

for our society. In Denmark, college education is virtually free, including graduate school and medical school.

At a time when in our country millions of people are overworked and underpaid; at a time when we work some of the longest hours of any people in the industrialized world, when people in Vermont are working not 40 hours a week but 50 hours a week, 60 hours a week; at a time when people are not working one job but two jobs, three jobs, trying to cobble together an income; at a time when some employers are hiring people and providing zero vacation time or maybe, if one is lucky, a week off, how does it happen that in countries such as Denmark people not only get 5 weeks' guaranteed paid vacation, but they get another 11 vacation days?

In this country, we talk a lot about family values. However, if you are a working-class woman having a baby, you will get some maybe. If you are working for a large enough employer, family medical leave may have an impact and you may get some time off to have the baby, but you can't stay home very long to take care of your newborn because you will not have any money coming in. Millions of folks have a baby and go right back to work, putting the child back in childcare when they would prefer otherwise. How does it happen in countries such as Denmark that women get 4 weeks off, fully paid before they give birth, and then months off afterwards to stay home with the baby, not to mention three-quarters payment from the government for childcare, while we so poorly manage that?

I think it is time we have a serious discussion about values, and that discussion has to include whether we feel good about the fact that in this country so few have so much and so many have so little.

Do we feel comfortable with the growing imbalance in terms of income and wealth such that the top 1 percent owns 38 percent of the wealth and the bottom 60 percent owns only 2.3 percent, and the gap between the billionaire class and everybody else is growing wider?

As the Pope asked: Are we comfortable with a financial system where the goal is not to invest in the productive economy but to make money for itself, such that the top six financial institutions in this country have assets equivalent to some 70 percent of the GDP of the United States—some \$9 trillion—and enormous political power?

This IRS business people are talking about on the floor of the Senate is related to the absurd campaign finance system we have where big companies can secretly put hundreds of millions of dollars into the political process. Are we comfortable with a political system where people can make contributions in secret that end up in the political process and then end up on a 30-second ad on our TV—money coming from billionaires who don't have to disclose their contributions?

So when we talk about values, it is important to assess who we are as Americans and what we believe in. I believe most Americans believe we have to do a lot better job at focusing on the needs of the declining and disappearing middle class; that we have to create millions of jobs so our young people do not have outrageously high levels of unemployment and older people who lose their jobs have nothing to go back to; that we have to address the issue of high childhood poverty; and we have to, in fact, make sure government works for all of the people and not just the people on top.

I would just conclude by recommending to the Members and to the American people they examine the remarks made this morning by Pope Francis, which I think raise some very important issues. I think there is a lot to be learned from those remarks.

With that, I yield the floor, and 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. BROWN. 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.

#### WORKER PROTECTION

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, 50 years ago, in August 1963, Martin Luther King wrote, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

When a factory full of human beings collapses in Bangladesh, it matters in Bucyrus and Boardman and Bellefontaine. When the concrete ceiling of a shoe factory crumbles in Cambodia, it matters in Celina and Canton.

Earlier this month we observed Workers Memorial Day. We paused and remembered those Americans who had lost their lives on the job. We honor their memories by passing laws to help ensure no other child waits by the door for a mother or a father who will never return home from work.

Out of the ashes of the Triangle Shirt Waste Factory fire 100 years ago in New York City, we fought and won workplace safety reforms that have helped save countless lives decade after decade in our country. Yet even though we have passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, even though we have a National Labor Relations Board, we still have a moral responsibility to be vocal about violations to worker safety wherever it happens—whether it happens in Cleveland, in Honolulu, or in Bangladesh.

We are interconnected with this world. Our economy is linked to the women and children—to the people—whose names we don't know, the workers we don't know, who sew labels we all know in our shirts and in our sweaters. American and European retailers purchase some two-thirds of Bangladeshi garment production.

That is why, Mr. President, in the aftermath of the deadly Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh and the Wing Star Shoes collapse outside of Phnom Penh, we might have expected outraged American companies to take action. That is not exactly what happened. Which member of this multibillion-dollar industry will speak out for workers who face hazardous conditions for a minimum wage—in many cases of just \$38 per month—making the clothes we wear in this country?

Today, Leader REID, Senator HARKIN of Iowa, DURBIN of Illinois, LEVIN of Michigan, LEAHY of Vermont, MURRAY of Washington State, ROCKEFELLER of West Virginia, and I sent a letter to some of our leading American retailers. We are urging retailers such as Walmart to sign onto a legally binding global accord to help ensure worker safety in Bangladesh. We are asking a number of the largest retailers in America to sign onto this legally binding global accord to help ensure worker safety in Bangladesh.

Remember, as Dr. King wrote some 50 years ago, injustice anywhere threatens our ability to create a more just world. Signing this accord from our retailers is one step our leading retailers can take to help us usher in a new era of justice in this new century.

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask consent to speak for up to 15 minutes as in morning business.

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

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am back again to remind this body and the American people for what I think is perhaps the 32nd speech on this subject that I have been giving weekly, that it is time, indeed it is well past time, for Congress to wake up to the disastrous effects of global climate change. The famous Mauna Loa Observatory has for the first time ever hit 400 parts per million of carbon in the atmosphere. That is an alarming benchmark to have hit.

What is happening? Over on the House side today they are repealing ObamaCare for the 37th time. That is the level of seriousness in Washington right now. In particular, our oceans—the Presiding Officer represents the Bay State, I represent the Ocean State—our oceans face an unprecedented set of challenges that come from climate change as well as from pollution and energy exploration and more.