

that keep one up at night wondering what is the right thing to do for the Nation; what is the right thing to do for one's own conscience. We know at the end of the day when we cast that vote, if we go forward people will die. We hope the enemy will be the victims, but we know even under the best of circumstances, innocent Americans will also die. Those votes we think over for a long time.

In the Senate, next to votes on war, votes on Supreme Court Justices reach that same level of gravity and importance. We realize that man or woman we choose to be on the Court is likely to be there after our Senate careers and after we are long forgotten; that those nine people sitting across the street, when five come together, can make decisions that can impact America for generations to come. That is why it is so critically important for us to take a careful review and to take a deliberate approach when it comes to the selection of a Supreme Court Justice.

When the time comes—and I hope it comes soon, maybe within the next week or two—I will be proud to cast a vote in favor of the nomination of Elena Kagan to the Supreme Court. I sincerely hope she receives the bipartisan support she richly deserves.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAUFMAN). The clerk will call the roll. The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT CALENDAR—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as if in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that at 5 p.m. today, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 815, the nomination of Sharon Johnson Coleman to be a U.S. district judge for the Northern District of Illinois; that debate on the nomination extend until 5:30 p.m., with the time equally divided and controlled between Senators LEAHY and SESSIONS or their designees; that at 5:30 p.m. the Senate proceed to vote on the confirmation of the nomination; that upon confirmation, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate resume legislative session.

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

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. NELSON of Florida pertaining to the introduction of S. 3569 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF SHARON JOHNSON COLEMAN TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Sharon Johnson Coleman, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The deputy leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, under the pending nomination, to speak under the time allocated to Senator LEAHY.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am pleased the Senate is going to vote today on the nomination of Sharon Coleman to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois. We currently have at least five vacancies. She is an amazing, accomplished jurist who will fill one of those vacancies with distinction, I am sure. She has devoted her entire legal career to government service.

She was elected to be Cook County trial court judge in 1996, a campaign where I first met her and her great family. She won retention election in 2002. As a trial judge, she presided over 600 cases that went to verdict.

In 2008, she received promotion. She was elected to the prestigious Illinois Appellate Court. She has a reputation for fairness and impartiality and for having an outstanding judicial temperament.

Not surprisingly, all members of the American Bar Association evaluation committee gave Justice Coleman the highest possible rating of well qualified.

Before tenure on the bench, Justice Coleman served for 4 years as an assistant U.S. attorney in Chicago and for 8 years in the Cook County State Attorney's Office. As Cook County pros-

ecutor, she handled a wide variety of cases—from muggings to murders. She was promoted to be chief of the public interest bureau, where she supervised over 75 attorneys and created a special unit to protect senior citizens from exploitation and abuse.

As additional evidence of her commitment to the legal profession, she served on the boards of numerous bar associations and public interest organizations in the great city of Chicago. She has received many awards for her work, including the prestigious C.F. Stradford Award from the Cook County State Attorney's Office, the Esther Rothstein Award from the Women's Bar Association of Illinois, and a "Women of Excellence" award from the Chicago Defender newspaper. Finally, I note that Justice Coleman was one of the top candidates recommended to me by my bipartisan merit selection committee I established last year to review applications for judgeships in the northern district. This screening committee is chaired by Abner Mikva, who served at the highest levels of government in all three branches. Also, Senator BURRIS has joined me in supporting Justice Coleman.

I hope we can receive a very strong vote for her nomination when it is considered by the Senate in a few moments. The State of Illinois will be very fortunate to have Justice Shirley Coleman to be serving on the Federal bench.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

NASA AUTHORIZATION

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, while we are waiting on other Senators who wish to speak on this judge, I wish to briefly inform the Senate that this coming Thursday, the full Commerce Committee will consider a number of bills that it will mark up. Among them is the authorization bill for NASA.

We are building consensus in what has otherwise been a consensusless position of the future of the manned space program. The President had proposed one thing. He altered that. Different people have different ideas. Different aerospace companies all looking to have a certain part of the manned space program also have their different ideas.

Out of this mix, we are trying to bring together Senators to build a consensus in a bipartisan way; the space program is not only not partisan, it is not even bipartisan. It is nonpartisan—to be able to do this in a fairly unanimous way.

I am happy to report to the Senate that I think we are getting there. I believe what we will have is the essence of the President's proposal. It will still have the continuation of the President's proposal for competition among commercial space companies to deliver not only cargo to the International Space Station, of which the President recommended, and we will certainly

authorize extending the life of the space station to 2020, something on which we have spent \$100 billion. It did not make sense, as was proposed before, to cut it out in 2015, something we spent that much money on and are just now completing its construction. These commercial companies would, in this authorization bill, have the direction as to how they go about man rating their systems in order to have the safety, when you strap human beings on to rockets that defy the laws of gravity, to take a human being into low-Earth orbit to rendezvous and dock with the space station and to return safely. That is one thing.

The next thing on which we are building a consensus is to accelerate the development of a heavy-lift vehicle. The President said no later than 2015. We are going to authorize NASA to start in 2011 and to take a lot of the existing technology and build upon that, make it evolvable with a heavy-lift vehicle that would be in the range of 75 metric tons in order to get space assets in the low-Earth orbit to ultimately fulfill the President's goal as stated in his speech to the Kennedy Space Center, which was to go to Mars by a flexible path. His specific timeline was to rendezvous and land on an asteroid by 2025. We accelerate the development of the heavy-lift vehicle.

Because the hardware is there and ready, will be on the pad, we are going to authorize an additional flight of the space shuttle. This is the shuttle that they call the "launch on need." It is a second space shuttle that is on the pad for the remaining two, in case they get into trouble. It becomes a rescue shuttle to get the marooned astronauts, were that to be the case.

The fact is, they are doing so well now, and now that we are going to and from the space station on these final two missions, the likelihood of anything happening is de minimis and, therefore, we are going to authorize the flying of that last shuttle, the launch on need, because we believe there is a minimal risk. If something did happen on ascent—such as a piece of foam coming off and hitting the wing and knocking a hole in it, which was the cause of the destruction of the Space Shuttle Columbia back in 2003—then the astronauts would be able to take safe harbor in the International Space Station, and they would then be able to be returned to Earth by other vehicles, such as the Russian Soyuz, which is a permanent lifeboat that is attached—two of them—to the International Space Station.

We will continue in this authorization bill a robust research and development program. We will continue the President's recommendations for his science budget, for his aeronautics budget of NASA, and all of this will be within the amount of money the President has proposed.

This NASA authorization bill will be for 3 years. We are expecting that we will be able to take this up this Thurs-

day and to pass it out of the full Commerce Committee.

We, of course, in respect to the appropriations process, have been in close consultation with our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee. How the authorization committee and the Appropriations Committee worked together has been a good example of considerable cooperation.

I wanted to bring that message to the Senate. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I know—I assume we are on the confirmation of Sharon Coleman?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. LEAHY. First, I am going to speak a little bit about the process of her nomination through the committee. The distinguished Presiding Officer would know about this because he has had probably the best attendance of anybody, including the chairman, on the Senate Judiciary Committee, and he has handled a number of these nominations.

We are going to proceed today on only 1 of the 22 judicial nominations that have been stalled on the Senate floor by Republican obstruction. This is a nominee we considered and voted out of the Judiciary Committee unanimously 3 months ago without objection.

Just so everybody will understand, even after being nominated to serve on a court, these well-qualified nominees have to put their lives on hold. We have the hearing, they go through the committee unanimously, but then they wait and wait on the Senate floor. If the nominee is practicing law they cannot take on new clients. If they are with a law firm, they have a hard time taking new cases as the law firm needs to avoid any conflict of interest.

I cannot understand why this obstruction is happening. I have never seen anything like this in my 36 years in the Senate. No Republican Senator on the Judiciary Committee voted against this nomination. There are another dozen judicial nominations on the Senate's Executive Calendar that were reported by the Judiciary Committee without objection, but they remain stalled by a Republican refusal to consent to final Senate action.

I tell people in my home State of Vermont I am sent here to vote yes or no, not to vote maybe. It seems to me everybody wants to vote maybe. There is no good reason each of these pending nominations could not be confirmed immediately. With so many nominations, despite ongoing vacancies and the need in the Northern District of Illinois for this judge, 3 months have passed without any explanation.

I predict that when we have the roll-call on this nomination it will be confirmed with virtually no opposition, which makes it even more tragic. Also, it hurts the Federal judiciary. It hurts the credibility of the Federal judiciary.

But I might say, especially on something like this, where the Senate Republican leadership would not even consent to a vote on the nomination until today, this certainly hurts the image of the Senate. People cannot understand why, when we have something on which everybody agrees, why it cannot come to a vote.

We have the Senate Republican leadership refusing to enter into time agreements on pending judicial nominations that have the support from both Democrats and Republicans, including nominations with bipartisan support from North Carolina and Tennessee and South Carolina and California and New York and Delaware and Virginia and Utah, Maryland, Minnesota, and Rhode Island. Every single Democrat is prepared to vote on these nominations. They could vote on them tonight and are prepared to vote now. However, they continue to be held up by Republicans.

So I tell the people of North Carolina and Tennessee, South Carolina and California and New York and Delaware and Virginia and Utah and Maryland and Minnesota and Rhode Island, if you are wondering where your judges are, they are being held up not by the Democrats but by the Republicans.

In fact, the Senate is dramatically behind the pace I set for President Bush's judicial nominees in 2001 and 2002. In 2002, the second year of the Bush administration, the Democratic Senate majority's hard work led to the confirmation of 72 Federal circuit and district judges nominated by a President from the other party. In this second year of the Obama administration, we have confirmed just 23 so far—72 for President Bush, 23 for President Obama.

In the first 2 years of the Bush administration, we confirmed 100 Federal circuit and district court judges. So far, in the first 2 years of the Obama administration, the Republican leadership has successfully blocked all but 35 of President Obama's Federal circuit and district court nominees—100 to 35.

Playing games with the Federal judiciary hurts everybody. During the first 2 years of President Bush's Presidency, I had the opportunity to serve for 17 months of as Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. I knew we had just come from a time where Republicans had pocket-filibustered 61 of President Clinton's nominees to the judiciary. I said we ought to try stopping that, so in those 17 months that I had the privilege to serve as chairman, I convinced the people in my caucus and others and we confirmed 100 of President Bush's nominees.

I mention this because in the first 48 months of President Bush's Presidency, actually barely half of that time, 17 months of that 48 months, there were Democrats in charge. For 31 months of this time there were Republicans in charge. During the 17 months that the

Democrats were in charge, we confirmed 100 of President Bush's nominees. During the 31 months the Republicans were in charge I think they confirmed around the same number. So we showed our good faith, even though we had seen 61 of the Democratic President's nominees pocket-filibustered.

At this date in President Clinton's second year in office the Senate had confirmed 72 of his Federal circuit and district court nominees. At this date in President Bush's second year in office, 57. Of course, we confirmed 100 in all by the end of the year.

Federal judicial vacancies around the country continue to hover around 100. Of these, 43 vacancies have been declared by the nonpartisan Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts to be judicial emergencies. I cannot remember a time when we have had 43 judicial emergencies.

Sharon Coleman has been nominated to fill one of them, but we have had to wait 3 months just to get to a vote on her. Ten nominations to fill other judicial emergency vacancies have been reported out of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and they remain stalled in the Senate. Last year, when Senate Republicans blocked President Obama's nominees, we confirmed the fewest judges in 50 years, the fewest judges from any President, Republican or Democratic, in 50 years.

Speaking of another nominee, I said to President Obama when he asked why they were blocking everything he tried to do, I said: If you had nominated Moses the Lawgiver, there would be some who would try to block the nomination. In fact, I said, at least somebody would say: Well, he can't produce a birth certificate.

This is playing games with the Federal judiciary. I don't know what the benefits are. It certainly does not make the Senate look good. When you think the Senate Republican leadership last year allowed only 12 Federal circuit and district court nominees to be considered and confirmed, despite the availability of many more for final action—that is wrong. They have continued their obstruction throughout this year. By every measure, this Republican obstructionism of our Federal judiciary is a disaster for the Federal courts and the American people. But the good thing is Sharon Coleman is going to be confirmed today. After these unnecessary delays, she will be confirmed, and I congratulate Sharon Coleman and her family on her confirmation.

She is currently a justice on the Illinois Appellate Court of Chicago, having served previously as a judge on the Circuit Court of Cook County, IL, as Deputy State's Attorney and Bureau Chief for the Public Interest Bureau of the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Northern District of Illinois, and as an assistant State's attorney in Cook County.

The American Bar Association's Standing Committee on the Federal

Judiciary unanimously rated Justice Coleman "well qualified." That is the highest possible rating they could give her.

After she is confirmed, and she will be, there will be still 21 judicial nominations favorably reported by the Judiciary Committee that have been stalled from Senate consideration by the Senate Republican leadership. For many months I have urged the Republican leader to work with the majority leader to schedule immediate votes on consensus nominees. Going forward, we will have many who will be confirmed by our committee unanimously. We ought to get them to the Senate floor and vote on them. The Senate needs to be making better progress considering the many pending judicial nomination awaiting final Senate action.

I see the distinguished Senator from Illinois. I assume he wishes to speak, and I will yield the floor to him.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. BURRIS. I thank the Senator from Vermont, the chairman. I thank him for the wonderful job he has done trying to move our judges along. I agree with the Senator, the fact we have to go to a vote on this distinguished nominee; it should be done by unanimous consent, and we should not have had to take up this time. But if that is the will of the body, then so be it.

Mr. President, I rise this evening in strong support of Judge Sharon Johnson Coleman, a proud resident of my home State of Illinois and of course a fellow Chicago south-sider. We are very proud of which side she comes from in Chicago, west side or south side. Few appear from the north side. We don't have a deal with the east side because that is Lake Michigan. We are proud of that.

She received her law degree from Washington University in St. Louis, and she has served as an assistant State's attorney, deputy State's attorney, and assistant U.S. attorney. She quickly proved she knew her way around the courtroom and could be very successful in the cases she tried.

From 1996 to 2008, she served as a circuit court judge in Cook County. She displayed a thorough understanding of the law and a fair temperament that marked her as a model jurist.

She was assigned to the Child Protective Division for 2½ years and was a jury trial judge in the law division for almost a decade.

In 2008, Judge Coleman was elected to the Illinois Appellate Court. She has served there ever since and is doing a tremendous job in her deliberations.

I am proud to support her nomination to become a district judge for the Northern District of Illinois. We are short of judges in that district. The caseloads are heavy, and we can stand to have a few more of those nominees confirmed by this body.

Judge Coleman is an excellent jurist, and I place my full confidence in her as

President Obama's nominee for this post. She has been supported by all of our bar associations. She has won numerous awards and received recognition in her career. She has been a tremendous member of the bar and of the judiciary.

I am asking my colleagues to join me in supporting her in this confirmation. I agree with my chairman. These judges should be confirmed so we can move on with some other important business of this body.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays on the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Sharon Johnson Coleman, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois?

The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. HAGAN), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. KOHL), the Senator from Louisiana (Ms. LANDRIEU), the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI), and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. KYL. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. BROWNBACK), the Senator from Florida (Mr. LEMIEUX), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SESSIONS), and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of New Mexico). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 86, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 205 Ex.]

YEAS—86

Akaka	Corker	Kerry
Alexander	Cornyn	Klobuchar
Barrasso	Crapo	Kyl
Baucus	DeMint	Lautenberg
Bayh	Dodd	Leahy
Bennet	Dorgan	Levin
Bennett	Durbin	Lieberman
Bingaman	Ensign	Lincoln
Bond	Enzi	Lugar
Boxer	Feingold	McCain
Brown (MA)	Feinstein	McCaskill
Brown (OH)	Franken	McConnell
Bunning	Graham	Menendez
Burr	Grassley	Merkley
Burriss	Gregg	Murray
Cantwell	Harkin	Nelson (NE)
Cardin	Hatch	Nelson (FL)
Carper	Hutchinson	Pryor
Casey	Inhofe	Reed
Chambliss	Inouye	Reid
Coburn	Isakson	Risch
Cochran	Johanns	Rockefeller
Collins	Johnson	Sanders
Conrad	Kaufman	Schumer

Shelby	Thune	Webb
Snowe	Udall (CO)	Whitehouse
Specter	Udall (NM)	Wicker
Stabenow	Voivovich	Wyden
Tester	Warner	

NOT VOTING—13

Begich	Landrieu	Sessions
Brownback	LeMieux	Shaheen
Gillibrand	Mikulski	Vitter
Hagan	Murkowski	
Kohl	Roberts	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table. The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Ohio.

EXTENSION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the extension of unemployment benefits, something we talked about 2 weeks ago before we left town. It is something we talked about the week before that and the week before that. There has been a lot of talk, and there has been continued opposition from Senate Republicans.

I am incredulous that we have seen week after week after week—it has been 41 days since the Congress let unemployment insurance lapse. It was on June 4, 41 days ago. It is not because a lot of us didn't want to see it happen. It is because of an obscure—less obscure to the public than it was—60-vote rule. The Republicans did not just oppose the unemployment benefits extension—there are a couple of Republicans who voted for it, but of the 41 Republicans there was overwhelming opposition, virtually 90 percent of them—it is not just that they voted no. Let them vote no. They actually filibustered. They actually blocked us from even voting on the extension of unemployment benefits.

It is unfair to the unemployed who face a difficult job market through no fault of their own, and it is bad economics. We know Senator MCCAIN, Presidential candidate MCCAIN's economic adviser, among others, pointed out that money going out for the extension of unemployment benefits actually stimulates the economy better than any other dollars going into the economy. The money that goes to an unemployed teacher or an unemployed steelworker or an unemployed clerk or an unemployed computer programmer is money that is spent almost immediately because they have bills they have to pay. That money goes right into the community. We see a multiplier effect.

When the humanitarian response is to extend unemployment benefits, and the best economic policy response is to extend unemployment benefits, most of

my colleagues on the other side of the aisle—39 out of 41 of them, I believe—have voted no.

June unemployment was 9.5 percent. We know a year and a half ago 700,000 Americans lost their jobs; 700,000 Americans lost their jobs the month that Barack Obama became President. Things are better now. We are seeing job increases. In April, in Ohio, we had the biggest job increase of any State in the country: 37,000 new jobs. But that is not close to dealing with the unemployment brought on by the economic policies of deregulating Wall Street, cutting taxes for the rich, and not paying for anything—the war, the tax cuts, the bailouts to the drug and insurance companies in the name of privatizing Medicare.

Never before has Congress cut off benefits when unemployment was so high. Until recently, it has always been a bipartisan extension of unemployment benefits. Overwhelming numbers of Republicans and Democrats voted to extend unemployment benefits. I just keep trying to explain to my colleagues who vote no on the unemployment benefits extension that this is not welfare, this is insurance. People pay into the unemployment insurance fund and get benefits when they lose their jobs. At the same time, nobody gets these benefits unless they actively seek work; unless they are sending out resumes, doing interviews, going and visiting businesses, employers, whatever they can do to try to find jobs. Yet the Republicans continue to deny the extension for unemployment benefits.

Our workers deserve more than this crass political gamesmanship that an overwhelming number of Republican Senators are playing. July 1 was one of the busiest days ever at the Summit County Department of Jobs and Family Services. It was the first of the month, and because of Republican obstructionism—because they voted not just against extending unemployment benefits, they voted to filibuster our even considering these extension of benefits—because it was the first of the month and because of Republican obstructionism, this body failed to extend unemployment benefits. Staff members at the Summit County Department of Jobs and Family Services typically assist 300 to 400 clients a day. On July 1 twice that number were served by midday, and four times that number were seen by the close of business.

So a typical day of 300 or 400, 300-plus clients at the Summit County Jobs and Family Services turned into 600 before midday, and 1,200 by the close of business. The staff at the Department of Jobs and Family Services in Akron, led by Ms. Pat Divokey and County Executive Russ Pry, is doing everything they can to help working middle-class Ohioans. But when 90,000 Ohioans across the State are in need of an extension of unemployment benefits—90,000 people—it is time for this body to step up. Ninety thousand is a lot of people. It is almost hard to imagine.

I think what is important is to think about these 90,000 as individual human beings. I wish to share a handful of letters I received from Ohioans—just three of them—to put a human face on this issue. It is incredible to me to think about this many people who are so unsure whether they are going to have any money to feed their kids, to pay their mortgage and their utility bills in the weeks ahead because of the 60-vote rule, and this body has not been able to extend unemployment benefits because of a Republican filibuster.

Let me read a letter from Judith of Franklin County. It is the county where Columbus is located, the State capital.

I am very disappointed that the unemployment extension has not passed. I was laid off after working in my job for 20 years. I have a bachelor's degree and a master's degree and I have worked for 35 years since I graduated. I have never been without a job until now.

I understand the growing budget deficit, but what are working people supposed to do when we can't find a job?

These are not people who don't want to work. Whether they are in Albuquerque or Santa Fe or whether they are in Truth or Consequences, these are people who want to go to work. They are people who have worked their whole lives and are used to showing up to work. They can't find jobs. I hear this prattle from the other side of the aisle that this is some kind of welfare scheme. It is not. These people want to work. Most people who are filing for unemployment are people who, No. 1, have worked for years and, No. 2, continue to search for a job; they cannot get an unemployment extension unless they do.

The second letter is from Pat from the Mahoning Valley, in the Youngstown area:

I am a 25-year veteran of the accounting industry, but I was recently laid off.

My employers have paid into the federal and state unemployment funds for me for those 25 years that I worked.

And now for the first time I need to collect those benefits until I secure new employment.

While Congress plays political games, I have bills to pay and work to find.

Mr. President, he points out exactly this. He works in the accounting industry. He understands it. He understands that it is good economics to extend these unemployment benefits to people who lost their jobs, and he understands fundamentally that for the 25 years he worked for this accounting firm or for a number of accounting firms—I don't know whether Pat is a man or a woman, so he or she was paying—Pat's employer was paying into this insurance fund. So it is not welfare, in spite of what my Republican colleagues say.

You know, the other thing that is absolutely amazing in what Pat said and what Judith said about the growing budget deficit—the Presiding Officer was in the House of Representatives for several years representing a district in northern New Mexico. He saw year