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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 7, 2014, at 2 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, JANUARY 6, 2014

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our fortress, stronghold, deliverer, shield, and refuge, we have entered a new year that promises opportunities and challenges. Inspire our lawmakers to seize this season of opportunity, committing themselves to the fulfillment of Your purposes, even in the face of challenges. Keep them in the center of Your will, aligning them with Your providential wisdom and guiding them with Your words. Lord, shield them from discouragement as they persevere with integrity. Finish the good work You have begun, for You are both alpha and omega.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. I welcome back the President pro tempore and the entire staff

and look forward to our continuing work together over the next 2 weeks and to see what happens after that.

Following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will resume the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 265, S. 1845, the unemployment insurance extension.

At 3 p.m. the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the nomination of Janet Yellen to be Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, postcloture. The time until 5:30 p.m. will be equally divided and controlled.

There will be two rollcall votes at 5:30 p.m., first on confirmation of the Yellen nomination and second on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to the unemployment insurance legislation.

There could be a series of votes after that dealing with other nominations. We will keep everyone advised as to what is going on.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 2019

Mr. REID. I am told that H.R. 2019 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows: A bill (H.R. 2019) to eliminate taxpayer financing of political party conventions and reprogram savings to provide for a 10-year pediatric research initiative through the Common Fund administered by the National Institutes of Health, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. I object to any further proceedings at this time.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard, and the bill will be placed on the calendar.

CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM

Mr. REID. I am optimistic, cautiously optimistic, that the new year will bring a renewed spirit of cooperation to this Chamber. It is very badly needed.

Last year the Senate passed a number of momentous pieces of legislation, including comprehensive immigration, a budget agreement, and a bill to prevent workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation.

There is so much more that needs to be done and there is so much left undone. There has been never-ending obstruction during the entire 5 years that President Obama has been President of the United States.

Setting that aside for a brief moment, today we will address two pressing matters held over from last year: the nomination of Janet Yellen to be head of the Federal Reserve, and extension of unemployment benefits for 1.3 million Americans still struggling to find work. Instead of celebrating the beginning of the New Year on January 1, more than 1 million Americans, including 20,000 veterans and about 20,000 Nevadans, were left wondering how they would feed their families and make their mortgage payments while they continue to look for jobs. Frankly, most of these people aren't making mortgage payments; they are renting. They are trying to make ends meet from month to month.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Today there is only one job opening for every three people searching. We have never had so many unemployed for such a long period of time.

The long-term unemployment rate is twice as high as it was any other time we have allowed emergency unemployment benefits to end. It will be catastrophic for this to happen for men and women, boys and girls.

What is more, failing to extend unemployment insurance won't only be a hardship for hard-working Americans, it will be a drag on our economy. Allowing this important lifeline to lapse will cost 240,000 jobs.

These people who are drawing unemployment benefits are just getting by. They have to buy groceries, maybe at 7-Eleven. Sometimes they go to a regular store. They have to buy gas for their vehicles. They have to buy bus tickets to get across town to look for a job. A multitude of other things they need are going to be eliminated. That will cost almost a quarter of a million jobs.

By contrast, helping Americans while they search for full-time unemployment is one of the most efficient ways to support economic growth. Each dollar we spend on unemployment insurance benefits increases the gross domestic product by \$1.50. According to leading economists—including Mark Zandi, JOHN MCCAIN's chief economic adviser when he ran for President—they agree that every dollar we spend brings back \$1.50 to our gross domestic product.

In 2012 alone, 500,000 children were kept out of poverty by unemployment benefits. That is one reason it is outrageous that Congress allowed this program—which helps tens of millions of American families with millions of children get by each year—to lapse in December is unconscionable. Today the Senate has a chance to correct this terrible omission.

Just before Christmas my colleague from Nevada, a Republican, DEAN HELLER, joined with the senior Senator from Rhode Island, JACK REED, a Democrat, to propose an extension of unemployment insurance for 1.3 million Americans who lost benefits this past week. I commend these two Senators for their compassionate stance on this issue. The Senate will vote on moving forward on this Reed-Heller bill this evening. I hope a few reasonable and empathetic Republicans will join my colleague from Nevada Mr. HELLER and help us advance this bill today.

Passing this measure is one of the best things we can do for our economy, and it is cost-effective. It is cost-effective in so many different ways, but it is cost-effective to immediately address the worst consequences of growing income inequality in this Nation.

Another way to raise millions of Americans out of poverty is to increase the minimum wage and make it a living wage. People can work two jobs, work so hard—80 hours a week, and some are working over 100 hours a

week—just to make ends meet. They work minimum-wage jobs. Minimum-wage jobs are not living-wage jobs. We are seeing this change all over the country. In the State of Washington, there is one community that has raised it to \$15 an hour.

We have to do more to help people who are willing to work. We want them to make a living wage. The reason that is so very important is that it is believed—it is not believed, polling will indicate this—that two-thirds of small businesses want the minimum wage to be increased. Why? Because it helps them grow their businesses.

When a mother or a father working two or three jobs still can't afford groceries and rent the same month, it is a sign that something is wrong in this country.

Last year the top 1 percent, the very rich, took home so much money that it broke a 1928 record percentage-wise. In the last 30 years the income of the top 1 percent has increased by 300 percent 3 times. But what has happened in that same 30 years to middle-income Americans and the middle class? Their income has dropped by 10 percent—300 percent minus 10 percent. That is not good.

Wages for middle-class families have actually fallen, as I have indicated. They have fallen by almost 10 percent while the cost of housing, food, and gas has gone up. The rich keep getting richer, the poor keep getting poorer, and the middle class is under siege.

This country can't afford to allow the gap between the fabulously wealthy and those who are barely getting by—to keep their incomes going up, the middle class going down, and the poor getting poorer. That is why Democrats this year will renew our efforts to address poverty and economic disparities.

I congratulate wealthy Americans on their good fortune. I think it is tremendous that we are a country of opportunity where people could make money. But we also believe it is time for the middle class to share in the success of economic recovery.

(Mr. MURPHY assumed the Chair.)

The Presiding Officer has spent a great deal of time on the Senate floor trying to bring to the attention of the American people what is going on in the Republican-dominated Congress. The Presiding Officer hasn't come to the floor and berated Republicans about the fact that 90 percent of the American people believe that if a person has mental disabilities, severe mental problems or is a criminal, that they shouldn't be able to buy a gun without a background check. Ninety percent of the American people agree with the Presiding Officer.

Members of Congress, or Republicans, disagree, but it is the same on the other two issues I have talked about—minimum wage. The vast majority of Americans agree with this, Democrats, Independents, and even Republicans. Unemployment insurance is the same.

But in Congress, they disagree with the American people as it relates to background checks. They disagree with the American people as it relates to minimum wage. They disagree with the American people as it relates to the unemployment insurance extension.

They cannot get off the tune they have been singing for such a long time: ObamaCare, ObamaCare, ObamaCare. As we speak, the American people are so much better off because of ObamaCare. If they have a disability, they cannot be denied health insurance coverage. Children stay on their parents' insurance until they are 26. Seniors get wellness checks, Pap smears, mammograms. Many people could never afford that. The doughnut hole for prescription drugs is being closed. Your insurance can't be terminated because someone is hurt and the bill is big. They can't do that anymore. But Republicans can't get off trying to repeal ObamaCare.

ObamaCare is here to stay. As we speak, there are 9 million people who have insurance who didn't have it before. We have about 2.5 million people who have gotten insurance on the Web, including the 14 exchanges of various States, including Nevada.

We have 3 million people who have insurance now because they are on their parents' insurance and can stay there until they are 26. Three million Americans have that because of ObamaCare, and there are about 3 million Americans who are so poor they now qualify for Medicaid. That is 9 million people who didn't have insurance before.

But what is the first thing the House of Representatives is doing? They are going to vote on ObamaCare. They voted to repeal it at least 45 times, which didn't work. We now have one Senator from Wisconsin who is filing a lawsuit today, and he is boasting about this lawsuit: It is a great deal. It would take away the health insurance of the people working in this body—all of these people, plus all of our staffs who aren't here in this building.

Here is what longtime Republican House Member JIM SENSENBRENNER from Wisconsin—with whom I and the Presiding Officer had the good fortune to serve in the House of Representatives—said:

“Senator Johnson's lawsuit is an unfortunate political stunt. I am committed to repealing ObamaCare, but the employer contribution he's attacking is nothing more than a standard benefit that most private and all federal employees receive—including the President, Sensenbrenner said.

“access in the suit will mean that Congress will lose some of its best staff and will be staffed primarily by recent college graduates who are still on their parents' insurance.”

Sensenbrenner is a longtime House Member and former chairman of the Judiciary Committee. He is expressing concerns that were shared publicly and privately by many lawmakers and senior aides about the possible “brain drain” from taking away the employer contribution. Several Republicans, led by Sen. David Vitter of Louisiana, have

floated legislative proposals that would accomplish the same goal as the Johnson lawsuit.

Sensenbrenner went on to say:

“Senator Johnson should spend his time legislating rather than litigating as our country is facing big problems that must be addressed by Congress—not the courts. All Republicans want to repeal ObamaCare, but this politically motivated lawsuit only takes public attention away from how bad all of ObamaCare really is and focuses it on a trivial issue. Fortunately, Senator Johnson’s suit is likely frivolous and will not achieve the result he’s seeking.”

As I stated in my remarks today, we have been able to get a few things done, but we have been unable to get so many important things done because the goal for the last 5 years by the Republicans in the Congress—not Republicans in the country but Republicans in the Congress—has been to do everything they could to make President Obama look bad. Remember, my counterpart said his No. 1 goal in the last Congress was to do everything he could to defeat Obama from being reelected. Well, he was elected overwhelmingly, so that was a futile effort.

We need to get back to working together, as we have always done—until this effort which has been made to disparage and damage in any way they can the President of the United States and, in the process, our country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, if I may take one moment while the distinguished leader is here.

I wish to commend Senator REID for his cooperation. He has worked very hard to bring this together. We had a very complex and very extensive immigration bill, with 300 amendments filed in the Judiciary Committee. After it went through the committee, Senator REID worked hard to get time on the floor and then we passed it with an overwhelming bipartisan majority.

Mr. REID. Would my friend yield for a question?

Mr. LEAHY. Of course.

Mr. REID. Through the Chair to my friend, the President pro tempore of the Senate, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, we hear the Republicans talking that they want to do everything they can to reduce the debt. I ask my friend, twofold: No. 1, the bible for how to reduce the debt was Bowles-Simpson. They set a goal of \$4 trillion. Right now we are almost at \$3 trillion. We have cut spending to reduce the debt by almost \$3 trillion.

Does my friend acknowledge that, by passing the bill reported out of the Judiciary Committee, it would reduce the debt by another \$1 trillion; we would basically reach the goal of Bowles-Simpson if they would just pass immigration reform?

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, addressing the majority leader through the Chair, I would note that even Grover Norquist, who is sort of the guru of many of the Republicans, testified before the Judiciary Committee that

passing this bill and putting it into law would add nearly \$1 trillion or more to the economy. All sorts of business leaders came in and said this would add to our economy. It is one of those rare cases where the AFL-CIO and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce came together because it would dramatically improve the economy, dramatically improve the wages of people, and it would lower the deficit. It is a no-brainer. That is why we came together in the Senate. With the leadership of the distinguished Senator from Nevada and others, Republicans and Democrats, we came together and we passed it.

They should take it up. If they want to make some changes, do so. I am ready to go to conference on it at a moment’s notice so we can get this bill passed and on the President’s desk.

We have shown we could do it before. We did it with the Violence Against Women Act, which they at first refused to take up in the House. Even the White House was backing off some of the parts we added to it here because they were afraid it might not go through. But Senator CRAPO and I stuck together. A bipartisan group in the House stuck together, and they passed it in the House. We passed it, and it went into law. We added sexual trafficking. It is a good bill.

We can do it, if people want to. But if we take the position that we cannot do anything, that we just want to be naysayers and nihilistic about government, then, of course, we don’t do anything. But here is a way to get the economy going. Here is a way to improve our Nation.

Frankly, I just wanted to stand and compliment the distinguished majority leader for speaking of what we can do, and I hope we do.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION EXTENSION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1845, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 265, S. 1846, a bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, Senators are permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the Reed-Heller bill, which would extend unemployment insurance for 1.3 million Americans—very critical—for 3 months, because it is the

right thing to do for these workers, and it is the smart thing to do for our economy.

Unemployment insurance has been around since the 1930s, and it has historically received bipartisan support. Indeed, I am pleased that Senator HELLER has joined me. So this is a bipartisan bill, also. This is something we have to deal with today. It is a huge crisis. As I said, 1.3 million Americans have lost their benefits as of December 28. But we can expect through this next year approximately 3 million more to exhaust their State benefits—typically 26 weeks—and not have this Federal long-term benefit available to them.

This has always received support on a bipartisan basis because it is not a red State and blue State issue. It is something which impacts this entire country. It impacts people who work. You cannot get this program unless you have a job and, through no fault of your own, you have lost that job. In this economy, people who lose jobs are competing with many others for very few jobs.

These 1.3 million Americans were pushed off an economic cliff just 9 days ago. This vital lifeline would help them cope. They were not let go from their jobs because of something they did. It was through no fault of their own, and they are searching for work in an economy which has nearly three job seekers for every one job opening.

Illustrative of this is a front-page story in the Washington Post today. In Maryland, they are opening up a new dairy operation, and what this story speaks to is something that is happening across this country in so many places:

When the Good Humor ice cream plant closed here two summers ago, more than 400 jobs and a stable, punch-the-clock way of life melted away, another in a string of plant closings that have battered this once-proud manufacturing town.

I would add parenthetically that in Connecticut, Rhode Island, west coast, east coast, north and south, we have seen this happen. Manufacturing plants close, move overseas, and shut down entirely.

The hulking plant sat vacant until a co-op of Virginia dairy farmers purchased it in summer 2013 to process milk and ice cream, though on a far smaller scale than the 60,000 cases of ice cream that global food giant Unilever churned out every day.

Randy Inman, the board president for Shenandoah Family Farms, said he expected the plant’s revival to trigger plenty of interest in its three dozen or so initial jobs. What he did not expect: 1,600 applicants and counting—a deluge.

That is what this economy is about. Skilled people lose jobs through plant closures, and suddenly they see a possibility. But it is not one job for one applicant. It is 1,600 applicants for about 36 jobs. They are trying—they are trying awfully hard. But unless we pass this legislation this evening and begin the process, we are not trying.

On the economic side of the ledger, moving away from the human dynamic, the nonpartisan Congressional