

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 cannot 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.