

and keep pushing for commonsense reforms that will actually help people get the care and what they wanted all along, which was better access to quality, affordable health care.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes and that following my remarks Senator FRANKEN be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes and Senator MARKEY be permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes.

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

THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise this morning to talk about the matter before us, which is the minimum wage. Today the Senate will vote on cloture on the motion to proceed to the Minimum Wage Fairness Act, the legislation we are considering, which would increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour over the course of 3 years. We do not know what the result will be today, but we are working to get as much support as possible because getting past this first hurdle, of course, is essential to getting the bill passed, to giving Americans who are working very hard a fair shot at some economic security that they may not have right now.

We have a lot of work to do because there are still people out there—especially here in Washington—who are making arguments that do not make a lot of sense and, to me, do not make a lot of sense to the people of Pennsylvania. Where I came from, when someone works a full day and a full week, they should not—most people believe they should have a fair shot at making not just a living but making sure they have enough of a living that they can lift themselves out of poverty. You should not work 40 hours a week and be paid a poverty wage. Unfortunately, that is the case for far too many Americans.

Increasing the minimum wage would help workers make ends meet, and it would offer a lift up the ladder to the middle class and boost the economy by boosting new spending. We know that is the case. All the data shows that. All the studies show that. But we still have to make the case to some folks here in Washington.

Wages for most workers are not keeping up with the cost of living, the cost

of paying a mortgage and raising a family and some of the other middle-class concerns. The pay for minimum-wage workers is not keeping up with inflation.

Six years have passed since the last minimum wage increase was enacted. Pay for the middle class is stagnant, while the gap between the haves and the have-nots has widened substantially.

The chart on my right tells the story of what could happen if we are able to pass an increase in the minimum wage. It is about giving a fair shot to our families and to our workers by raising the minimum wage. Increasing the minimum wage helps a lot of folks across the country more broadly. Of course, it helps working families.

Look at these numbers. Workers who would get a raise: 27.8 million workers across the country. There are very few things the Senate can do today or this week that would provide that kind of direct economic jump-start to so many communities and to 27.8 million people.

Look at the boost to GDP. I mentioned that earlier—a \$22 billion boost to the economy. Again, there are very few things, if any, we could pass in the Senate that would provide that kind of jump-start to the economy when we need it.

The number of jobs created across the country: some 85,000. Some think the number is higher than that. I know this would have a job-increase impact into the thousands in Pennsylvania.

Look at the number for women. There is mostly an issue about women who are working every day trying to support their families. It also has an impact, obviously, on children. Women who would get a raise: 15.3 million women across the country. I would like to hear someone who is on the other side of the aisle demonstrate to women across this country what they will do in place of that if they are going to say that now is not the time for a raise in the minimum wage. What about those women who are shouldering most of the burden to raise their families and to make their way in a tough economy?

Children with a parent who would get a raise: 14 million children have a parent who would get a boost in the minimum wage. Again, I would say: What is your answer or what is your strategy to give a boost but really, more appropriately stated, a measure of security to our children? I am not sure I can name another action this Senate could take to make sure 14 million children have a measure of security that they do not have today even in an economy that—in some parts of the country—is getting a little better.

Americans overall lifted out of poverty: 2 million Americans will be lifted out of poverty if we pass an increase in the minimum wage.

Again, I would ask anyone on the other side, is there an action, is there a bill, is there a vote, is there a step we can take in the Senate this week or

next week that would do the same to help 14 million children, to lift 2 million Americans out of poverty? I do not know of any. I will wait and see what their answer is. I hope they will answer that question because they should. This is a debate. They should answer that question. Tell us what you will do to help 14 million children if you are not going to support lifting or raising the minimum wage.

Less spending on food stamps: \$4.6 billion per year. We hear attacks all the time—unjustified though they are—from the other side about SNAP. We used to call it the food stamp program. They are always saying: We need to reduce spending in that program. Well, instead of cutting people, as so many in this body seem to want to do every day of the week, voting for budgets that would slash support for people who need help just having a measure of food security, being able to feed their families, instead of doing that, why don't we support raising the minimum wage, lifting them out of poverty, lifting them out of the dependence they have to have on an important program such as SNAP? That is the better way to reduce those numbers. It is not just a question of what is right; it is a question of the best economic strategy for that worker, for his or her family, and for the economy overall.

Finally, veterans who would get a raise: 1 million veterans. We hear speeches all the time here in Washington from both sides of the aisle. In most cases—in almost every case—they are heartfelt and they are honest about the support that one Senator or a group of Senators provide to help our veterans. I have no doubt that people are sincere when they say that. But there are some opportunities around here where you can take action. You can cast a vote that has a direct benefit not just for 14 million children but in this case for 1 million veterans.

You have to ask yourself, if you cannot cast that vote, what are you going to do? What are you going to do with the power you have to cast your vote, to stand and say: I support an increase in the minimum wage. If you are not going to do that, if you are not going to vote for this or ever vote for this, then what are you going to do to help those same 1 million veterans or those same 14 million children or those 15.3 million women? If you have an answer for that, if you have a different strategy that will get us to these numbers, let's hear it. I would like to hear the answer to that. I have not heard it yet. Maybe I have not been listening. But I will try to listen closely to what the arguments are on the other side of the aisle.

So the hashtag #raisethewage is a good way to summarize why this is so fundamental but really so simple. This is about giving people a fair shot. It is not about some program people are asking to be created. It is about basic fairness in giving folks a fair shot in an economy that is still very tough for a lot of families.