

That was kind of the beginning of the current crisis for these families. They have been living through a very difficult economy for years now. They have been out of work for many months, and in some cases more than a year or two, but the current crisis started for them on December 28.

I can't even imagine what it is like for them. You are at the end of the holiday season, you are out of work, you have been robbed of your dignity and your ability to contribute to your family's well-being, and on top of all of that—in the middle of the holiday season when it is supposed to be a time of hope and optimism and gift giving and all kinds of family time—you, and perhaps another member of the family, lose your emergency unemployment compensation. That is where it started.

Because Congress didn't have a bipartisan consensus until recently, the days and weeks started to add up. So when you go from December 28 to March 1—and we can take another look at the numbers—unfortunately, and not surprisingly, those numbers went up. As of March 1, 105,000 Pennsylvanians lost their benefits. It gets worse than that. If it continues, and there is not some relief provided through May—and this is the period that would be covered by the bill—it is estimated that 158,400 Pennsylvanians and some 2,795,300 Americans who could benefit from this bill will lose their unemployment compensation.

It is very simple in terms of the choice we have to make. We need to decide in the very near future—we hope starting this week so we can begin the process of finally getting this done—whether we will help almost 2.8 million Americans and almost 160,000 Pennsylvanians. It is a very simple choice. We are going to take either one path or the other. I hope and pray we take the path that helps those almost 3 million Americans and almost 160,000 Pennsylvanians.

Earlier I mentioned the economic impact of passing this kind of legislation. We know that in Pennsylvania, for example, one estimate shows that extending benefits would provide a boost to consumption and economic activity which would save an estimated 15,000 jobs. That is another way to measure the impact of this program.

It is my hope that the Senate can swiftly pass this bipartisan legislation to extend emergency unemployment compensation and that the House will take it up and pass it without delay. We can't allow politics to stand in the way of helping families in need.

This is a basic and fundamental issue. These families and individuals have waited far too long. I will conclude with just one example. A couple of Sundays ago—maybe 3 weeks ago—I was walking out of church in our neighborhood and a woman came up to me. I didn't know her, but I recognized her from the neighborhood. She asked me about this issue. She said: I'm out of work; when do you think it will

pass? She asked me the same question a couple of weeks before that. I said: I think we are getting to the point where there is a consensus. On that particular Sunday—just a couple of weeks ago—she asked me again. When she started to ask the question, she asked it with a seriousness and an earnestness and a kind of worry in her voice that caught my attention. I said something like: I think we are starting to get there, but I can't say for sure when. When I gave that answer, she looked at me and she started to become very emotional and said: I hope you are reaching the point where you can pass something because it is going to be very difficult for me to hang on any longer.

This is very tough. I felt at that moment—as an elected official who was given power by the voters to vote and represent them—if not powerless, I was not doing nearly enough for her. I am part of an institution that has not come together yet—in the Senate and in the other body as well. We have not come together to answer her question with full confidence and to say: Yes, we understand. We understand what you are up against to the extent we can—not having lived through this ourselves—and we are going to act this week or tomorrow or the next day.

Not having a specific answer for her gave me a sense of not just frustration but a sense of failure. There was a sense of urgency that she brought to my attention, and I believe almost every Member here could probably tell a similar story.

We have to act. We have to get this done, and we have to make sure we undertake every effort in the next few days—and I hope we are talking days now—to get this done so we can finally provide a measure of relief which is short term but will have the effect of providing a measure of relief to families who have suffered in ways I can't even imagine.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JOHN B. OWENS TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 573.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of John B. Owens, of California, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a cloture motion at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of John B. Owens, of California, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Bill Nelson, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Jack Reed, Tammy Baldwin, Jon Tester, Tom Udall, Bernard Sanders, Michael F. Bennet, Christopher A. Coons, Elizabeth Warren, Charles E. Schumer, Sheldon Whitehouse, Richard Blumenthal, Richard J. Durbin.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIRE-FIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

Mr. REID. Mr. President, is the motion to proceed to H.R. 3979 now pending?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion to proceed is now pending.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, that being the case, I have a cloture motion that has been filed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 333, H.R. 3979, an act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Harry Reid, Jack Reed, Patty Murray, Bill Nelson, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tammy Baldwin, Jon Tester, Tom Udall, Bernard Sanders, Michael F.

Bennet, Christopher A. Coons, Elizabeth Warren, Charles E. Schumer, Sheldon Whitehouse, Richard Blumenthal, Richard J. Durbin, Patrick J. Leahy.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following disposition of H.R. 4152, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 689; that there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form prior to a vote on the nomination; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid on the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last week I had the privilege of chairing a field hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee in Rutland, VT. The committee received powerful testimony about community solutions to breaking the cycle of addiction to heroin and other opioids. The hearing marked the fourth time in the past 6 years that the Judiciary Committee traveled to Vermont to explore issues related to drug abuse. As in many States, opioid addiction has ripped through parts of Vermont. Overdoses have reached record levels, while communities have struggled to keep pace with the demand for treatment. Sadly, this story is not unique. We are confronting a localized problem with regional echoes and national implications. Some of what we face is similar to the addiction outbreaks in large cities, and other aspects are particular to rural areas.

What struck me in Rutland last week is how Vermonters have worked together—and are continuing to work together—to get ahead of this problem, with innovative prevention, treatment, and law enforcement strategies.

The city of Rutland has an important story to tell. Its addiction crisis has received national attention. But I brought the Judiciary Committee to Rutland not to explore the horrors the city once faced; rather, I wanted us to

learn how the people of Rutland are reclaiming their community, block by block. One effort that has shown great promise is Project VISION—Viable Initiatives and Solutions through Involvement of Neighborhoods—developed by city and community leaders to address the many issues related to opioid abuse: addiction and treatment, prevention, quality of life, and crime and safety issues.

The chief of the Rutland Police Department, James Baker, testified at the hearing. Chief Baker explained that the police department for the first time is housing social workers, a domestic violence advocate, a mental health specialist, an early intervention coordinator, an assistant attorney general, a school resource officer, a crime analyst, and a building inspector. All are working in concert toward one goal: “Not on our streets; not in our town.” When Chief Baker asked how many in the audience were connected with Project VISION, over half of the standing-room-only audience raised their hands. Project VISION has proven adept at pursuing emerging, community-driven strategies. Just this week, community leaders and police in Rutland are considering implementing drug market intervention. This is a promising tactic designed to clear neighborhoods of nonviolent street-level dealers by bringing them in front of community leaders and giving them a stark choice: Stop selling today or go to jail tomorrow. Rutland has clearly risen to the challenge of combatting heroin and opioid abuse.

Other witnesses at the hearing described communities in action, working together to find inventive and tailored solutions. The U.S. attorney for Vermont, Tristram Coffin, who has had remarkable success leading enforcement efforts in the State, described how he has taken the message of prevention to Vermont schools, partnering with the father of a young man who tragically died of a heroin overdose. Dr. Harry Chen, the Vermont Department of Health commissioner and a career emergency room physician, described what it means to recognize addiction as a public health issue, expanding access to prevention and treatment services to all corners of the state. Mary Alice McKenzie, director of the Boys & Girls Club in Burlington, made clear how important it is to provide young people early and safe alternatives to drug use. The director of the Vermont State Police, Colonel Tom L'Esperance, described how State police will soon carry naloxone, a drug that immediately reverses the effects of a heroin overdose. Addicts in Vermont now know that police are not just there to arrest but to save lives.

It is important that the Judiciary Committee hear about a range of experiences, as opioid addiction has plagued communities large and small, rural and urban. This is why I encouraged all Vermonters to submit testimony on strategies to curb addiction, which will

be incorporated into the permanent record of the U.S. Senate. The response was remarkable. We received testimony from law enforcement officers, first responders, substance abuse counselors, doctors, public health officials, mental health practitioners, professors, school counselors and teachers, concerned parents, Governor Peter Shumlin—who is sharply focusing his administration on these problems—and many, many others.

Taken together, the testimony submitted to the committee offers a blueprint for communities ready to get ahead of addiction. It is clear that success requires community investment. Only after a community identifies addiction as a problem can it commit to defeating it. This is where Vermont is ahead of the curve. We tend to come from close-knit communities in Vermont. When we hear about victims of overdoses, and concerns about a growing problem, nearly all Vermonters can name someone who is affected. I suspect that is why we have had a number of excellent initiatives already enacted—it did not take long for heroin and opioid abuse to affect all Vermonters. And it did not take long for Vermont to take steps to resolve the problem. Nowhere is this more evident than in Rutland.

It is equally clear from the submitted testimony that success requires close collaboration among prevention, treatment, and law enforcement efforts. From my years as a Vermont prosecutor, I recall how important such collaboration is, but never have I seen a law enforcement community as committed to prevention and treatment efforts as I do now. We know we cannot arrest our way out of this problem. If the underlying cause of criminal behavior is an addiction, treatment is often a more humane and cost-effective alternative to arrests and prison.

As we continue to review testimony submitted to the committee, I look forward to working with other members of the Judiciary and Appropriations Committees to ensure that these community-driven responses receive the support necessary to succeed. I will continue to work to fund youth mentoring and prevention organizations on the front lines, like the Boys & Girls Clubs, and I will continue to work to fully fund Byrne-JAG and COPS grants to enable law enforcement agencies to devote the necessary time and resources to develop durable solutions with community partners. We also need to continue to support drug court and diversion models to substitute treatment for prison when appropriate. Many programs funded through the Second Chance Act provide offenders a real opportunity to succeed once released from prison by ensuring they have the resources to become productive members of their community.

I also look forward to discussing effective law enforcement strategies and partnerships with Michele Leonhart,