

the location of the massive 1968 discovery, contained oil in ground that was permanently frozen up to 1,000 feet deep in the northernmost section of the State with three mountain ranges between it and the nearest ice-free port.

Seven oil companies got together to discuss how they might move the oil to the lower 48 States. There were several options that were proposed at the time. One of them was a water route that would use large ice-breaking tankers—essentially plowing through the ice—to get the oil down to the lower 48 market. A second option was a water route using submarines. A combined land and water system with a Trans-Alaska Pipeline and shipments from a southern Alaskan port was the third option and the option that was considered to be most feasible for several different reasons from the technical, the economic, and the legal issues that surrounded it.

The third option, this Trans-Alaska Pipeline, raised so many concerns and so many problems that for many it seemed an impossible task. The southern two-thirds of the proposed route was the most seismically active area in North America. This was the location of the very famous 1964 earthquake centered out of Valdez. The southern portion also contains a very high avalanche threat. Permafrost, which is the permanently frozen ground, runs about half the length of that pipeline route. You will find permafrost in that area. These all presented an unprecedented engineering challenge. The pipe would have to span a distance greater than the distance between Oregon and Mexico or, to put it in perspective as to where we are here, it would be the equivalent distance of going from this Capitol in Washington, DC, all the way south to Orlando, FL. That is the distance our Trans-Alaska Pipeline covers today.

Also, keep in mind we are not only talking about an incredibly long 800-mile pipe, but it is a stretch of land that includes thousands of rivers, three mountain ranges, and we have air temperatures ranging from minus 80 degrees below in the wintertime to a positive 95 degrees in the summer. So the challenges that faced the Nation as they looked to this engineering feat were quite incredible.

There were also political obstacles that were pretty steep. Environmental concerns, which, quite honestly, mirror the modern-day debate over oil development in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, resulted in a 50-50 Senate tie on the vote for the pipeline's approval. Vice President Spiro Agnew cast the tie-breaking affirmative vote in this Chamber about 34 years ago.

It took 38 months, billions of the final \$8 billion pricetag, and 1,347 State and Federal permits later for the construction to begin on one of the most ambitious engineering endeavors in the history of the world. During construction, thousands of would-be job seekers

flocked to Alaska, and those workers battled the cold in the winter that caused the equipment to freeze up, and in the summer they battled sunken bogs when digging the concrete supports that allow the pipeline to shift in order to deal with the temperature changes and the seismic activity. They solved problems such as installing the pipe in both Atigun Pass and Thompson Pass, incredibly steep terrain just outside the southern terminus in Valdez. The terrain is so steep there that workers had to be tethered to the peaks by cables to keep them from falling down the slopes.

Mr. President, I think I have probably used my 5 minutes. I ask unanimous consent for an additional 2 minutes.

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

Ms. MURKOWSKI. I thank the Chair.

Along the way, those working on this pipeline made major engineering advances, learning how to insulate the pipe and how to keep the permafrost ground frozen so that the pipe didn't sink out of site. When the project was completed in 1977, 3 years after construction started, we had a new domestic supply of oil made available to the United States—the single largest domestic source it has ever had.

On average, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline—we call it TAPS—now sees just over 800,000 barrels of oil pass through it each day. This is 231,000 barrels per hour and 22,000 gallons per minute. So, in other words, in the time I have been standing to address you, Mr. President, it has transported about 100,000 gallons of crude.

At peak production, TAPS provided the United States with about 2 million barrels of oil a day, or 30 percent more than Saudi Arabia does today, and nearly as much oil as the entire Persian Gulf provides our country today. And Alaskan oil, unlike Middle Eastern oil, does not come from unstable regimes, does not hinder our foreign policy options by bonding us and our allies to such regimes, and is not at risk of being cut off due to instability. We have been a stable domestic supplier of the oil needs of the United States for over 30 years.

The pipeline has turned out to be a much better deal than originally anticipated. The dire predictions of environmental disaster have been proven false. There have been minor spills, we acknowledge, but the environment and the wildlife have been unaffected by the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. Our caribou numbers have actually grown along the pipeline area, with estimates of up to sixfold in terms of the herd. Moose and bear have not been affected, and little oil has been added to the environment. All land spills have been completely cleaned up.

Additionally, while Prudhoe Bay was originally forecast to contain 9 billion barrels of recoverable oil, we will actually recover twice that much, about 18 billion barrels, by the time that field is depleted.

We recognize the days of abundant Prudhoe Bay oil are dwindling. We have produced about 15 billion barrels of oil, leaving only about 3 billion barrels remaining to recover. Output has fallen by more than 7 percent a year recently. According to the Energy Information Administration, Prudhoe Bay production will be down to 270,000 barrels per day by 2030, a level so low that the pipeline likely will not be able to function in winter's cold and may become inoperable. That could "shut-in" billions of barrels of future heavy oil deposits in the Greater Prudhoe Bay area and perhaps hamper oil recoveries from elsewhere in northern Alaska and the OCS off the State's coast.

In the meantime, U.S. oil imports have grown to account for 58 percent of our current net oil consumption. Twenty years from now, that number is forecasted to climb to 68 percent.

So I ask my colleagues and the American people, as we remember today what Alaska and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline system has given to our country, to consider also what Alaska could provide for America's future. The decision truly lies in the hands of Congress.

Mr. President, I appreciate the time, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of turn.

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

EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, historians who take a clear-eyed look at the last 30 years will tell you, and in particular economists will tell you, productivity has been rising, our economy has been expanding, and the workers responsible for our Nation's prosperity have not reaped anywhere near their share of the benefits which they have earned.

In 2005, the real median household income in America was down almost 3 percent from the median income in 2000. That is understanding that productivity has sharply increased among American workers. In Ohio, median income was down almost 10 percent. Meanwhile, the average CEO makes 411 times more than the average worker. As recently as 1990, the average CEO made 107 times more; so from 107 times more than the average worker in 1990 to now, 411 times more than the average worker.

Let me explain it another way. In the Agriculture Committee a couple of months ago, a young woman in her mid-thirties, with a 9-year-old son, came and testified about food stamps. The average food stamp beneficiary in our country gets about \$1 per meal per person. She and her son got about \$6 a day for food stamps. She works full time at a \$9-an-hour job. She has no health care benefits. She gets a food stamp benefit. She is president of the local PTA at her son's school. She volunteers to teach Sunday school. And

she is active in the Cub Scouts for her son. She works, as I said, full time, making \$9 an hour, and gets a small food stamp benefit.

She says at the beginning of the month she serves her son porkchops a couple of times, and as the month goes on she takes him to a fast food restaurant once or twice, but by the last couple of days of the month she sits at the kitchen table with her son and doesn't eat. Her son asks her what is wrong, and she says she's just not feeling well. She simply runs out of money at the end of the month. This is somebody playing by the rules.

Later in the day, on the Banking Committee, a committee on which I sit with the Presiding Officer from New Jersey, Secretary Paulson was testifying, the Secretary of the Treasury, and I told him the story of this lady from Middletown, OH.

He said: Senator, you have to understand we have had 2½, 3 percent economic growth in the last year. Things in our country are going well.

Yes, things are going well in terms of profits for corporations. Things are going well in terms of top executives. But too often they really aren't. Just look at this chart from 1946 to 1973. Economic opportunities for poor and working families grew. The incomes of the country's workers are divided. The lowest 20 percent, second lowest, middle, and then the top 20, top 40 percent, and the top 20 percent here. Families who worked hard and played by the rules had a real chance of getting ahead. You can see those from 1947 to 1973, the lowest 20 percent of our wage earners had the highest growth in income; those who made the most had the lowest. So we are seeing all boats rise—boats rising a little faster for those in the lowest incomes.

Beginning in about 1973 and through to 2000, workers at the bottom and in the middle began to share less and less of the wealth they created. Even though their productivity was going up, their wealth didn't, their wages didn't. Economic growth flattened out for those same families. You can see there is still economic growth at the lowest 20, 40, 60 percent, but the fastest growth in incomes was in the top 20 percent. That was in 2000.

As the economic pie got bigger, the slice for most Americans got smaller. Here you can see the most devastating news of all in the last 4, 5, 6 years. The only people who had economic growth in this country were the top 1 percent. These are the five quintiles. The top 1 percent are the only ones who had economic growth, and those at the bottom fell the furthest and further behind.

Historians will also say that in 2006 the middle class spoke up and sent a message to Congress demanding change. This Congress raised the minimum wage for the first time in a decade. This Congress is fighting for fair trade like never before. And I speak today, Mr. President, in support of the Employee Free Choice Act, which goes

to the heart of the plight of working families to reap the benefits of the productivity they created, to provide a home and health care and pensions for themselves and a college education for their kids.

The Employee Free Choice Act is a historic step for working families. It would give workers the right to organize so they can fight for fair wages and decent benefits. The efforts of labor organizers more than 100 years ago finally led to the progress made seven decades ago with the signing of the Wagner Act. The rights that became law then ensured fair pay and decent working conditions.

But more and more employers chose to flout the law by intimidating workers and suppressing union activities. All across Ohio, I talk with workers who have tried to form a union and who share with me the tactics taken by some employers—not all but some employers—to prevent workers from organizing.

I talked with Bill Lawthorn from Macomb, OH. Bill and his coworkers wanted a union so workers would be treated with the respect and dignity all laborers deserve. They hoped with the union they would get fair and decent wages, a decent retirement plan, and decent health care benefits. According to Bill, the company responded with threats, with intimidation, and harassment.

Bill said the company threatened to fire him even if the campaign for the union failed. The union lost the election, and the day after, Bill, in fact, was fired. Since then, various labor boards have held the company's actions were illegal. Bill has not been reinstated, though, or seen 1 cent of backpay, even though his firing was illegal. That is why we need the Employee Free Choice Act.

Despite the struggle, despite doing odd jobs to pay the bills and relying on friends, family, and neighbors, Bill says, if he had the chance to do it all over again, he would do everything exactly the same because he knew he was right. It was the right thing to do, he said, and the Employee Free Choice Act is the right thing to do.

In 2005 alone, 31,000 employees were awarded backpay by a very conservative pro-business National Labor Relations Board due to retaliatory firings and unfair labor practices. I repeat, 31,000 employees were given backpay because, according to the National Labor Relations Board, they were fired illegally and unfairly.

Many companies decide to fire union supporters. Even if employees later successfully prove their case, the penalties all too often are an insufficient deterrent. These practices must end. The Employee Free Choice Act is the first step.

For the first time in our history, our sons and daughters do not have the opportunities their moms and dads had. A son, in 1994, earned 5 percent higher wages than his dad did in 1964. You can

see how wages went up in that generation. But in 2004, a son's wages were down 12 percent from what his father made in 1974. You can see, too many kids are pessimistic about their futures.

We cannot continue this course. Unions are an agent for change. History will show that this Congress responded to the ever-increasing gap between the haves and have-nots. Fair trade, fair wages and benefits, the right to join a union—all three are basic to a society where work is rewarded and worker intimidation is not tolerated. Majority Leader REID is committed to moving forward on fair trade issues, on fair wages and fair benefits issues, as we already have, and equally importantly, the right to join a union.

The Employee Free Choice Act is a major step for working families. I urge my colleagues to support it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I first would like to express my appreciation to the distinguished Senator from Ohio for his advocacy for better trade policy for our country. I also appreciate his graphic illustration of what is happening in our country now, when sons are making less than their fathers.

It is difficult to comprehend, but that is the position in which we find ourselves, so we need a better trade policy, and we certainly need to pass the card check and Employees Free Choice Act.

I appreciate the statement of the Senator from Ohio and his constant advocacy for a better trade policy.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, today I voted in support of the NOPEC amendment to H.R. 6, which was offered by my colleague, Senator HERBERT KOHL. The amendment seeks to prevent OPEC nations from continuing to conspire to limit the supply of oil and to drive up America's already exorbitant energy costs. While I recognize that this is not a perfect piece of legislation, and that it may require the addition of certain clarifying provisions to ascertain its applicability in particular circumstances, I believe that it is a fine first step toward finally holding OPEC accountable for its actions. The time is long overdue for America's working families to send OPEC the message that West Virginians in particular will no longer be content to sit quietly by the side of the road, watching OPEC drive our gas and home heating prices to ever higher levels. This amendment is meant to send a signal—a signal to OPEC nations that the American people are not going to take it anymore. We will no longer be held hostage to OPEC's self-serving energy policies, which line their pockets, at the expense of our pocketbooks.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I will be very brief, but I do want to say that I have been in the Senate now for a number of years, with Republican leaders and Democratic leaders, Democratic majorities and Republican majorities,

and never have we had a situation like we have had this past 6 months. We have to move to cloture on virtually everything—everything. I am going to file, now, tonight, four cloture motions. Never have we had to do this before.

It is common practice, and has been for all the time we have been a Senate, that, because you are dealing with the House, you are offering a substitute amendment that takes place with the Senate bill. Without going into a lot of detail, we rarely in the past had to file cloture on not only the substitute but also the underlying bill. We have to do it on virtually everything. We have never had to file cloture on every motion to proceed. That is what we are having to do now. It is a tremendous waste of the time of the Senate and of the country, but that is what we have to do. That is what I am going to do tonight.

It is going to become apparent, and is to some people, and some writing is taking place on it now, that we had to file so many cloture motions. It is because we have on almost every occasion had to file cloture on everything. It is a struggle to get legislation here to the floor. The minority's goal, the Republicans' No. 1 goal, I guess, at this time is to see that we don't get anything done. But in spite of that, we have been able to get a lot done. It has been difficult. It has been slogging. It has been slow.

We have a list of things we have been able to accomplish, with which I think the country should be very happy—minimum wage; we have been able to get disaster relief for farmers for the first time in 3 years; we passed a balanced budget amendment; we funded the Government with a continuing resolution. We have been able to do a number of things. There is no need to run through the entire list tonight other than to say it is too bad it has been so difficult to get those things done. We are very close to being able to finish the conference on the lobbying ethics reform; 9/11—I spoke to Senator LIEBERMAN earlier this evening, that is basically all done.

We have a difficult schedule. Why? Because of having to jump through every procedural hoop. It would be different if we were doing it because of people who didn't like immigration. I understand that. But we are doing it on everything we bring through the Senate.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). 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, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the Bau-

cus tax amendment No. 1704 to H.R. 6, the Energy bill.

Max Baucus, Jay Rockefeller, Kent Conrad, Jeff Bingaman, John Kerry, Blanche L. Lincoln, Charles Schumer, Amy Klobuchar, Byron L. Dorgan, Ron Wyden, Maria Cantwell, Ken Salazar, Daniel K. Akaka, Daniel K. Inouye, Sheldon Whitehouse, Sherrod Brown, Harry Reid.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the Reid substitute amendment No. 1502 to Calendar No. 9, H.R. 6, the Energy bill.

Jeff Bingaman, Barbara Boxer, Patty Murray, John Kerry, Robert Menendez, Kent Conrad, Pat Leahy, Russell Feingold, Jack Reed, Christopher Dodd, Ken Salazar, Joe Biden, Frank R. Lautenberg, Daniel K. Inouye, Dianne Feinstein, Jay Rockefeller, Byron L. Dorgan.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on the first cloture motion I filed, the mandatory quorum required under rule XXII be waived.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on the one I just filed, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call required under rule XXII be waived.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Calendar No. 9, H.R. 6, Comprehensive Energy legislation.

Jeff Bingaman, Barbara Boxer, Patty Murray, John Kerry, Robert Menendez, Kent Conrad, Pat Leahy, Russell Feingold, Jack Reed, Christopher Dodd, Ken Salazar, Joe Biden, Frank R. Lautenberg, Daniel K. Inouye, Dianne Feinstein, Jay Rockefeller, Byron L. Dorgan.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call required under rule XXII be waived.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I was going to ask, on a number of these matters, unanimous consent that we move forward on them. I am not going to do that tonight. I only appeal to my friends, the Republicans, that they take a look at this and find out if it is absolutely necessary that we have these cloture votes. If we follow

through on all these, we will have to work both this weekend and part of the next weekend. I hope we do not have to do that. If it were productive time, it would be one thing, but it is basically a waste of time.

FREE CHOICE ACT OF 2007—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. President, as I indicated, I was going to ask consent that the Senate proceed to consideration of Calendar No. 66, H.R. 800, the Free Choice Act of 2007, at a time to be determined by the majority leader following consultation with the Republican leader, but I am not going to do that.

CLOTURE MOTION

I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 66, S. 800, and send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 66, H.R. 800, the Free Choice Act of 2007.

Harry Reid, Ted Kennedy, Patty Murray, Bernard Sanders, Charles Schumer, Russell D. Feingold, Jack Reed, Barack Obama, Christopher Dodd, B.A. Mikulski, Pat Leahy, John Kerry, Robert Menendez, Claire McCaskill, Debbie Stabenow, Frank R. Lautenberg, Joe Biden, H.R. Clinton.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum required under rule XXII be waived.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now withdraw the motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is withdrawn.

The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, am I next in the order?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Parliamentarian shows the Senator from New Jersey is to be recognized for up to 10 minutes and then the senior Senator from New York for up to 10 minutes.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the Employee Free Choice Act, of which I am proud to be an original cosponsor. This bill will level the playing field for workers seeking a voice at work and ensure they have the freedom to choose to join a union without coercion. I applaud Senator KENNEDY for his passion to move this bill forward and his relentless fight to improve and uphold the rights of workers.

Some may ask why this change is needed. They may think that in 2007, in this great democratic Nation, the right of an employee to seek representation in their workplace is alive and well. It should be. But the fact is, under current law, there are loopholes that have

been exploited, tactics that have been utilized, and actions taken against employees that have undermined the basic rights to which employees should be entitled.

We have a chart that shows the number of workers facing roadblocks trying to form a union. From start to finish, workers often face roadblock after roadblock in trying to seek union representation. Active union workers are fired; employers challenge and file appeals with the NLRB; and employers can simply stall the process and prevent it from moving forward.

We cannot ignore that there are some concerted and disturbing efforts that have tainted what should be a fair process. In that process, employees are fired in roughly one quarter of all private-sector organizing efforts. One in five workers who openly advocate for a union during an election campaign is fired.

In 2005 alone, some 30,000 workers experienced some form of discrimination for their participation in an organizing effort, resulting in lost wages or lost jobs. And, in an increasingly common trend, a vast majority of private employers are hiring union-busting consultants to fight unionization drives.

Clearly, existing law has not been enough to deter these types of tactics. The Employee Free Choice Act would close loopholes that have allowed employers to abuse the labor process without repercussion, and it would beef up the penalties for violation. Part of the problem is that under current law, there is not a strong enough incentive to follow the law.

While employers face stiff penalties for firing an employee based on race, gender, or disability, they face minimal penalties for firing an employee for union organizing.

In addition to enacting stronger penalties, this legislation would essentially enforce the steps that are supposed to take place, but often do not. A key part of this bill is that it will bring people to the table. It would ensure that when employees make their voices heard, the process moves forward. This is not forcing the hand of employers or employees, but it simply ensures that negotiations that are supposed to take place will take place.

Currently, employees can agree to join a union, but then the process is dragged out for months or years. This is not the spirit of the law. The Employee Free Choice Act will restore that spirit and uphold the meaning of the rights employees are supposed to have.

Improving the rights of workers is not just about fairness—it is also about equity. We know that workers who have a voice at work have better benefits and are able to provide a higher quality of life for their families. When nearly half of all Americans report having just “enough to get by,” it should be obvious that we need to take action to improve the economic standing of many of our workers.

The fact is, union membership means higher wages. According to the Department of Labor, union workers earn 30 percent higher weekly earnings than non-union workers—that is an average of \$191 dollars per week, or more than \$9,000 per year.

This is especially true for minorities. Latinos represented by unions typically earn median wages that are 46 percent higher than non-unionized Latinos. Women and African-Americans typically earn more than 30 percent higher median wages when they are unionized. By opening the door for more workers to seek union representation, we are helping ensure a pathway to fairness and hopefully, a pathway to a better quality of life.

Hardworking Americans deserve the chance that this bill provides. They deserve a strong law that will not allow employers to skirt its meaning; a law that will protect their decisions and ensure their voices will be heard.

That is why I support this bill. I believe a majority of voices should be upheld and I believe that our workplaces should be the very best they can be for our Nation’s workers.

So I urge my colleagues to support the Employee Free Choice Act to protect and enforce the rights of any worker to freely join a union; free from intimidation, free from back-door tactics, free from fear of retribution. That is a right. That is a right that no worker in America should be denied.

I hope we will have the support of our colleagues when this comes to a vote on the floor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise to first speak briefly about the Employee Free Choice Act, which is a very important piece of legislation. In fact, I introduced the original bill 4 years ago, worked hard to persuade many of my colleagues in the labor movement that this should be a top priority. I am so glad it is. I wish to salute the Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. KENNEDY, who has taken leadership on this issue. I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of the bill.

Let me say this: Before the union movement in America, we had a few wealthy people and a lot of poor people and not much of a middle class. The great thing about the union movement is it created a middle class. Through struggles of laboring men and women from about 1870 to 1960, America became a country that was about 30 or 35 percent unionized.

What that meant was that wages rose, benefits rose, health care rose, and America was a prosperous country. Without a middle class, America would not have prospered. Then, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, many employers who wished to prevent unions or beat back unions found new ways to basically thwart what was the original thrust of the NLRB, which was to free-ly allow men and women to organize.

They hired lawyers. There are law firms with hundreds of people whose whole job is to prevent unionization. They basically succeeded. So as old industries closed, new industries that have as much reason to organize did not. Factories closed, office towers came about, but the union jobs did not follow from the factories to the office towers, with the exception of the public sector.

So now we are in this situation where fewer than 10 percent of American workers are organized. That hurts America. That means that men and women are not able to bargain collectively for rights. When you talk about declining wages of the middle class, when you talk about declining health benefits of the middle class, one—not the only but one of the reasons is we do not have unions.

Fewer and fewer Americans are organized. What the legislation does, what the Employee Free Choice Act does, is very simply restore the balance so it would be as easy to organize a factory in an office tower in 2007 as it was to organize a factory in the 1930s or 1940s or 1950s.

To show you the law works, Canada has basically the same economic structure as America. Canada is over 30 percent organized and America is 8 percent organized. One reason, they have a law such as the Employee Free Choice Act which allows a majority of employees to sign a card and then a union takes effect.

One of the great problems in the new America is income inequality. The top 1 percent of America represents 9 percent of the income in 1980, 16 percent in 2001, and now it is over 20 percent by the latest statistics. One of the many ways to overcome that inequality is to make it a little easier for people to organize.

So I think this legislation is extremely important to the basic fabric of America. If we want middle-class people to continue to have wage growth and benefit growth, unions are basically essential. So I am proud to support this legislation.

I understand there are employers who fight it tooth and nail. I have seen some of the ads. There is one today in one of the papers, particularly vicious, with a picture of a union leader and then of two dictators. I thought it was the kind of cheap shot we shouldn’t see in this country.

The bottom line is simple. This legislation is vital to the health, economic health of working men and women and vital to keeping a middle class in America and not reverting to the old days, when you had very few wealthy people and a large number of struggling people. I support the legislation.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 1604, 1605, 1606, AND 1656 TO
H.R. 6

Second, I would like to speak about amendments 1604, 1605, 1606, and 1656, amendments I will be offering to H.R. 6. I am not going to offer them tonight because none of my colleagues from