

helps people here in the District, it helps people across this country, Haiti, India, Russia, and that is why it is so important; that is why we are pulling together the great science we have today. Once we get rid of the virus, it goes away across the world.

I did not intend to talk about this little virus except that it is so devastating.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

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#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

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#### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business, for statements only, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. DASCHLE. I thank the Presiding Officer.

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#### MIDDLE-CLASS SQUEEZE

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, over the course of the last several weeks, many of us have come to the floor to talk about the question raised by our former President, Ronald Reagan, back in the 1980 Presidential campaign. His question at that time, which we are told was paraphrased from a question posed by Franklin Roosevelt in 1934, was: "Are you better off than you were four years ago?"

Unfortunately, in 2004, the answer to that question is all too clear for most middle-class Americans. Four years ago, our economy was booming. The stock market had reached record heights. Twenty-two million jobs had been created in 8 years. We built a record Federal surplus. And millions of American families enjoyed newfound prosperity and felt the optimism of even better times ahead.

Four years later, we have lost nearly 2 million private sector jobs, the stock market has dropped, record surpluses have turned to record deficits, and middle-class families are truly being squeezed.

This chart tells the story. Since President Bush came to office, wages have been stagnant. Average weekly earnings have not increased in the last 4 years, but the costs facing Americans have skyrocketed. Gas prices have increased 23 percent; college tuition has gone up 28 percent; and family health care premiums, as we can see from the chart, have actually increased 36 percent.

All that has come out of average weekly earnings, which have been stagnant.

This is not what was predicted. This certainly is not what the White House said would happen under its economic policies.

In his annual economic report released in February, the President predicted the economy would create 3.8 million jobs in 2004.

As of today, we are still 2.5 million jobs short of that goal. Even more troubling, the jobs being created today pay less than the jobs we have lost. And even Americans who have been fortunate enough to keep their jobs have failed to see the pay raises they need and they deserve.

Just this morning we received confirmation from the Department of Labor that working Americans are still being squeezed by this economy. In fact, the new numbers indicate the squeeze is actually getting worse. According to the Labor Department, real earnings in June fell \$2.16, the second largest monthly drop in 14 years.

The Labor Department report also reveals what has happened over the past year. As this chart shows, the real earnings of our working people over this last year have actually decreased by 1.4 percent. They have less purchasing power today than they did in June 2003. But a typical commodity, a grocery that most families buy every week, milk, has gone up 30 percent. All this money is coming out of weekly earnings.

As people across the country know, gas prices have also risen dramatically. There was an article on the front page of the Wall Street Journal about this development. It concluded that at current prices, the average driver will pay nearly \$300 more for gasoline this year than last year. And the story only gets worse when it comes to prescription drugs.

According to a recent report by the AARP, drug companies raised their prices for the top 200 brand-name drugs at nearly three times the rate of inflation in the first 3 months of 2004. Some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle think these increases are less important to American families than the rise of gross domestic product, GDP. But Americans don't live on GDP, they live on earnings. That is what they use to pay for milk, gas, medicine, health insurance, and tuition. They live on earnings, and those earnings clearly are not keeping up with the costs they are facing today.

Remarkably, the administration's response to this problem has been to fur-

ther undermine wages by limiting overtime rights. This week, an independent study showed that the White House's new overtime regulation, which goes into effect next month, will strip 6 million workers of their right to overtime. That is unacceptable. Democrats continue to fight at every opportunity to reverse the administration's misguided policy. Middle-class Americans are being squeezed, and the last thing they need is for their Government to make it worse.

What Congress should do is raise the minimum wage. It has been 8 years since we last voted to raise it. In that time it has become nearly impossible for minimum wage workers to make ends meet, especially when they are trying to raise a family. In my home State of South Dakota, a worker earning the minimum wage has to work 82 hours a week to afford rent for a two-bedroom apartment. And that is without taking into account other family costs, such as clothing, groceries, and health care.

Of course, not everyone in America is feeling the pinch. As this chart shows, while workers continue to struggle, our big corporations are thriving. In just the past year, corporate profits have risen 30 percent. The White House likes to talk about how we are now in an economic recovery. That is true for corporate America. But American workers are being left behind. As the New York Times recently reported, take-home pay, as a share of the economy, is at its lowest level since the Government started keeping track in 1929.

Economic policies that lead to these kinds of results don't do right by middle-class families, and they don't do right by America.

The good news is, we can do right by America. We proved during the Clinton administration that we can create millions of jobs, raise wages, and increase the quality of life for families all through the country. We did right by America then, and we can do it again.

With the help of the American people, and with some resolve by this body, we will do it again.

I yield the floor and 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. HARKIN. Madam 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.

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#### LEAK INVESTIGATION

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I have taken the last several days on a daily basis to come to the Senate floor to talk about the treacherous and damaging leak of the identity of a covert CIA operative by the name of Valerie Plame, leaked to a columnist by the