program, a very innovative program which allows people to collect for part of the week but also stay employed the rest of the week. It is a program which has helped companies all across the country, small companies in particular. We have given States more flexibility on job training. We have given States more flexibility in oversight of their programs. We have made changes. We are willing to listen to thoughtful proposals again. But we can't do it on the backs of 1.3 million Americans who have lost the only benefit they have.

If we really want to talk about job training, if we want to talk about cooperation, why haven't we been able to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act since 1998? We have not made the changes in workforce training that affect this whole country—not just the unemployed but those young people who are trying to move out of high school and junior college into the workforce. We haven't done it. Why? Well, from 1998 until 2007, we had a Republican Congress. Since 2007, we have been struggling very mightily with an economic crisis. And we have made progress.

But if we want to start cooperating, let's bring the Workforce Investment Act to the floor. It has passed the committee on a bipartisan basis. Let's bring it to the floor. Let's help people.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DURBIN. Would the Senator yield for a question?

How much time is remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 3½ minutes remaining.

Mr. DURBIN. I ask the Senator from Rhode Island under that time to yield for the following question.

I don't know if the Senator was on the floor when the Republican leader said he wanted to pay for the cost of these unemployment benefits by eliminating the individual mandate under the Affordable Care Act—which is the key element in protecting families who have children with preexisting conditions—cancer survivors, children with diabetes, children with asthma. As I understood the Republican leader, he believes that the best way to take care of people who are unemployed and can't feed their children is to deny the protections of the Affordable Care Act for those families who have children with preexisting conditions. Would the Senator from Rhode Island comment on whether that is a good trade for either side?

Mr. REED. I think it is a terrible trade. It is not just about families with children, it is about many of these working adults who, if they have a preexisting condition, lose their coverage. It is not just a question of children. That I think is very sensitive. Without the Affordable Care Act, if you get sick, you can't get coverage. The only way you can get coverage if you are middle-aged is if you are healthy and you don't need it. When you needed it, the insurance companies took it away—before the Affordable Care Act.

Mr. DURBIN. If I might ask another question to the Senator from Rhode Island from the time allotted on our side, I listened carefully to the speech given by the Republican leader this morning.

I see my colleague from New York here, so I will yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. I thank my friends from Illinois and Rhode Island.

How much time is remaining on our side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 1 minute 30 seconds.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I see what is going on here. Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle know the power of this issue but don't really want to vote for it, and so they are putting impossible logjams in the path.

Who would believe that on this side of the aisle we would delay an important part of the ACA which would hurt—as my colleagues from Illinois and Rhode Island brought out—parents who have kids with cancer? We are not going to do that, and we are not going to do it on the fly.

So what I would say to my colleagues is if you believe in unemployment benefits and extending them, pass them clean and simple. Don't play games. Don't put obstacles in their path that you know would be insurmountable. Get it done.

I make one other point. The bottom line is very simple: People want to work. People who have lost their jobs after working decades for a company are knocking on doors every day. They are going online. They are desperate to work.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. This idea that unemployment benefits encourage them not to work is balderdash.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. I yield back all time on the Republican side.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The 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. 265, S. 1845, a bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes.

Jack Reed, Richard J. Durbin, Martin Heinrich, Thomas R. Carper, Charles E. Schumer, Dianne Feinstein, Patty Murray, Bernard Sanders, Angus S. King, Jr., Al Franken, Tom Harkin, Jeff Merkley, Elizabeth Warren, Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, Richard Blumenthal, Sherrod Brown.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 1845, a bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) would have voted ''nay.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 60, nays 37, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 2 Leg.]

YEAS—60

Ayotte	Hagan	Murphy
Baldwin	Harkin	Murray
Baucus	Heinrich	Nelson
Bennet	Heitkamp	Portman
Blumenthal	Heller	Pryor
Booker	Hirono	Reed
Boxer	Johnson (SD)	Reid
Brown	Kaine	Rockefeller
Cantwell	King	Sanders
Cardin	Klobuchar	Schatz
Carper	Landrieu	Schumer
Casey	Leahy	Shaheen
Coats	Levin	Stabenow
Collins	Manchin	Tester
Coons	Markey	Udall (CO)
Donnelly	McCaskill	Udall (NM)
Durbin	Menendez	Warner
Feinstein	Merkley	Warren
Franken	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Murkowski	Wyden

NAYS—37

Alexander	Fischer	Moran
Barrasso	Flake	Paul
Blunt	Graham	Risch
Boozman	Grassley	Roberts
Burr	Hoeven	Rubio
Chambliss	Inhofe	Scott
Coburn	Isakson	Sessions
Cochran	Johanns	Shelby
Corker	Johnson (WI)	Toomey
Cornyn	Kirk	Vitter
Crapo	Lee	Wicker
Cruz	McCain	
Enzi	McConnell	

NOT VOTING—3

Begich	Hatch	Thune

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 60, the nays are 37. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. I move to reconsider the vote.

Mrs. BOXER. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It is not an order to reconsider; it is a separate cloture motion.

Mr. REID. I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am so pleased that six Republicans—six out of all the Republicans—joined with us—every Democrat present—to reach that magic 60 votes we needed to proceed to consider the unemployment compensation bill.

I think it is so important to recognize that Federal unemployment programs have been extended no less than 28 times since 1958—15 times under Republican Presidents and 13 times under Democratic Presidents. So this is nothing new—this is nothing new—and the fact that it has been made such a big deal is incomprehensible given the circumstances of us recovering from the greatest recession since the Great Depression, with a very special number, a very large number. The fact is we have a long-term unemployment rate that is very high, way higher than normal.

The fact is, since we have extended Federal unemployment benefits so many times it should not be a problem, it is shocking it is a problem. In November 2008, unemployment insurance was extended with bipartisan support without an offset, which seems to be the excuse the Republicans have for not voting with us.

What is very interesting about that is these are the same Republicans who voted to go to war twice and put those wars on the credit card—never paid for them. These are the same Republicans who voted for tax cuts to billionaires and multimillionaires and never paid for it. Yet still, when it comes to the middle class, oh, they cannot possibly extend unemployment benefits without paying for it. If anyone knows anything about economics, they should know that when we are trying to stimulate jobs and stimulate the economy—not depress jobs and lose jobs—we do not contract spending.

We have already dealt with deficits, and we continue to deal with deficits. I want to show the progress we have made under President Obama. This is something we never hear from the Republicans. They would make us feel deficits are raging, as they were under George W. Bush.

When President Obama took over, he inherited a $1.4 trillion deficit from George Bush. George Bush inherited surpluses from Bill Clinton. It took him—and I am exaggerating—15 minutes to change it: two wars on a credit card, no problem, no offsets; tax cuts to billionaires, no problem, no offsets—and the deficits soared to $1.4 trillion.

When President Obama came in, he not only had to deal with raging deficits, he had to deal with the worst recession since the Great Depression, and all we hear from the Republican side is: This President did not do enough here, did not do enough there. Nothing is enough.

We are now in a situation where this deficit has been cut in half—cut in half—down to $560 billion, and we want to see it disappear, just as we did when Bill Clinton was President and the Democrats passed a budget that balanced and set in motion a surplus, which was destroyed when George W. Bush was President. Let's be clear on the history. There are facts. There are stubborn things. They are real. These are the facts.

Now we come to a place where we want to extend long-term unemployment benefits for those who got deeply hurt in this great recession, and we hear that we have to offset it, which goes against the economic experts who say it is important that we stimulate this economy and keep these jobs rolling.

Remember, in the President George W. Bush recession, we had a similar extended benefit. It was not offset. It was extended twice in 2003 with strong bipartisan support and no offset. So why is it when a Republican is President the Republicans say: OK, let's help the unemployed without an offset, without spending cuts. But when a Democrat is President, oh no, we could not do it?

Honestly, it just is so political on its face. Democrats have been consistent. Whether a Republican is President or a Democrat is President, we want to help the middle class. We want to help the unemployed. That is the difference between the parties. I say God bless those six Republicans who joined with us today so we can do our job and help the long-term unemployed.

The long-term unemployment rate is 2.6 percent—the long-term unemployment rate, twice as high as it was at any other time that these extended unemployment benefits were allowed to expire. Let me say that again, how urgent this is. The long-term unemployment rate—that means people who have been out of work for a long time, 6 months or more, is 2.6 percent, twice as high as it was at any other time in our history where we have extended unemployment benefits.

There are almost three unemployed people for every job opening nationwide. Let me repeat. There are almost three unemployed people for every job opening nationwide. We need to understand, while some of our Republican colleagues are blaming the unemployed and saying it is a disservice to give them unemployment compensation, that these folks are actively looking for jobs. That is part of the deal.

First of all, this is insurance. Second of all, they are looking for work. Third of all, they are stuck in the situation where it is not their fault. A Christmas present was given by the Republicans to the 1.3 million unemployed. That Christmas present was: Sorry, you are not getting your unemployment benefits. We left here without being able to deal with it.

But today we have a chance, a chance to do the right thing. In California, my State alone, there are 222,000 people who have lost their extended unemployment benefits. An additional 1.9 million people are projected to lose their benefits over the next 6 months if unemployment insurance is not extended.

What are these grandiose amounts of money that people get when they are long-term unemployed: $300 a week, on average—$300 a week, on average. So for our colleagues to say that people want to be purposefully unemployed to collect $300 a week, could I tell you, try living on $300 a week. If you are lucky, you can keep a roof over your head but you have to be pretty lucky. If you are lucky, you can get maybe a little bit of nutrition. That $300 a week is a lifeline. They can put some groceries on the table, pay their rent, and cover the expenses they have in looking for a job.

This keeps American families afloat at a critical time. I want to give you a few stories from my home State of the real face of long-term unemployment and why we have to vote to extend these benefits. One woman wrote:

> I am 58 years old and am receiving unemployment benefits for the first time in my life. I am currently receiving my first federal extension. I was laid off because the nonprofit I was working for lost a major portion of its state funding.
>
> Getting unemployment benefits is not preventing me from looking for work. In fact, people getting extended unemployment benefits are required to prove they're looking for work. I spend hours every week filling out applications and posting my resume without result.
>
> Tell me, how am I, and thousands like me supposed to pay my rent and eat? I agree that Washington should ''focus on job creation'' but that should be in addition to, not instead of, extending benefits. I beg you,—

She writes to me—

> Please extend unemployment benefits. Thank you.

Another Californian wrote from Los Angeles:

> After working 27 years for one employer, the bad economy finally led to my layoff and my first time ever on unemployment.

Remember, this person worked 27 years for one employer.

> I was told that because of the bad economy, I would get up to 63 weeks with the Federal Extension. Now I'm being told without further action from Congress and the President, my benefits end at the end of the year even though that leaves me 3 months short. After paying into the system for 32 years, this is the only time I have ever asked for anything back and this is how I'm treated.

There are other stories. Kaitlyn of Twentynine Palms, 24 years old, lost her $450-a-week benefit when the Federal extension expired. She is a Marine Corps veteran, the mother of two young kids. She has been searching for work. The family cannot move because her husband, a veteran of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars must remain near the combat center until he is discharged from the Marines.

The loss of her benefits will cut deeply into the couple's income. Smith said, ''The family is already skimping on basics, including heat.''

Including heat.

''I have to keep the house at 55 degrees even though I have two little girls, ages 2½ and 1½.''

Keeping the house at 55 degrees. That is a story which appeared in the Los Angeles Times on New Year's Eve.

Laura Walker, a 63-year-old paralegal has been looking for work since January when she was laid off from a California law firm. She counted on her benefits that have now run out.

Not all of us have savings and a lot of us have to take care of family because of what happened in the economy, said Walker, of Santa Clarita, who said she has applied for at least three jobs a week and shares an apartment with her unemployed son, his wife and two children. It's going to put my family and me out on the streets.

That appeared in Bloomberg News on December 31.

We have a story of a software engineer who lives in San Diego County. She is one of 18,000 San Diego County residents to lose their payments. She says her $450 weekly unemployment payment goes to food, dental insurance, and other living necessities. She has tried zealously to find work. She has volunteered. She has attended meetings. She has cold called. She has written letters. She has joined the Project Management Institute of San Diego. She said:

I haven't been sitting here watching soap operas. I would go to work tomorrow, or today. I really am tired of this.

That story appeared in the San Diego Tribune. I ask unanimous consent that several additional stories be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Cindy Snow, of Beaumont, CA, lost her job as a social worker in April when the San Bernardino school system terminated the child-care program where she worked. Her husband, employed in the construction industry, has been without a job since 2009. They have been relying on assistance from the California Housing Finance Agency to cover a $1,424-a-month payment on their home.

When she loses her unemployment benefits, she said, the family will no longer qualify for the housing assistance. ''Why are they using us as pawns? They're playing games with people's lives,'' Snow said, referring to politicians in Washington.

—Bloomberg News, 12/30/13

Steven Swanson of Madera Ranchos, CA, worked for 33 years in wholesale, mostly in beverage sales, before losing his job in 2011. Since then, he estimates that he's submitted resumes for more than 500 positions and in the last six months filled out more than 200 job applications—all to no avail.

''I want a job, I want to work,'' said Swanson whose daughter and son-in-law live with him and pay rent to help him keep up the mortgage on the house he owns. ''As a taxpayer, I paid into the system for a lot of years. For them to just shut it off and say, 'These people need to get weaned off and get a job'—well, yeah, I need to get a job. But for them to suggest that I just go get welfare or go get food stamps—that's why I'm frustrated with the Republican Party. They just don't get it.''

—Fresno Bee, 1/2/14

Mrs. BOXER. So here you have the facts. I will just recap them. We have a situation where the long-term unemployment rate—those looking for work and out of work for more than 6 months is higher than it has ever been, 2.6 percent.

We have a situation where we are coming out of the worst recession since the Great Depression. Even though President Obama has done an amazing job on job creation, creating 8 million private sector jobs in his time—8 million private sector jobs under President Obama. We lost more than 600 million private sector jobs by the end of 8 years under George W. Bush. But we still have a problem. How many private sector jobs were lost in the recession? More than 8 million. So we need to restore those jobs.

So this is not the time—when you go for a job and there are three applicants for one job—to tell people they are cut off from unemployment.

Here is the issue. In a State that has a really good economy with a very low unemployment rate, less than about 5 percent, the full extension does not go forward. It only goes forward to States that have a high unemployment rate. So it is targeted. It is not going to States where there is a boom going on or a really strong economy. It goes to States that have a tough unemployment rate, and have all these people coming for one job opening.

In some States it is five to one. Remember, the average is almost three to one, three people for every job. In some States they are doing better. Maybe there is just two people for every job. But there are three nationally. In some States it is way higher. So we are just saying at this particular point in time: Let's extend this for a 3-month period. Do it without offsets, because when you offset you cut something else and you constrict the economy at a time when you should be expanding it. Two-thirds of the time we have never paid for unemployment extensions. Under George W. Bush, who started the current program, we never did—at least in the beginning we did not.

We care about jobs in this country. Everybody does. If we extend unemployment insurance, we would prevent the loss of 240,000 jobs. You say: Why? That is because when folks get their checks, what do they do with it? They go down to the store, and they spend it buying food for their families. They do not hold back. They pay their rent. The landlord gets that check and spends that check. So it is an immediate boon to the economy and an immediate fact that we can definitely prove that jobs are not lost because economic activity in those communities goes down.

We are talking, in my State, of 46,000 jobs that will be lost if we do not correct this problem. The Congressional Budget Office has said another year-long extension, if we do this and do it for a year—this particular bill is only a few months extension—if we did it for a year, we would add two-tenths of 1 percent to our gross domestic product.

Extending unemployment insurance is one of the most cost effective ways to grow the economy and create jobs. In the end, that reduces the deficit. So all of this talk to cut this and cut that to pay for this, it is counterproductive because you will pull back on gross domestic product growth, and there will be less revenue coming into the government.

So I do not see how this extension of unemployment is anything but a win-win. It is an obvious win-win. If you took the politics out of it, you would do the right thing, Republicans, because you have done it in the past. When Republicans were President, you did it without an offset. You did not hold up a bill. You passed it. You stimulated the economy. You create more jobs. The deficit then goes down even faster than it is going down. Look at how it is coming down.

There is no reason why we have to cut something that then depresses spending over here, while doing unemployment over here. It does not make sense. I was an economics major a long time ago. So I am not saying that I am up to date on the latest theories. But one thing we know makes sense: When you are trying to create jobs, when you are trying to get out of a recession, you do not turn to austerity, especially since we have wrapped our arms around this deficit. It has been hard to do. But who would have thought we could have done it. We did it.

So we do not have to say now that, while we give an unemployment extension on the one hand, we are going to cut something on the other hand and lose those jobs over there. It does not make sense. Then you put those people on unemployment. It really does not make sense.

Would I vote to give a little higher tax rate to the billionaires? I just watched a documentary called ''Park Avenue.'' This is what they said. I have not fact-checked it, so we have to fact check this. But this is what the documentary said: Approximately 400 or 500 families are worth more than 150 million Americans—net worth. That is what they said. We are going to fact-check it this afternoon. If I am wrong, I will correct the RECORD.

That is what the movie said: 450, 500 families have more net worth than half the population of America.

That is the income inequality.

So would I pay for this by putting a little tax on the billionaires? Oh, yes, I would. But I don't wish to start cutting programs: education, housing, health care, whatever they come up with, which then means people would be laid off.

We can do this. We are not afraid to cut spending. We are not afraid to reduce the deficit. We did it under Bill Clinton. We got a surplus, and we are doing it under Barack Obama.

I defy any Republican to show me how this shapes up in a bad way with the Bush record, which was taking surpluses that George Bush inherited and turning it into massive deficits and literally no job creation. It was 1.1 million jobs created, compared to cutting

the deficit in half after President Barack Obama inherited the worst recession since the Great Depression, creating 8 million new jobs in the private sector alone and reducing the deficit by half.

We know what we are doing, despite what they say, and it is OK, because at the end of the day the facts are the facts. I didn't make up this chart. This is a chart that comes from the Congressional Budget Office. These are their numbers.

The stories I have told and that I have put in the RECORD are poignant. There are people out there who are at their wit's end holding their lives together, keeping their homes at 55 degrees when they have little children in them, not knowing if they can pay the rent, not knowing if they can go to the grocery store, not knowing if they will be homeless, not knowing what the future holds.

The least we can do, the least we can do in this Chamber is stand and fight for them.

What are we here for anyway? Are we here for the Koch brothers? I hope not. The billionaires are doing just fine. This country is a great country. It is a great country because everyone can dream to go to the top. But if we lose the middle class and we are not there with the safety net when they fall, we will lose everything and this country will not resemble the America I grew up in and that I knew. I had nothing and my husband had nothing. He lost his father when he was only a young boy. His mother was a school crossing guard and raised three boys.

In this country, my husband went to college, to law school, and started his own law firm, his own small business. That is what America is.

But when we were in trouble when we were young, we knew we had the hope and the dream. It was real. It wasn't unreachable. It was reachable because there was a safety net, and part of that safety net is unemployment insurance. Part of that safety net is extending it for the long-term unemployed.

I am going to close with a couple of facts about health care because I am so tired of the ''bad news bears'' coming out here every day whining about ObamaCare. I wish to tell everyone some of the good news about health care because we don't hear it enough.

Across this country, over 2.1 million Americans have enrolled through the exchanges in private health insurance—2.1. It is pretty amazing, and I wish to state some more facts.

In California, I wish to tell you what is happening. We have our own exchange, Covered California, coveredCA.com. What has happened so far we don't hear around the beltway. All we hear is: ObamaCare is bad. ObamaCare is bad.

I wish to tell some stories of what is truly happening and these facts will catch up as well, such as 400,000 Californians now have coverage through the California exchange, private coverage.

We have more than 200,000 Californians on Medi-Cal, which is California's Medicaid Program.

A truly great number is more than 1 million California families—not people, families, so we are talking about probably a few million people—have begun the process of applying for coverage.

Across the country, I can state—and we know we have had our bumps in the road—today we are resolving some of those bumps. We had about 2 percent of the people who wound up in a problem where they couldn't get the insurance they wanted. President Obama fixed that problem.

Now we have that 2-percent problem down to way less than .2 percent, very few families. Let's get that clear. Will there be more bumps? Yes. Will we fix them, yes. Are we still worried about the few thousand families who need our help? Yes. We will fix it.

I don't shy away from this. If we have a problem, we fix it. Somebody point out to me any business that doesn't have a few problems in the rollout, and I will say that is pretty amazing.

We had problems with the rollout. It was bad. We are fixing it, and the proof is in the pudding. Today, 9 million Americans have new secure health insurance; 2.1 million, on that other chart, have received it through all the different exchanges, 2.1 million; 3.9 million have enrolled in Medicaid; and 3 million young adults can now stay on their parents' plans. There were bumps in the road, we fixed them, and we will continue to do so, but this is a good story.

I wish to read from some constituents who have written to me about the Affordable Care Act. These are real people speaking, not politicians, not I—them.

Mary Natwick of Monrovia signed up for a platinum plan for her family of three through the Covered California Web site. Even though she makes too much to qualify for a subsidy and even though she purchased the highest level plan, she is saving $1,000 a month on her premiums and she has a lower deductible.

Mary wrote:

> Needless to say, we are thrilled beyond belief. Please accept our gratitude, and pass on our thanks to all who voted for this bill.

This is a constituent who likes ObamaCare and she thanks the Senator from Oregon, Mr. MERKLEY.

David Specter of Ventura and his wife are young retirees, 62 and 58. Their old premiums cost $882 a month. Now because David and his wife qualify for subsidized premiums on the Covered California exchange, they will pay a total of $434 a month with lower deductibles. That is $400 a month in savings. Calculate what that means in 1 year, $400 a month. They can spend it in the neighborhood, in the movies, at a restaurant, in the grocery store, on a vacation, gifts for their grandkids.

David wrote:

> Thank you so much for supporting the Affordable Care Act. It may not be perfect, but it sure makes a big difference for us.

I think that sums it up for me. The Affordable Care Act, ObamaCare, may not be perfect, but it sure is making a difference for Americans—so far 9 million strong, and it will be way more than that.

Maya Walls of San Diego was diagnosed with breast cancer at 27 years of age. Since that diagnosis 20 years ago, she has either kept working to maintain insurance or paid very high COBRA premiums in between her jobs to keep her coverage and to avoid preexisting condition exclusions. That is because, as we know, until ObamaCare became the law of the land, insurers could walk out on people once they got sick.

Two years ago, Maya lost her job. In September she held her breath and went without coverage. On October 1, she found out she finally qualified for California's new expanded Medicaid Program, which she had never qualified for before.

She wrote:

> Please do not give an inch on the ACA. This is the first time I have taken a deep breath in 20 years. Thank you.

I see we have a new Presiding Officer, and I wish to retell this story.

This is a story of one of my constituents who was diagnosed with breast cancer at 27 years of age. Since that diagnosis she was so scared she would lose her insurance because of her preexisting condition that she kept paying very high COBRA premiums. When she finally ran out of options, she lost her insurance and just found out she qualifies for the new expanded Medicaid.

She wrote:

> Please do not give an inch on the ACA. This is the first time I have taken a deep breath in 20 years.

I say to the American people—I hope a few will hear my voice—nothing in life is perfect. No bill is perfect. No business is perfect. No one is perfect; no individual, no President, no Senator for sure. But we see a problem, and we do our best to step up to the plate.

If things go wrong, as it did with the rollout, we get mad about it, but we fix it, and we don't go back to the problems we had before of kids being kicked off their parents' insurance and having no insurance, of people being told: Sorry. You have asthma or you have cancer or you have high blood pressure. We can't help you.

Those days are over. Being a woman was a preexisting condition. Having been a victim of sexual assault was a preexisting condition. If someone was in an abusive relationship, they said: You are just too high of a risk, and they walked away.

There were lifetime caps on our policies. There were annual caps on our policies, gender discrimination, preexisting condition discrimination, all of that.

I am going to say anyone who wants to repeal ObamaCare or the Affordable Care Act will go back to those days.

I will never forget reading a New American Foundation study that said,

if we hadn't changed health care in this country, we were getting to a place where premiums would have risen to about 50 percent of our incomes, on average, for at least half of American households. At that point, who is going to be able to afford insurance?

I met people who were praying on their hands and knees to turn 65. As we get older we say: Oh, my God. I want to stay young.

People were saying: Let me get to my 65th birthday so I can get Medicare because I have no insurance.

That is what I heard from my constituents.

What I hear may not be perfect, but it is saving their lives: Fix what is a problem, Senator. You can.

I thank the President for acting to make sure the people who got those cancellation notices—it was about 2 percent of all Americans—were able to stay on similar insurance for an extended period of time.

Yes, we will fix what the problems are, but we will also rejoice when we get letters such as I am getting from all over my State. I ask unanimous consent to have three additional stories printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

John Nunnemacher is a 43-year-old freelance graphic artist from San Jose and the last time he had health insurance was 15 years ago, when his employer paid for his coverage. But as of January 1, John is covered by a plan he can finally afford. He told the San Jose Mercury News, ''I hoped this day would come. I worried that it wouldn't. And I'm very glad that it finally has.''

Amy Torregrossa, 27, is from San Francisco. She has been without insurance since July, when coverage through her partner's company ended because he changed jobs. She has a congenital heart defect and a history of high blood pressure. She no longer runs, she said, because ''if I twist my ankle or get hit by a car. . .any doctor visit is so expensive.'' She signed up on Covered California for a silver plan costing $310 a month. She made sure her cardiologist was in the insurer's network and plans to schedule a checkup for early next year.

Michel Stong, 57, is a self-employed product designer. For many years, she could not afford any insurance at all because of a false-positive test for lupus, which incorrectly flagged her as someone with a pre-existing condition. For the past 15 years, she could afford only catastrophic insurance. Now, thanks to a tax credit, she will pay $55 a month with no deductible and a $3 copay for doctor visits. ''It just blows my mind that I can get health insurance for this price! I can finally afford checkups, tests, and age-related visits.''

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, we will tell those stories and we will counteract the stories we hear.

In closing, I wish to say—because I know the Senator from Oregon has been waiting patiently—the reason I took to the floor to talk about health care is to make the point that it is the middle class and the working poor who are truly being helped—that is so important in this time of income inequality—and make the point that we make sure we extend the unemployment compensation to the long-term unemployed as they, through no fault of their own, are trying to keep their house and home together, which is so critical.

I thank my six Republican colleagues who showed courage, stepped up, and allowed us to get on this bill. I hope we pass it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I wish to make a few very brief comments, and the first is this: In the budget agreement that was hammered out right before we left for the holidays, a provision was inserted by Congressman RYAN that changed the COLA details for our veterans. This provision is outrageous. It is changing the retirement deal in the middle of a person's service or, for many of our veterans, even after they have retired—between the time they have retired and the time they reach age 62. In the coming days of this week, I hope this body can come together and reverse this provision which unfairly changes the terms of retirement for our veterans. Our veterans stood up for us as a nation when they were overseas, and we must stand up for them here at home.

Secondly, I would like to express hope for the bipartisan spirit that led to an agreement to debate the bill regarding restoring emergency unemployment. I had eight townhalls over the weekend, and I can tell you that it strikes people as fundamentally unfair that States with high unemployment, such as my home State of Oregon—that these weeks of emergency unemployment, which was a deal hammered out in a bipartisan fashion under a Republican President, President Bush, should be set asunder.

Indeed, on December 28, 18,000 Oregon families got a lump of coal in their stockings, and in the course of this coming year another 58,000 Oregon families will be thrown out in the cold, if you will, due to the failure to reauthorize this program. Indeed, the failure to reauthorize it not only affects directly those families who need a longer bridge to the next job because of the high unemployment levels, but it also affects the economy, destroying an estimated 4,000 jobs. Our citizens want to see us create jobs, not destroy jobs.

So I hope the bipartisan spirit that led to our agreeing to debate restoring the emergency unemployment program will lead to our actually reauthorizing the emergency unemployment program.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, this new year represents an opportunity for us to refocus and plan for our year ahead. Unfortunately, for millions of Americans their focus will be on trying to stay afloat over the next year while they search for work. All of us here know there is no more important issue for middle-class families across America right now than jobs and the economy. This is what they want their elected officials to be focused on, and it is exactly what I think we ought to be working on every day.

By reaching a bipartisan agreement last month, we did a number of things to work toward that goal. First of all and importantly, we showed the American people that Members of Congress can work together, that we can listen to each other, and that we can get into a room and talk frankly without trying to hurt each other politically. Second, by breaking through that partisanship, we finally ended that seemingly never-ending cycle of lurching from crisis to crisis. Third, we showed that ''compromise'' isn't a dirty word and that there is a big coalition that is ready to make some sacrifices politically to get things done. Finally and importantly, for our efforts to continue to grow our economy, we gave American families and businesses the certainty they need to grow.

Of course, there is much more to do. As much as we are heartened by the headlines that predict a strong economy this year, we understand just how fragile our recovery still is, with millions of Americans still out of work.

Now is the time to redouble our efforts, not shrink from the challenges we face, because the truth is that all the economic predictions in the world mean nothing if we don't continue to support policies that help our middle class. That work absolutely starts with extending unemployment benefits for the millions of Americans who have been losing their benefits since December 28.

Because unemployment assistance goes right back into the economies of communities large and small, nonpartisan economists have found it is one of the most effective ways to build a recovery that lasts. Those same economists have said that failure to continue these benefits will cost us over 200,000 jobs. And renewing these benefits is simply the right thing to do at a time when millions of American families continue to teeter on the brink in States where unemployment remains stubbornly high.

I have come to the Senate floor today with the hope that we can continue with the bipartisan momentum we saw with today's cloture vote and that we have seen over the last few weeks and take a final vote to provide a lifeline for millions of Americans. This should be an easy issue. It would be simply wrong to cut off the support while our economy continues to struggle and so many workers are really having difficulty finding work. Right now, in fact, there are three unemployed workers for every single job opening. If every opening were filled tomorrow, we would still have more than 7 million American workers across the country without a job to even apply for. More

than one-third of all unemployed workers have been out of a job for 6 months or longer—above historic averages and higher than in past recoveries.

Millions of Americans are unemployed today not because they do not want to work, not because they do not have valuable skills, but simply because they found themselves in an economy that isn't creating jobs as quickly as needed. These unemployed workers are desperate to get back on the job, and unemployment benefits make all the difference for them and their families while they scour the want ads, pound the pavement, and send out resume after resume.

I have received story after story from workers and families across my home State of Washington about what unemployment benefits have meant to them and what losing them would mean for their future. These men and women can't afford to have the rug pulled out from under them and are now struggling with each day that passes.

One of these stories came from a woman named Carol from Puyallup in my home State. She is a nurse. She was laid off from her job. She decided that in order to make ends meet she would start her own legal nurse consulting business, so she enrolled in classes to help her hone her entrepreneurial skills. While taking those classes, Carol relied on her unemployment benefits to get by. Then, not only were her benefits slashed significantly due to sequestration, but Carol just found out she was one of the 25,000 people in Washington State whose benefits were completely cut off on December 28.

As a leader in the classroom, Carol has spoken to many other soon-to-be business owners who are suffering. In the face of unexpected job loss, they now feel as if they are being punished for deciding to chart a new course in their lives. They are creating work for themselves and potentially others but now have to decide whether they can continue following that dream without the critical support unemployment benefits provide them.

Carol is not alone. I heard from a woman who was laid off from her job at a plant in Keyport, WA, early last year. She told me:

> Living in Kitsap County, we are geographically isolated, and finding work with so many qualified applicants right now is much more difficult. This year, I have applied for over 200 jobs and in spite of a stellar resume, have only gotten four phone interviews. I have lowered my standards throughout the year and applied for jobs far below my pay grade to no avail . . . my husband and I have had to claim bankruptcy . . . and I truly worry about losing my home and displacing my children.

Madam President, that is what people are facing today.

Finally, there is Traci, a woman from Everett. She is a former executive assistant with 20 years of experience. After taking time off from work to care for her dying mother and a daughter who was suffering from bipolar disorder and drug addiction, Traci found herself without a job. Shortly after her mother passed, Traci fell ill, making it difficult for her to look for work.

While Traci was receiving unemployment benefits, they were barely enough to cover the care her daughter required. Traci told me that she now can't afford food and has lost over 50 pounds. She even asked that I send her a video of the speech I am making right here as she won't be able to tune in today because she had to get rid of her television in the process of finding savings. Like so many others, Traci is searching high and low for that one break, and she told me, ''I just need time for someone to give me a chance.''

For Traci, unemployment benefits are not the solution. A job is what she wants. But they provide her with some critical support while she takes care of her family and tries to find that work.

Those are just a few of the stories I have heard, but there are a lot like them. Millions of people across America, including an almost additional 28,000 in my State, stand to lose the benefits they count on if Congress doesn't act soon. These workers are not looking for a handout. They do not want to be a burden. But they need support while they work to get back on their feet and back on the job.

In this struggling economy, renewing these benefits is truly crucial. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has said that renewing unemployment benefits is one of the most effective policy tools we have to boost the economy and get money in the pockets of consumers. So I am really hopeful the Senate will act quickly, without political games, because failure to do so wouldn't just be devastating for the families who count on this, it would also hurt many small businesses and communities to have the billions of dollars pulled away from consumers who spend it every month on food and rent and clothing.

Last month's budget deal provided us with a glimmer of bipartisan hope coming into this new year. However, we have to continue working together to focus on improving the economy for middle-class Americans. We cannot afford to allow this lifeline to be cut off.

The stories I shared today, like so many others, are heartbreaking, but they also show the fierce determination exhibited by so many who are out of work in the struggle to get back on their feet. They are the stories of people who are applying for work far below their own qualifications, going back to school to earn the skills needed to change careers or waking up every day to scour for jobs in their communities that all too often lack opportunity. I believe it is Congress that needs to match their determination and grit. We took an important first step today, and I know unemployed workers I have heard from are watching. Today's vote is a glimmer of hope for them. We can't let it fade. We need to move on and pass this extension quickly, and the House needs to follow suit.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, what is the parliamentary situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in postcloture on the motion to proceed to S. 1845.

FARM BILL CONFERENCE

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I congratulate Senator REID, who I know worked extraordinarily hard to get the votes for this.

I read something someone wrote in the press, saying they are afraid that Senator REID didn't talk about these issues enough yesterday on the floor. I would point out that you can either talk or do. I thought he spoke quite well, but he basically spent the time lining up the votes and won. A lot of people talk about what they want to do. Senator REID usually gets it accomplished. As one who has served here longer than anybody else in this body, I would rather see people get things done, and he did.

Speaking of things to get done in this new year, the farm bill remains as one of the Nation's top legislative priorities. Yet it has languished in Congress's in-box. As the Senate begins this new session, it is a relief—at last—to be able to say that there are new glimmers of hope that Congress is nearing the point of being able to complete work on a farm bill.

We passed this farm bill twice in the Senate. I compliment the chair of the Agriculture Committee, Senator STABENOW. She brought together Democrats and Republicans, many of us who served at one time or another as either chair or ranking member or both on that committee, and said: Why don't we just do it the old-fashioned way? Instead of just talking about it, why don't we actually sit down, write it, and bring something to the floor that can pass? We did, and it passed twice. While over in the House, the bill languished for quite some time before they decided to move forward.

Chairwoman STABENOW and Chairman LUCAS from the House worked throughout the holiday break. My own staff, Adrienne Wojciechowski and Rebekah Weber, have worked very hard with them to produce a bipartisan, comprehensive bill that addresses the needs of farmers, families, communities, and taxpayers.

A farm bill is a dynamic element of our agriculture economy, and of our overall national economy. A farm bill touches every family, in ways large and small. It has now been more than 460 days since the last farm bill expired. That is well over a year ago. Since then, American farmers have

struggled to make long-term planting decisions, and more than 20 programs—such as those affecting organic certification cost-sharing, beginning farmers, relief from livestock disasters, renewable energy, and rural small businesses—all have been stranded without funding. Rural small businesses are a major part of my State and the Presiding Officer's State. But every State has some rural area that is extremely important.

This farm bill limbo is part of a string of artificial made-by-Congress dilemmas. Farm bill limbo hurts not only farmers, but their communities, and our economy. It hampers efforts to help those who are struggling the most in our communities, with food security for their families. It holds us back from making greater gains toward energy security.

Last month, the Republican leadership in the House of Representatives proposed a short farm bill extension. Short extensions are nothing new here on Capitol Hill. Most of us know them by the term ''kicking the can down the road.'' They patch things over from one crisis to the next. But just as a temporary extension to fund government offers neither certainty nor meaningful change, a short extension of the farm bill would not provide farmers the certainty they need to plan, or funding for stranded programs. Farming is a business, and saddling farmers with this needless uncertainty makes their difficult work even more difficult. Even worse, the proposed House extension would prolong direct payment subsidies for another year, senselessly costing taxpayers untold millions of dollars. At this point, the only acceptable path forward is to deliver a full, five-year, comprehensive farm bill by the end of January. Moving forward on the farm bill not only will avoid the so-called ''dairy cliff,'' but it also will help families put food on the table, improve conservation efforts, support regional farming, and put an end to wasteful subsidies.

This farm bill marks the seventh time that I have served as a member of a Farm Bill Conference Committee. I know how difficult it is to bring complex, five-year bills to the floor and ultimately to final passage after a conference. I don't in any way diminish the difficulty in that. I know; I have been there, and I have done that.

While there have been many significant changes in agricultural policy since the 1981 farm bill, which I had the privilege to write, one thing has remained the same: No farm bill is easy, and no farm bill is perfect. But to finalize a farm bill, the Senate and House must work together to reach bipartisan agreement. It means, whether you are a Republican or Democrat, forget the symbolism and start dealing with the substance. Stop rhetoric and go to reality.

The conference committee is making steady progress, and Chairwoman STABENOW and Chairman LUCAS deserve credit, and our appreciation, for working closely together to bridge the wide differences between our two bills. The cuts it includes will not go unnoticed, as we have already seen spending reductions from the sequester, followed by the end of the Recovery Act nutrition benefits. We can talk here on the floor. We are all going to collect our paycheck every month. But we sometimes forget these cuts and policy changes affect real people in real ways. So we have to continue to do the best we can.

Speaking as a Vermonter, I would note that every farm bill is important to Vermont, just as every farm bill is important to every State represented in this body. Farm bills make real differences in our quality of life, and the fact that Congress every 5 years or so would renew and pass a farm bill was once something Americans could take for granted. This is the first time we have not been able to do so.

The delays have been unfortunate, and they have been needless. But I am increasingly hopeful that this recent dark chapter is coming to a close. Farmers and families around the Nation are looking to us to pass forward-looking, fiscally responsible, and regionally sensitive food and farm policy—and the two have to be together, both the food and the farm policy. Farmers have to be able to plan, but families have to know, when their children go to school, they are going to be fed. Every teacher will tell you that a hungry child doesn't learn. If children aren't learning, what are we doing for the next generation? That is our responsibility.

Now is the time, without further delay, to enact a farm bill that will strengthen the Nation and support the economy. I know we are up to this challenge. We have done it twice already in this body, forging a bipartisan coalition. I am hoping the other body, notwithstanding some of the Republicans who tried to block it, will come forward and speak, not just for a small part of one political party, but speak for all Americans.

Before I yield, I ask unanimous consent that all the time during the recess count postcloture on the motion to proceed to S. 1845.

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

Mr. LEAHY. 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 12:32 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION EXTENSION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, last month the President of the United States gave a speech on what has come to be known by the code words ''income inequality,'' which means different things to different people. He also talked about a very important aspect of that, and that is upward income mobility. In other words, we want to make sure that somebody who goes to work in a restaurant bussing tables can work their way up the income and education ladder to where they can actually own their own restaurant and create jobs and opportunities for other people. The President called it ''the defining challenge of our time.''

Well, the timing, coming as it has, one might be forgiven from wondering whether the President and his allies want to change the subject from ObamaCare. We know that the rollout of ObamaCare has been an unmitigated disaster, and, frankly, there is more to come. We can certainly understand why the President might want to change the subject. But while he is changing the subject, Republicans should embrace the challenge of discussing this: What are the policies that have resulted in income inequality and insufficient upward mobility when it comes to jobs in America?

Of course, the President, you might predict, has talked about his proposed solutions, which are creating more government programs and more spending, including up to $6 billion of money that we have to borrow from China and our other creditors just to extend the unemployment insurance program by 3 months. My question is: What happens after that 3 months? I don't want to be rash, but I will make a prediction that the Democrats will say: We need another 3 months. After that, they will say: We need another 3 months. Before you know it, unemployment insurance has been extended beyond the half-year mark, which is the basic program, to another full year beyond that at a cost of $25 billion.

Just to put all of this in context, the Federal Government spent $250 billion for extended unemployment insurance benefits since 2008. Of course, the President did not mention some of the primary causes for income inequality and the loss of upward mobility because he is responsible for a lot of that, along with his allies. He failed to mention that under his administration America has suffered the longest period of high unemployment since the Great Depression, and he failed to mention his signature health care law. I mentioned that a moment ago. He is trying to pivot to another subject, but inevitably we find ourselves coming back to ObamaCare and its negative impact on job creation and the 40-hour workweek.

We know that ObamaCare has done a number of things in the short period of time since it began the rollout, which was October 1st. Millions of people have lost their existing insurance coverage. In fact, more people have lost their insurance coverage than have