Calgary area, the Province of Alberta, Canada, down to Cushing, which is a major oil hub, and our refineries in the gulf.

So it is not a new concept; we are already doing it. This pipeline carries almost 600,000 barrels a day. The new pipeline would carry 830,000 barrels a day.

It is not just about Canada. It is not just about moving Canadian crude to our refineries. My home State of North Dakota, and Montana, produce oil as well—light, sweet, Bakken crude—good stuff. We need to get that product to market as well; 100,000 barrels a day from North Dakota and Montana will go into this pipeline. Now, that is incredibly important to States such as North Dakota and Montana because right now we have to move that product by truck and by train. There is incredible wear and tear on our roads, and with the congestion on our roads, there are also traffic accidents and traffic fatalities.

Mr. President, 100,000 barrels a day represents 500 truck loads a day on some of our highways in western North Dakota and eastern Montana.

This pipeline would reduce the number of truck miles to move that product by 17 million truck miles a year. So it is not just about moving that product from Canada to our refineries, it is about moving our own crude, crude that we produce in this country to market. Our States need that vital infrastructure, and the government is not building this infrastructure—not one penny of tax money, not one penny of Federal Government spending. This is a $7 billion-plus investment from the private sector to give us the infrastructure we need to get our oil to our refineries.

So it is not a new project. It has been done before.

As a matter of fact, as my next chart shows, not only has this been done before, but the Obama administration has approved similar projects before.

In August of 2009 the current administration approved a 1,000-mile pipeline that moves 800,000 barrels of oil a day that is moving oil right now. They approved this project in August 2009. It came online in October 2010. It goes from the Province of Alberta down to refineries in Wisconsin. So they approved it in August 2009.

So what is going on here? Well, the issue they have talked about is that they have to delay this because of the western Sandhills region of Nebraska. The western Sandhills region of Nebraska includes something called the Ogallala Aquifer. The Ogallala Aquifer is obviously very important for water supply and irrigation. That is here in western Nebraska, so that concern has been raised. So we put forward legislation that addresses that issue.

We put forward legislation that follows the lead of the State of Nebraska and says: We will reroute the pipeline in Nebraska. For example, rerouting it over here where there is already the existing Keystone Pipeline. But in the legislation we put forward we say we will reroute the pipeline in Nebraska; that issue will be fully addressed, and we do not set a timeline on doing it and we expressly provide that we work with the State of Nebraska to do it.

Nebraska had a special session in November. After their special session where we all agreed to do the rerouting, the State of Nebraska—their legislature, their Governor, and their Senators—supported the project. They said: Yes, we need to move forward with the project.

As you can see, there are many pipelines through there already. Nevertheless, we said: OK, the administration said that is an issue. We do the rerouting and we set no time limit to do it. So why aren't we proceeding with the project? What are we waiting for? And what are the ramifications of waiting? Look at all these pipelines. This is not a new concept.

So I take a step back to what I mentioned earlier: What is going on here? Why is it that Prime Minister Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada in China today, is arranging to sell oil that they produce in Canada to China rather than to us in the United States when we need it so badly—not just for our economy, not just for the jobs, but for energy security at a time of incredible upheaval in the Middle East? Now this oil is going to go to China. What is going on here?

Well, the only thing that I guess we can figure is that the administration has decided they don't want oil produced from the Canadian oil sands. They have decided they don't want oil that is produced in Canada in the oil sands. The argument is that somehow that oil will have higher greenhouse gas emissions, so we are not going to take it and somehow that is not going to be produced. So it is an environmental issue. The only problem with that is that it is going to be produced. It just won't come to us, it will go to China. And maybe an even bigger irony—although certainly not a bigger problem but a bigger irony—is that the environmental stewardship will then be worse, not better. So if that is the argument, it is going in the wrong direction.

This oil, which will be produced up here—that is exactly the agreement Prime Minister Harper is now working on with China and, believe me, China wants the oil. There is no question about that. They have made it very clear. While we continue to put Canada on hold, China is working very hard to make sure that oil comes to them.

Lets talk about the environmental aspect of that. Now, instead of bringing this oil in a pipeline down to our refineries—the best technology in the world in terms of refining, so we put it in a pipeline and we have lower emissions in the very best refineries in the world—we are going to put this oil in thousands and thousands of tankers that have to go across the ocean, producing greenhouse gases, and it is going to be refined in China, where they have lower emission standards, meaning higher emissions. They don't have the same standards we do, so we end up with more greenhouse gas, and yet at the same time we continue to have tankers of oil coming in from the Middle East producing more greenhouse gas because we can't get the oil from Canada.

So if that is the argument, what are we doing? We are saying: OK, we are going to say no to the jobs and we are going to say no to the fact that we can be energy independent in terms of oil. Between the United States and Canada, we can be independent in our oil needs. We won't need to get oil from Venezuela and we won't need to get oil from the Middle East—a huge national security issue. Look at what is going on in Syria and look at what is going on in Egypt and look at what is going on in Iran. Look at what is going on with the price of gasoline. We can become oil independent with our best friend and ally, Canada, but we say no instead. After 3 years, we are going to say no to the project, so Canada sells it to China and we get worse environmental stewardship.

I hope the American people fully understand exactly what is going on here because it is time to act. Right now, Prime Minister Harper is talking to President Hu Jintao, the President of China and, believe me, China wants the oil. Prime Minister Harper and Canada, our closest ally in the world, have waited 3 years—3 years—to get a ''no'' answer from the administration. So we will see what kind of agreement he comes back with from China.

The reality is, it is time to act. Here are some of the pipelines that are moving crude oil and other product around our country. Do we really think that is a problem, particularly when we put in legislation—when we went specifically and found out what the administration's concern was and we solved it and we built it into the legislation? The time has come to act. I call on my colleagues to join me. We put forward legislation that addresses the concerns. But it is time to act for the good of the American people.

Thank you, Mr. President. I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator rescind the suggestion, please.

Mr. HOEVEN. I will.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:34 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. WEBB).

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The 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.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the January jobs report shows that President Obama and many others have joined to help put our economy on the path to recovery. The economy added 257,000 private sector jobs in January. That is the 23rd month in a row that the economy has added private sector jobs, for a total of 3.7 million payroll jobs over that same period.

In January, the unemployment rate fell again from 8.5 to 8.3 percent. The unemployment rate has fallen .8 percent since August. That is the first time in almost 17 years that the unemployment rate has fallen for 5 consecutive months.

Job growth is occurring across many sectors of our economy. In Illinois, we are seeing manufacturing jobs return, some from overseas, and across the country last month the manufacturing sector added 50,000 new good-paying jobs.

Don't get me wrong, we still have a long way to go. We have to quickly agree on the extension of the payroll tax cut, which will expire in just a few days. We have to ensure that unemployment benefits for those looking for work are continued. We are on the right track, but we shouldn't rest in our efforts to foster an economy that is built to last.

I am not a deficit and debt denier. I understand the gravity of our fiscal challenge, and we need to work to resolve these problems. I hope my work on the President's fiscal commission and as part of the Gang of 6 shows a commitment to this issue. However, as Ben Bernanke, Chairman of the Federal Reserve, said last week:

> Even as fiscal policymakers address the urgent issue of fiscal sustainability, they should take care not to necessarily impede the current economic recovery.
>
> Fortunately, the two goals of achieving long-term fiscal sustainability and avoiding additional fiscal headwinds for the current recovery are fully compatible—indeed, they are mutually reinforcing.
>
> On the one hand, a more robust recovery will lead to lower deficits and debt in coming years. On the other hand, a plan that clearly and credibly puts fiscal policy on a path to sustainability could help keep longer-term interest rates low and improve household and business confidence, thereby supporting improved economic performance today.

We can grow our economy and reduce the deficit. In fact, it is arguable that we can't balance our books or the budget with 14 million people out of work. We have to work to put this economy back on its feet, to put Americans back to work earning good incomes, paying their fair share of taxes, and sustaining a growing economy.

A credible deficit reduction plan will include investments that look to the future. Not only can we be fiscally responsible and still invest in infrastructure, education, and innovation, we can only be fiscally responsible if we do make those investments. Failing to invest in the future is a recipe for more intractable fiscal problems in the years to come.

Those who say just cut spending and ignore the consequences ignore the reality. There are those who say that government spending is holding our economy back. They say that if we cut government spending, somehow we are going to enliven and rejuvenate this economy. History tells us quite a different story. President Clinton presided over the strongest period of private sector growth in recent memory, and he did so while government spending grew every year from 1995 to 2000. In 3 of those years, President Clinton generated a balanced budget—the last balanced budget we have seen in Washington.

It is clear to me that we should be heartened by the recent positive economic data, but we can't mistake it for a signal to retreat. We have to continue working to build a strong and fiscally sound economy for the 21st century. A critical element in that is unemployment insurance. The January report, as I mentioned, says we are on the road to recovery, adding 257,000 private sector jobs, with the unemployment rate dipping from 8.5 to 8.3 percent. Even with these gains, more than 12½ million people are still unemployed and actively looking for work. Even more concerning is the number of longer term unemployed, which remains at about 5.5 million. The trouble finding work isn't due to lack of initiative. We need more jobs. And until there are more jobs available, we should maintain unemployment insurance benefits at current levels.

Maintaining the current level of Federal unemployment insurance has proven to be one of the best things Congress can do to breathe life into this economy. The Congressional Budget Office—respected and bipartisan—estimates that every dollar we put into unemployment insurance not only goes into the economy but is respent and is worth $1.90 in economic activity. Late last year, the Economic Policy Institute estimated that extending Federal unemployment benefits for 1 additional year generates $72 billion in economic growth, creating over 560,000 jobs over the course of the year.

An estimated 3.2 million people were kept out of poverty simply because of unemployment insurance checks. As of the end of last year, 200,000 individuals were collecting unemployment in Illinois, with 43 percent of those unemployed people having children in their homes.

I came to the floor today to reinforce for my colleagues and the conferees working on the payroll tax-unemployment insurance bill that this isn't just about numbers, it is about real lives.

I received a letter from Laurel in December, who does a far better job of illustrating the role of unemployment benefits than anything I can say. Here is what Laurel wrote:

> Thank you for working late nights. I am from Evanston, IL. I graduated from Evanston Township High School. My position as Ethics and Compliance Manager in a large multi-national conglomerate was eliminated last December 2010.
>
> I am trained as a lawyer, and have worked in international law, economics and policy. In addition to a law degree, I have a Master of Science in International Relations from the London School of Economics. I wrote my thesis about US trade policy, the now expired Agreement on Textiles and Clothing, and international economics and labor at LSE.
>
> After working for a think tank in London on democracy and participation, I went to law school. During law school, I interned at the United Nations and later for the legal and regulatory group of a Wall Street research service.
>
> I was working in the legal department of Smiths Group on international compliance issues when I was laid off. While working for Smiths Group, I studied for an LLM in international comparative law in the evenings.
>
> After being laid off, I received severance from my previous employer and was able to get a short-term contract with the World Bank after only a few weeks of unemployment. However, since the end of that contract in July, I have not been able to find a job or get a contract.
>
> My first phase of unemployment ended in November. I have now been receiving unemployment insurance payments for 7 months, just beginning Phase II. If unemployment insurance extensions are not renewed, I understand I will no longer receive payments.
>
> I am a 38-year-old single female living alone. My parents are elderly, and my mother was just diagnosed with breast cancer. My dad has had two strokes in the last 6 years.
>
> I am paying $402 a month in COBRA payments to keep my health insurance. I rent an apartment and unemployment just barely covers my rent. I have been living on savings since July. Without the help of unemployment, I will not be able to pay my rent, and I am terrified.
>
> I have had over 20 informational interviews and applied to 42 jobs since I first heard my job might be eliminated last November.
>
> The extension of unemployment insurance means something to me personally. I need more time. I believe at least with some of the applications I have submitted in both the private sector and government agencies, the companies have not hired anyone despite posting a job. I believe many companies are waiting to see what will happen with government contracts, and agencies are stalled due to the hiring freeze or funding. I know something has to come through soon . . . I support the efforts to support the extension of unemployment benefits.

Is this an example of someone who is not trying, someone who is not trained and educated? Just the opposite. Here is a person who clearly has been driven her entire life to develop skills, to challenge herself, to improve her ability to earn and learn, and here she is out of work and desperate. She doesn't know which way to turn. She is single. She may not be able to pay her rent. Are unemployment benefits important for her to keep her on the track of finding a job? Of course they are. The money we give her will be spent back into the economy to create a better economic climate.