

of this national crisis is hard to believe.

Not since the Great Depression have so many Americans been out of work for so long.

When I talk to people in my state who are running food pantries and emergency shelters, they all tell me the same thing. They have never seen so many families struggling so hard for so long.

Go to an emergency food pantry and you will see America's "new poor": families who were solidly middle class just a few years ago, who are now having to ask for help for the first time in their lives.

It may start with a job loss. As weeks without a paycheck stretches into months, many families find themselves in financial free fall. They may lose their homes.

The inability to support one's family financially very often leads to feelings of shame and fear, which can lead to isolation, which makes it even harder to find work.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, an estimated 6.6 percent of Americans were "clinically depressed" in 2001 and 2002. By last year, that percentage had increased to 9 percent—an almost 50 percent increase in 8 years.

Last year, the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University in New Jersey released a comprehensive study of the emotional and mental health consequences of long-term unemployment on individuals.

The title of the study is, "The Anguish of Unemployment."

Overwhelming majorities of the survey's respondents said they feel or have experienced anxiety, helplessness, depression, and stress after being without a job.

Many said they have experienced sleeping problems and strained relationships and have avoided social situations as a result of their job loss.

Carl Van Horn, a professor of public policy and economics at Rutgers and head of the Heldrich Center said that America faces "a silent mental health epidemic" as jobless Americans face the financial, emotional, and social consequences of being unemployed.

One of the respondents in the Rutgers survey said:

The lack of income and loss of health benefits hurts greatly, but losing the ability to provide for my wife and myself is killing me emotionally.

Children are especially sensitive to the effects of unemployment in the family. They pick up on their parents' stress and are more likely to suffer from poorer school performance and low self-esteem.

One recent study found that children in families with an unemployed parent were 15 percent more likely to repeat a grade in school.

In extreme cases, people who are emotionally fragile and overwhelmed may see suicide as the only way out of their troubles.

A study released last April by the Centers for Disease Control shows that suicide rates rise and fall with the economy.

It is the first study to examine the relationships between age-specific suicide rates and the economy.

It found that suicide rates rose to an all-time high during the Great Depression, fell during the expansionary period following World War II, rose again during the oil crisis of the early 1970s and the double-dip recession of the early eighties, and fell to its lowest level ever during the booming nineties.

It also found the strongest link between business cycles and suicide among people in prime working ages, 25 to 64 years old.

It is too soon to know for certain whether we will see another increase in suicide as the result of the Great Recession that started in 2007, because government figures lag. But a preliminary estimate by the CDC shows that suicide ticked up slightly in 2009, becoming the 10th leading cause of death in the United States.

It is important to stress: It is never just one factor that drives people to suicide, and most people who suffer terrible losses never even think about suicide. But for those who are already emotionally vulnerable, this time of unprecedented longterm unemployment can be very dangerous.

One more measure: Between 2004 and 2010 calls to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline increased 72 percent. Last year, almost 40 percent of calls to the hotline involved people with financial and unemployment concerns.

The Atlantic magazine recently asked readers to share the one thing people didn't understand or appreciate about looking for work. The responses poured in.

One reader wrote:

For those of us prone to depression, the job search can amount to a heroic effort.

Another wrote:

Possibly the worst thing about being unemployed is having to suffer through the pundit and the politician classes gassing on interminably about what it's like to be unemployed, what kind of people are unemployed and how they think and act, when none of them knows or understands one damn thing about it, nor do they even want to. Get down here on the ground, and try to go a year on \$350 a week with no hope in sight, and then tell us why the lazy unemployed just need a good swift kick to get the country moving again.

Still another wrote:

I am over the bruises to my ego . . . The worst thing though is the impact on my kids. We were making \$120K plus two years ago. Now, about \$35K. Lost the house. Thankfully still in the same school. That said, the kids went from being respectably comfortable in their cohort to being comfortable if tattered (used clothes, battered rental, same old car, no summer trips, etc.). Thank God they are still young (just started third grade) but we're not having any sleepovers here no matter how much they ask. I am afraid for the social impact on them. They are so upbeat, so enthusiastic. They don't know we're in a ditch. It would break my heart if they figured that out.

Yet another wrote:

Unemployment dehumanizes the real person. They lose the essence of their identity and value. To become a number, a label, a resume, a failure, a defect, unproductive, desperate, wishful, delusional, depressed, poor and separated from respectful society. Being unemployed is to be silently disrespected. On a par with being homeless, mentally ill or addicted.

The website Unemployed-friends.com is another place you can hear the stories of unemployed Americans who are trying to hang on.

One person wrote:

Living in constant fear and feeling helpless to do anything about it is bound to take its toll. I really feel like I am going to have heart attack. Severe chest pains, shortness of breath, heartburn, but it has been going on for months and I'm still here. By the way, no doctor will see me without money for tests up front. I've already had the consult and that almost broke me.

Another wrote:

Another rejection notice from Lowe's today. Second time they've rejected me with the automated rejection notice—this time for "seasonal plumbing department associate." . . . I am willing to go from a 17-year professional to working doing anything I can. Retail, washing cars, pumping gas, flipping burgers . . . be it whatever. I cannot even land that!!!!

This is what one woman posted at 1 o'clock in the morning:

I'm so tired. I have no more fight left in me. I am a tough NY girl but this recession has sucked the life out of me. . . . I've exhausted all resources, borrowed from everyone, lost most of everything including my pride and self esteem. I feel like nothing, a total zero, non-productive person. . . . I fully expect to look in the mirror one day and see no reflection. I am fading away, becoming irrelevant. How will I ever recover?

Peter Kramer is a professor of psychiatry at Brown University and the author of two best-selling books, "Listening to Prozac" and "Against Depression."

In a recent op-ed in The New York Times, he wrote:

I began my psychiatry residency at a community mental health center. The director liked to put trainees in their place. He'd trade any of us, he said, for a good employment counselor. Medication and psychotherapy were fine, but they worked better if a patient had a job. . . . There is no substitute for the structure, support and meaning that jobs offer.

He went on to say that if Congress wants to do something about this silent mental health crisis that is hurting so many Americans, the best thing we can do is work with the President to pass programs that will get Americans back to work.

I couldn't agree more and I urge our Republican colleagues to do just that.

In the meantime, at the very least, we need to maintain unemployment benefits for people who have lost jobs and are still looking and continue the payroll tax cut so that families that are working aren't hit next year with a \$1,000 tax increase.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that upon the use

or yielding back of time on the Christen nomination and the resumption of legislative session, Senator MCCAIN be recognized for up to 30 minutes as if in morning business; that following Senator MCCAIN's remarks, the Senate proceed to the consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 1540, the Department of Defense authorization bill; that there be up to 3 hours of debate, equally divided between the two leaders or their designees; that the Senate proceed to vote on adoption of the conference report at a time to be determined by the majority leader after consultation with the Republican leader; further, that no motions be in order to the conference report other than budget points of order and the applicable motions to waive; and, finally, that upon disposition of the conference report, the Senate proceed to the consideration of H. Con. Res. 92, a concurrent resolution to correct the enrollment of H.R. 1540; the concurrent resolution be agreed to; and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I appreciate the courtesy of my friend, the assistant leader.

I wish to tell all the Members of the Senate that we will probably have a series of votes around 4 o'clock this afternoon.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF MORGAN CHRISTEN TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Morgan Christen, of Alaska, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I see both Senators from Alaska on the Senate floor, and I beg their indulgence. I will continue for about 5 minutes, first on the nomination of Justice Morgan Christen of Alaska to fill one of the four vacancies on the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, a judicial emergency vacancy.

This nominee is eminently well qualified and should be confirmed. Senator MURKOWSKI and Senator BEGICH have worked very hard to get this

nominee through, and I thank both of them. Today, we will take a step toward addressing a serious vacancy crisis in the busiest Federal appeals court in the country. I would hope, before we adjourn, that we could get the other 16 judges who have come out of the Judiciary Committee unanimously—every Democrat and every Republican voting for them—that are on the calendar. I would hope before we adjourn we could get those done.

Mr. President, I thank the majority leader for scheduling today's vote. It should not have taken more than 3 months to obtain Republican consent to consider the nomination of Justice Christen after it was reported unanimously by the Judiciary Committee on September 8. Her nomination has the strong support of both of Alaska's Senators, Republican Senator LISA MURKOWSKI and Democratic Senator MARK BEGICH, who introduced Justice Christen to the Judiciary Committee at her hearing on July 13. Several Republican leaders from Alaska also wrote to the Judiciary Committee to express their support, including former Alaska State Senator Arliss Sturgulewski, and Walt Monegan, the former Alaska commissioner for public safety appointed by then-Governor Sarah Palin. Connecticut State Representative Lile Gibbons, a Republican, has also written to the committee to express her support.

Justice Christen is the kind of qualified, consensus nominee who in past years would have been considered and confirmed by the Senate within days of being reported unanimously by the Judiciary Committee, not stuck for months unnecessarily on the Senate calendar. She is an experienced jurist who has served on Alaska's highest court for the past 3 years. She was nominated to that position by then-Governor Sarah Palin, and she is the second woman in Alaska's history to serve on its supreme court. Justice Christen previously served for 7 years as a judge on the Superior Court for Alaska's Third Judicial District, 3 of those years as the presiding judge. She worked in private practice for 13 years in Anchorage, clerked for Judge Brian Shortell of the Alaska Superior Court, and has demonstrated a deep commitment to her community throughout her career. Once she is confirmed, Justice Christen will be the first woman from Alaska to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

The unexplained Republican delay in consenting to consider her nomination has caused unnecessary delays in filling judicial emergency vacancies on the Ninth Circuit, the busiest Federal circuit court in the country. Sixty-one million Americans live in the jurisdiction served by the Ninth Circuit. At a time when judges on that circuit are being called upon to handle double the caseload of the other Federal circuit courts, the Senate should have expedited the consideration of Justice Christen's nomination, not needlessly

slowed it down. The chief judge of the Ninth Circuit, Judge Alex Kozinski, a Reagan appointee, along with the members of the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit, have written to the Senate emphasizing the Ninth Circuit's "desperate need for judges," urging the Senate to "act on judicial nominees without delay," and concluding that they "fear that the public will suffer unless our vacancies are filled very promptly."

The judicial emergency vacancies on the Ninth Circuit are harming litigants by creating unnecessary and costly delays. The Administrative Office of U.S. Courts reports that it takes nearly 5 months longer for the Ninth Circuit to issue an opinion after an appeal is filed, compared to all other circuits. The Ninth Circuit's backlog of pending cases far exceeds other Federal courts. As of March 2011, the Ninth Circuit had 13,913 cases pending before it. The second closest—the Sixth Circuit—had 5,231 cases pending.

If caseloads were really a concern of Republican Senators, as they contended when they filibustered the nomination last week of Caitlin Halligan to the DC Circuit, they would not have delayed Justice Christen's nomination to fill a judicial emergency vacancy for over 3 months. If caseloads were really a concern, Senate Republicans would consent to move forward to confirm Judge Jacqueline Nguyen of California, another well-qualified nominee, to fill a judicial emergency vacancy on the Ninth Circuit. Her nomination was also reported unanimously by the Judiciary Committee and needs only a final up-or-down vote by the Senate. Judge Nguyen is nominated to fill the judicial emergency vacancy that remains after the Republican filibuster of Goodwin Liu. I hope the Senate will be allowed to take up and confirm her nomination to finally fill that vacancy before the Senate concludes its work for the year.

I also hope we can continue to make progress early in the New Year by considering two nominations to the Ninth Circuit now pending before the Judiciary Committee. Earlier this week we held a hearing with Paul Watford of California, nominated to fill yet another judicial emergency vacancy on the Ninth Circuit. I would have included another nominee to the Ninth Circuit at that hearing, Justice Andrew Hurwitz of Arizona, who has the support of Senator KYL, but committee Republicans were not ready to proceed on that nomination. I hope both can be considered and confirmed early next year.

The Senate should act to address the continuing crisis in judicial vacancies that affects not only the Ninth Circuit but Federal courts around the country. It is now December 15, with only days left in the Senate's 2011 session. There is no time to further delay votes on the other 20 judicial nominations now pending on the Senate calendar and awaiting a final vote. Sixteen of these nominations, in addition to that of