapolis, the Salvation Army, State and local governments, and utility companies. These organizations know the value this program has to ensure that families have the tools they need to stay safe during the coldest winter nights. They also see how it creates economic activity by maintaining demand for utilities when household budgets are under the greatest strain and may be forced to go without.

According to economists, LIHEAP is a smart investment. For every dollar in benefits paid, \$1.13 is generated in economic activity. As a cosponsor of the LIHEAP Protection Act, introduced by Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island, I want to commend my colleagues on their leadership on this issue, and I look forward to working with them to ensure this legislation is passed and that funding for the critical program is maintained.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 3630

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am going to eventually make a unanimous consent request. We have alerted our Republican friends to it. But before I do, I want to set the stage for why I am going to eventually ask we be allowed to go to H.R. 3630, which is at the desk, and that there be a debate and a vote on the Republican-passed payroll tax cut.

For the life of me, I don't understand why, as we approach the end of this year, Republicans do not want, right now, to have a vote on their own bill. Maybe it is because they do not have a lot of votes for it because it is a disaster. The President has spoken out very strongly for a payroll tax cut. We need that. It has been in effect, and if we don't extend it in this time of recovering from a deep dark recession, economists of all stripes have said we are going to see a reduction in economic growth. That is something we don't need right now.

Initially, Republicans said they didn't want anything to do with this tax cut. They loved the tax cuts for the millionaires and billionaires. Oh, that one they have a heart for but this one, they don't really like.

I think they took the heat back home, and good for the American people. They then decided they had to pass it because if they didn't pass it, working people were going to notice that \$1,000 increase in their taxes.

So we are facing a very odd situation. Having served in the House for 10 years—I had left before Newt Gingrich became Speaker; I ran for the Senate. I know how things work over there. I can almost see—though I have no accuracy

on this; it is simply my own feeling—the mindset: The President wants this tax cut so badly, let's do it, but let's load this up with things he is not going to be able to abide. Frankly, that is what they did.

Let's look at some of the things that are in this payroll tax cut. First of all, they added environmental riders. One of them I am very familiar with, and I want to spend a minute explaining.

The EPA passed a rule to control the filthiest and dirtiest boiler operations. These boilers are located in our communities. They spew forth things you really don't want to know about, but we better know. They are things such as mercury, arsenic, and lead. All these things cause cancer, and all of these things are dangerous to all of us, particularly to children and to pregnant women. So the EPA has crafted a rule—listen to this—that only goes after 5,500 of the 1.6 million boilers. Again, these are the filthiest and the dirtiest.

In crafting this rule, they had peer review science that showed this rule would prevent 8,100 premature deaths every single year. That is because we are talking about mercury, lead, and arsenic. These are not our friends.

Now, not being able to abide by this, those in the House are standing with the dirtiest polluters, and they put a stop to that rule. To me, this is shocking, as chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee. If I saw you were driving a car in a certain direction, Mr. President, and I said to you, if you continue to drive your car in that direction, you are going to hurt people; you are actually going to be responsible for the deaths of 8,100 people in the course of a year, you would turn that car around. But, no, they are barreling forward. I am not even citing the stats—because I don't have them in my memory—on the number of missed workdays, the number of asthma cases, and the lost schooldays, but it is in the tens of thousands in a year.

So they attached what I call a real poison pill to the payroll tax cut. But that wasn't enough. Despite the objections from the Republican Governor of Nebraska, they pushed forward on the tar sands pipeline before the studies were done. By the way, the environmental impact report was done by a company that had ties to the developer. So before we rush to judgment on this, colleagues, we need to have more information. But, no, they are going to jam that through.

So those are two environmental riders that are in the bill that are very dangerous for the American people. So it is sort of like, here is \$1,000 for you with the payroll tax cut, but we have just increased your risk of getting asthma or perhaps dying of cancer or a heart attack. Maybe that is why they object to having a vote on this bill.

Now, in this bill, the way they pay for things is unbelievable. They are so fearful of hurting the upper income people—those earning over \$1 million a