

from 26 weeks to 40 weeks. If the State's unemployment rate is between 6 percent and 7 percent, the State is eligible for 28 weeks, for a total of 54 weeks—still less than 1 year of unemployment insurance. If it is between 7 percent and 9 percent, as it is in Oregon, the total goes to 37 additional weeks, which means, with the 26 underlying weeks with the State, 63 weeks. If the unemployment rate is over 9 percent, then the amount is 10 weeks more, for a total of 73.

On December 28, just days from today, there will be about 17,000 Oregonians who will be completely cut off from their unemployment—not tapered, not a few at a time; all of those who have more than 26 weeks right now will instantly be cut off. So that is 17,000 families or, at an average of 3 individuals per family, 50,000 Oregonians who are going to get from the Republicans in this Chamber a big lump of coal in their stocking.

Their argument is that we shouldn't keep this program in place because those folks should just go out and get jobs. I would remind them that this program was set up under a Republican administration, and it was set up to balance the fact that in States where jobs are more readily available, the number of weeks of provided unemployment assistance is fewer, and in States with higher levels of unemployment, where it is virtually impossible to find a job because there are so many applicants for any one job, then the number of unemployment weeks is greater.

This was a bipartisan plan, and this plan was implemented when the national unemployment rate was 5.6 percent. The unemployment rate today is 7.3 percent. The bipartisan emergency unemployment program that provided more than 26 weeks was implemented when there were 137.3 million Americans working—more Americans who were working than today.

So what was good enough under a Republican administration, under bipartisan support—that created a careful balance between unemployment; that is, the challenge of getting a job, and the bridge to the next job—if it worked then, why not now? Why throw 17,000 families in Oregon out in the cold? I hear silence in this Chamber. I don't hear a reply. Why is it justified to terminate this program when unemployment is still high?

Some of my colleagues want to keep all the special tax breaks for the oil companies and all the special tax breaks for the coal companies. But what do they want to give to the families who are looking for work in high-unemployment areas, where it is virtually impossible to find a job? They want to give them a lump of coal. It is wrong.

Moreover, not only does this program help those families directly, but it helps the entire economy improve gradually because those benefits are immediately spent by these families.

These benefits help families get through a hard time. They help them pay the mortgage, which solidifies not just this family but by preventing foreclosures solidifies the street and the community from the impacts of foreclosure, of empty homes. It has guarded the family between getting to the next job and ending up homeless.

I call upon my colleagues to come to this Chamber and pass immediately the extension of this carefully balanced program which not only directly benefits families who are doing the hard work of finding the next job but provides a solid foundation for our economy. This is no time to try to deflate our economy and throw more people out of work, but that is what happens when we cut this program.

I encourage my colleagues to think carefully about the fact that this program was neither a Democratic program nor a Republican program. Think carefully about the fact that it was developed during a Republican administration, that it was designed to carefully pull itself back in as employment improved. But what isn't right is for it to be cut off completely in this period of ongoing high unemployment.

While the average in Oregon is between 7 percent and 8 percent unemployment, we have communities with far greater than 10 percent or 12 percent unemployment. So many families are wanting that next job. There is nothing better than a job in terms of any type of social program. It creates a sense of self-worth, it creates a sense of structure, and it creates a sense of satisfaction. The families in Oregon want jobs and they are applying, but there are not enough jobs to go around.

That brings me to my next point. This Chamber should be considering program after program to invest in infrastructure and invest in manufacturing to create jobs. But there are those here who have sought to paralyze this Chamber in every possible way, to prevent any improvements, in terms of trying to sustain partisan campaign warfare rather than problem solving. This is an abdication of responsibility as a Senator. The responsibility is to be here working hard to solve the problems for families across this Nation, not continuing the partisan politics of the last campaign.

The American people see this partisan campaigning, and they do not like it. They want to see problem solving. They want to see us coming together to fix things.

A few moments ago the colleague from Texas was on this floor. He was saying some things that were extraordinarily misleading. He said, basically, that all of the paralyzing strategies that his party has employed stem from a lack of amendments. We have seen those paralyzing tactics in every possible responsibility that this body has. We have seen them on executive nominees. There are no amendments on executive nominees. You either approve them or you do not. We have seen this

paralyzing strategy on judicial nominees, but there is no tree—the tree he referred to, the amendment tree—on judicial nominees. We have seen this on conference committees, unparalleled blockade of letting the House and Senate meet together to resolve differences in their bills.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I know we are closing down this body, according to the unanimous consent agreement. I am thankful for the opportunity to address this important issue, about the fact that it is wrong to put lumps of coal into stockings of working Americans rather than extending the emergency unemployment insurance provisions.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:45 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. HEITKAMP).

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014—Continued

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1834

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Madam President, last week I had the opportunity to see Charles Dickens' classic "A Christmas Carol." As my colleagues know, this is a morality tale that highlights the plight of the poor, the less fortunate, and the unemployed. In fact, when Charles Dickens began to work on "A Christmas Carol," he was so upset with the plight of youth and children working in the mines in England, he started out to write about that in a novel that evolved into a tale about Christmas, "A Christmas Carol."

As I watched "A Christmas Carol" with my wife in Ford's Theater about a week ago, I was struck by the following line from the spirit of Jacob Marley. Here is what he said:

Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, benevolence, was all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business.

With that line, Dickens was advocating for those less fortunate and voicing his support for economic equality. Those words are most appropriate today at this time of year.

I come to the floor today with my friend, the Senator from Rhode Island JACK REED to share our concerns about the weak labor market, those who have been unemployed for so long, and its impact on the Nation's 11 million unemployed. Senator REED and I are especially concerned about those who have been without work for an extended period of time.