Consideration of the Senate.
Rebecca from Lorain County—that is the county in which I live in west Cleveland—works for Catholic Charities helping the unemployed:

My job is trying to find resources for the people in need. Every day I am deluged with requests for mortgage assistance by many who have exhausted their unemployment benefits and have not been able to find other employment.

One gentleman in particular is an unemployed steelworker of over 25 years who is raising a 2-year-old son by himself. His home is about to be foreclosed on and his employment prospects have run out. What else can he do? What can I do to assist him?

I look across the aisle when we are all in this Chamber and I think: 41 people voted against the extension of unemployment benefits. I think all of us are a bit too isolated in this job. We are paid well. We get a lot of attention.

We all have good staffs, fairly large staffs of 40, 50, 60 people both in Washington and our States, in Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Lorain. I don't know that we talk with enough people who are in a situation that she writes about the steelworker—25 years and raising a 2-year-old son by himself.

Lisa from Cuyahoga County is taking care of her elderly mother and college-aged daughter and already lost her home. I know empathy is in short supply in this world and particularly in the Senate. I wish each of us would read these letters and sit down and talk with somebody such as Lisa who first lost her job. Then she lost her health care. Then she has to explain to her daughter: Honey, we are not going to be able to stay in this house much longer because we cannot afford the rent—or got foreclosed.

Mom, where are we going to live? I don't know yet. Am I going to be able to go to the same grade school I go to now? I don't know yet, honey, if that is going to happen.

How are we going to move? How are we going to move our stuff? I don't know. We have to figure that out.

These are questions people such as us do not have to answer very often, are not faced with. If my 41 colleagues would sit down and listen to people who deal with these problems, who experience these problems, it might be a different situation.

The last letter I will read is from Marjorie from Summit County. That is in the Akron area:

I have been unemployed since January. My husband lost his job shortly before that. We are both college graduates. My husband has a master's degree.

Since we are both 61 years of age, employment prospects have run out. Because we are reaching a point where we will be unable to make mortgage payments.

We have always done the right thing raising our children and being responsible citizens. But now we can't even keep a roof over our heads.

What can I do to assist him?

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Mr. BURRIS. Thank you, Madam President.

For the past 2 years, this country has been held in the grip of an unprecedented economic crisis. The housing market collapsed, the bottom dropped out of Wall Street for the first time in generations many Americans felt their hard-earned economic security begin to slip away.

Here in Washington, Members of the House and Senate were faced with a harsh reality: For regulators and policymakers alike had fallen short of their responsibilities. A divisive political process drove them to duck the tough issues and kick the can down the road time and time again.

This failure of regulation and the absence of political will allowed Wall Street fat cats to let their greed get the better of them. They gambled with our economic future. They designed complicated financial products and piled high-stake bets on them.

In short, they built a house of cards, and when it finally came crashing down, the American economy lay in ruins.

There can be no quick fixes after a disaster of this magnitude. But under President Obama’s leadership, our elected leaders finally took the bull by the horns and did what was necessary to stop the bleeding and set our country back on the road to recovery. I was proud to join many of my colleagues in supporting the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act—a landmark stimulus bill that helped reverse the rising tide of economic misfortune. Thanks to this legislation, we have made some significant progress, though we still have a very long way to go. But this is an election year, and that means partisan bickering is in the air and it is on the rise. So I believe my colleagues and I have a decision to make: We can focus on winning the next news cycle—pitting Republicans against Democrats, on winning the next political battles that usually consume election years in Washington—or we can reach for something better. We can tune out the partisan fights, reject the failed policies that got us into this mess, and prove to the American people that we have the will to make tough decisions.

Our recovery is far from complete. I believe if we fail to continue the bold policies that pulled us back from the brink of disaster, if we shrink away from difficult decisions that will move this recovery forward, then we place our economy at grave risk of slipping back into a recession. This is a time for bold action, not pointless ideological battles. This is a time to move forward, not backward.

I call upon my colleagues to seize this opportunity. Let us keep America on the road to recovery, and restore the hard-earned security of ordinary folks who have suffered because of bad decisions on Wall Street. It won’t be easy, but it is our responsibility, and it is the right thing to do.