MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to a period of morning business. The Senator may speak up to 10 minutes in morning business.

EXTENSION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, there are several other points I would like to make. I know some people are thinking, why not do this for a shorter program. Why not expand the program for maybe another 60 days. The point is, where are we going to be in 60 days? Even if, say, we get a report on Friday that says there are 300,000 jobs being created and the next month there are 300,000 jobs being created, you still have at that point 1.4 million Americans looking for work; that is, people who have completely exhausted their State benefits.

My constituents are making all sorts of choices. They are putting up their homes for sale. They are moving in with relatives. They are selling family possessions to pay mortgage payments. They are trying to hold on so this economy recovers. And they are hoping the next several months will bring good economic news, as I hope it does. I hope the next several months brings good economic news. But even if we have good economic news, we are not going to have the return of 1.4 million people or 2 million people back to work in the next several months. The question is, do we want to meet our obligation under the Federal program and help them.

In the 1990s we had a very similar situation. We had an economic downturn and the first Bush administration basically had to come up with a program for unemployment benefits. They actually had already had the program in place for more than a year and had good economic news. I think more than 600,000 jobs had been created. The administration still supported another 9-month extension to unemployment benefits.

Actually, they supported that 9-month extension, even with a richer program than what we are suggesting today. We are suggesting that the program ought to go for 13 weeks of Federal program and 13 weeks for very high unemployment States. At that point, the program was 20 weeks. So in the 1990s, the Bush administration decided, even though it had seen more than a half million in job growth—I think they had several million in job loss—even though they had seen the economy pick up, they made the decision that so many people had been impacted, laid off, and could not find work, that it was important to give them access to the Federal program. So they expanded the program for another 9 months.

Now, I know this administration is now, as I said, through various members of its Cabinet, backing away from its economic numbers for the year, but it is also saying they would support an unemployment benefit package that would come out of the House and Senate. I say to the administration, obviously, we are not getting this bill done in the timely fashion that would benefit most Americans. Maybe they can come and help in this effort because the preceding Bush administration did a great job supporting the package, even though jobs were starting to be created, to stem the tide of job loss and negative impact on the economy, and still the economy started to pick up again. So we should do the same.

I think the administration should take some time, as it is riding around Ohio—and some of these middle America States have been hard hit with unemployment benefits—and listen to the people who have lost jobs. They will tell them this program is important to them, as I just outlined from several newspaper editorials that have been in the Dayton paper, specifically. I am sure there are editorials from other places throughout the Midwest as well. I know we had editorials from more than a dozen newspapers wondering why we were not moving forward on this legislation.

So the point is, we have a case study in the 1990s—and a good one—that this administration should follow. This administration should look at the success of that program, how jobs were being created, and still they expanded unemployment benefits because they knew it would take several months to put that many Americans back to work. That is what we are talking about today. We are talking about a jobs proposal that really is what we are going to do to incentivize or disincentivize corporations from moving overseas or doing business overseas. That is what the FCI/ETI bill is primarily about.

While we are debating what is good to massage the intention of corporations in America, we should be talking about what we are doing to support the American workers who lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Why try to mastermind and guess about corporate intentions and incentive in the tax policy but then leave American workers who have a program that is designed to help them out in the cold without an opportunity?

We have fought this battle a couple of times now. We fought it last year when the benefits expired and got it reinstated. We fought it when people actually lapsed off of benefits and we had to get them to understand that when we came back into session, the benefits were going to be restored. But now many Americans have lost hope. It has been since January 1 these people have been without benefits. Given that information, Americans have tried to make the best they can out of a tough situation. They have made those tough choices, and if you read the stories on my Web site, or talk to constituents, you will see very heartbreaking stories of people who have struggled to make ends meet and would rather work.

I think it is very important that Congress act to move forward on this legislation. I know my colleagues would like to get the FSC/ETI bill done. I know they would like to say they passed something that dealt with jobs. Let's be honest. There haven't been a lot of jobs created in the last 3 years. We are at a net negative jobs. We are at a net negative 2 million jobs lost in America. So let's not kid ourselves. Job creation will come back. It will come back slowly. It will start to pick up, but that pickup is not going to be at the pace to give people relief in America and relief that is due to them.

Mr. President, while I am not making a unanimous consent request, I hope that my colleagues understand how important this is, and that tomorrow we will find time to vote on this amendment. Not to vote on this amendment, again, is to say it is more important to deal with corporations and their tax incentives and tax breaks than it is to deal with the American workers who have lost their jobs. I don't want to send that message to these high-unemployment States, to those individuals who thought they supported this concept of a Federal program, and then tell them we have almost $15 billion in a Federal fund that was paid into by their employers, but now they are not going to be able to access any of it. I would rather tell them this body decided to do the right thing; that while we are waiting for the private sector to return to a strong economic engine, we are going to do the right thing and give people access to the Federal dollars from the program they have already paid into; that we are going to help the American workers in their time of greatest need; that our body, this institution, and the other side, the House of Representatives, believe the American workers deserve to have support.

I hope tomorrow we can work out a time agreement so this amendment can be voted on, so we can move forward on not only getting the underlying bill done but getting this legislation moved, since both bodies have supported it and a majority of Members have supported the legislation.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CINCO DE MAYO

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, on the fifth of May, 1862, in Puebla, Mexico, a fighting force of 2,000 peasants confronted 6,000 well-equipped and expertly trained French troops, The French troops had come to conquer the