

for those who are fortunate enough to make above \$1 million to say: Hey, I want to help carry this burden. I do not want to ask people who are scratching for a living—just trying to make ends meet—I do not want to ask them to do more without saying I want to do my share.

I was lucky. I ran a very big company. I want to do my share. That is why I am here. That is what I am talking about. To those who make more than \$1 million a year, I say: Look in the mirror. Ask yourself if you could succeed without help from anyone else or did your country help you achieve your prosperity. Was it people who built the buildings and built the infrastructure and manned the jobs all across the country—service jobs? They built the foundation upon which those who make \$1 million a year build their futures, build their fortunes. That is what happens. But there is not the respect for the hard-working families that we like to see.

I ask our Republican colleagues, think about the true meaning of the holidays.

It is not Halloween, it is not trick or treat, because otherwise that is what the game looks like. This time of the year is about coming together, caring about your fellow man. This should be a season of giving, not taking away the necessities from our country's most vulnerable.

We all remember at the end of a "Christmas Carol" when Ebenezer Scrooge opened his heart and became a hero. We need the same kind of miracle here in Congress. We need the Republican scrooges to have a change of heart and work with us to help our fellow Americans this holiday season. We need them to help us continue and expand the tax cuts for working families. We need them to help us continue unemployment insurance benefits for the jobless and clean air safeguards for our children. We need them to help us protect the programs that benefit the people who need them most, whom we need to keep our foundation strong.

To our Republican colleagues, we say, come on, let's work together. Let's do this. Let's put the acrimony aside. Let's put the selfishness aside and say, those who work every day for a living and try to keep things together—and we have millions of people who are looking for jobs who cannot find them right now—let's work together to make sure our children and grandchildren inherit an America that is even stronger than the one we inherited. Show the heart of America. That will be the best gift we can ever give them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, there are no more important issues for middle-class families across America than jobs and the economy. This is what

they want their elected officials to be focused on. It is exactly what I think we ought to be working on every single day. That is why I have come to the Senate floor again and again to urge my Republican colleagues to stop blocking our attempts to extend and expand the middle-class tax cut so many of our families are counting on. That is why I come to the floor once again today to discuss the urgent need to maintain Federal unemployment benefits for middle-class families across our country. This should be an easy issue.

Unemployment benefits provide a lifeline for millions of families, and it would be simply wrong to cut off this support while the economy continues to struggle and so many of our workers are having so much trouble finding work. Right now, there are more than four unemployed workers for every single job opening. If every opening were filled tomorrow, we would still have more than 10 million workers across the country without a job to even apply for.

Additionally, nearly half of all unemployed workers have been out of a job for 6 months or longer, which is higher than we have seen for more than 60 years.

So millions of Americans are unemployed today, not because they do not want to work and not because they do not have valuable skills but simply because they find themselves in an economy that is not creating jobs as quickly as we need it to. Those unemployed workers are desperate to get back on the job. Unemployment benefits make all the difference for them and their families while they scour the want ads and pound the pavement and send out resume after resume after resume.

I recently sent a letter to my constituents asking for their stories about what these benefits actually mean to them and their families. The response to that was unbelievable. Within a few days, I received hundreds of e-mails. People sent me videos. They sent me pictures of their families. I received story after story from workers and families from across my home State of Washington who are fighting to make ends meet in this very tough economy and who cannot afford to have the rug pulled out from underneath them.

One of those stories came from a woman named Vicki, who lives in Maple Valley, WA. She was an unemployed single mom, lost her apartment, and told me she now has to share a room with her son in a relative's home. Vicki told me she has made every effort—going to interviews, sending out her resumes to hundreds of employers, still not able to find a job.

She understands that in this economy finding a job will not be easy, but she is going to keep trying, and the support she receives from unemployment benefits has kept her and her family afloat and made all of the difference. She said those benefits allowed her to put food on the table for her

family and gas in her car so she could go to job interviews. She told me, "If I lose my unemployment benefits, I do not know what I will be able to do to provide for my son."

She is not alone. I heard from older Americans such as Judy. She is a grandmother of five from Bothell, WA. Judy told me she had been working for 47 years before being laid off from her teaching job in 2009. She said over the last 12 years she has worked to teach adults the skills they need to move into jobs as bookkeepers and receptionists and schedulers. But in this economy, although she was an expert in her area, even she cannot find a job in those fields.

She wrote to me, saying:

I want to work, but nobody will hire older citizens no matter how much experience they have. I started looking for a job at the pay level I was at when I was laid off. But after being unemployed now for 2 years, I am even looking at jobs for less than half of that. Still I am told my experience does not match their requirements.

For Judy, unemployment benefits are not the solution. She wants a job. But they provide her with some critical support while she looks for that last job before she can retire.

I also heard from Sheila from Bellevue, WA. Like Judy, she is close to retirement, but she was laid off last year from an engineering technician job that she told me she loved and now she is desperate to get back to work. After sending out over 500 resumes since then, she has had 4 interviews. In her e-mail to me, Sheila wrote:

I was devastated when I was laid off. I now look for work 7 days a week. I have worked hard my entire life. I do not want everything I have worked for to disappear.

She told me that is what would happen if her unemployment benefits run out now.

Finally, I received a video message from Scott in Olalla, WA. Scott told me that after working at the same company for 20 years, he was laid off in March and filed his first unemployment claim in the 30-plus years he has been in the workforce. He said he always thought unemployment insurance was for the other people, never thought he would be the one collecting it. Now he calls it a godsend for him and his family. In his video, Scott told me about the uncertainty his family would face if his benefits expired before he could get back on the job. If this happens, Scott said:

I cannot imagine what it would do to my family to lose our home. We spend our money wisely. We live well within our means. But if we lost our home, we would be just another statistic. The last thing I want to do is to explain to my wife and my daughter that we have to leave our home.

That is exactly what he said would happen if he loses his unemployment benefits in this tough economy.

Those are just a few of the many stories I have received. There are so many of them out there. Millions of the people across America, including about 100,000 in my home State of Washington, will stand to lose their benefits

that they count on if Congress does not act by the end of this year, in a few short weeks. These workers are not looking for a handout. They do not want to be a burden, but they need support while they get back on their feet and back on the job.

In this struggling economy, maintaining these unemployment benefits is critical. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has said maintaining unemployment benefits is one of the most effective policy tools we have now to boost the economy and get money into the pocket of our consumers. If they are cut off, it would not just be devastating for the families who count on this support, it is going to hurt our small businesses and communities to have billions of dollars pulled away from consumers who spend it every month on food and rent and clothing. We cannot afford to have this lifeline cut off. Our great country has always been a place that stands with our middle-class families when times are tough and gives them the support they need to get back on their feet and back on the job and contributing to their communities once again.

I urge all of our colleagues to stand with us as the holidays approach, to maintain these unemployment insurance benefits that so many of our families are counting on, and to keep working to cut taxes for the middle class and get our economy moving again and put our country back to work.

On that last point, before I finish, I want to join our majority leader and so many others who today called on Republicans to stop blocking their own bill and allow it to be brought up for an up-or-down vote. We know the Republican bill that passed the House yesterday is going to fail. It is bad policy, and many in their own caucus apparently do not support it. Their bill takes some of the policies we are fighting for to support the middle class, including unemployment benefits, waters them down, and then adds a whole bunch of tea party red meat to attract the Republican support it needed to pass the House.

I am focused on delivering the tax cuts that middle-class families need and deserve, so I will vote against the Republican bill if it is allowed to come up. But I cannot believe that our Republican colleagues are now preventing us from taking a vote on their own bill and then not allowing us to come together, which we need to do in these last few days before the holidays, to get a bipartisan deal and get it to the American people. They expect us to do this job. That is what is holding us up.

I urge our colleagues to sit down, work out an agreement, so that we can all celebrate the holidays with our families, and the families out there who are counting on us will know we have done the job for them.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I think there are a few things that many people across the country, and, hopefully, in the Congress, agree upon. One is that we need to focus like a laser on creating jobs. That is something I think there is universal agreement on here.

I also think there is universal agreement that we ought to become more energy independent as a nation. We need to look for ways in which our country can lessen that dangerous dependence we have on foreign sources of energy. We import a good amount of our oil from other places around the world—some of them not so friendly regimes. That is why it is such a mystery as to why the Keystone XL Pipeline project is running into such resistance from the administration.

It is ironic in many respects because we had the President of the United States, several months ago, saying:

We are going to have to import some oil; and when it comes to the oil we import from other nations, obviously, we've got to look at neighbors like Canada and Mexico that are stable, steady, and reliable sources.

That is what the President said earlier this year, that if we are going to get energy, if we are going to import oil, we ought to import it from countries that are friendly to the United States. I argue there is no country more friendly to the United States than Canada, with whom we have a very robust trading relationship. We do about \$640 billion of bilateral trade annually with our Canadian neighbors. So thinking that we might be able to get oil from Canada, as opposed to from Venezuela or somewhere in the Middle East, seems like a good option for this country—a good option that policymakers here ought to be very supportive of.

That, again, makes it an even greater mystery as to why the administration has insisted on blocking or even making a decision about whether we can develop a project called the Keystone XL Pipeline, which would take advantage of those oil resources available in Canada and bring them into the United States, transport them through a pipeline that is 1,700 miles long to refineries where that product can be refined, and people here could benefit from it or it could be sold perhaps somewhere else. Nevertheless, it would benefit the economy.

Both in the initial stages when the project is under construction, as well as later on, it will create lots of jobs. In my State of South Dakota—the pipeline would come through South Da-

kota as it makes its way down to the refineries, and we would benefit from hundreds of jobs that would be created and \$½ billion in economic activity will be created alone in South Dakota. That is during the construction phase, not to mention all the State and local tax revenue that would benefit many of the local governments across my State and other States through which the pipeline would traverse.

It is increasingly a mystery—I don't know how else to describe it—a curiosity or something—to those of us who see the great benefit in getting our oil resources from a friendly country like Canada as to why this administration would be so opposed even to issuing a decision on permitting this pipeline project that would enable that oil to come from Canada through to refineries in this country.

The other issue on which there is universal agreement is that we ought to put policies in place that create jobs. There is no greater shovel-ready project than the Keystone XL Pipeline. It would have an immediate impact of 20,000 jobs that will be created immediately—a \$7 billion initial investment and billions more over the years as this project continues to be utilized. Furthermore, I argue that it will create other opportunities for energy project development. Certainly, the Bakken oil find in North Dakota would stand to benefit from having a pipeline this accessible to it. It creates all kinds of spinoffs and other types of economic activity that would be good for jobs.

We will have something that lessens our dependence upon foreign sources of energy by about 700,000 barrels of oil a day, creates hundreds of thousands of jobs, and enhances the ability of State and local governments to collect revenues, which they desperately need for their own purposes and needs. Yet here we are looking at this project—or at least a decision on it—being blocked by this administration for no apparent reason other than politics, I argue.

We are heading into a political year, and the President is running for reelection next year. I think it is clear that the delay on a decision on this project for 18 months was clearly designed to get past the Presidential election so the President would not have to make a decision that splits his political base. We have the labor groups that are for it and the environmental groups that are opposed to it. I guess it must be a political decision for this administration to delay this project. It doesn't make sense for America and American workers.

The President says he gets up every day and he thinks about what he can do to create jobs. Well, here are 20,000 immediate jobs that we can benefit from right away—not to mention the many jobs that would come if this project was built.

As we look at the legislation sent to us from the House of Representatives, it includes this Keystone XL Pipeline language that would allow a decision