

more energy here at home. In doing so, we grow great American jobs—2 million long-term, sustainable, well-paying jobs. In doing that, we increase GDP by as much as \$10 trillion over the next 30 years.

But we accomplish even more. We lessen our dependence on foreign sources. We do not spend additional taxpayer dollars and go deeper into debt. By creating these jobs and domestic energy, we actually increase Federal revenue. Because what happens when we open our energy resources for production? That production comes online, royalty goes to the Federal Government—new Federal revenue—and we decrease deficit and debt. It truly is a win-win-win.

Part of that is also focusing on the nuclear side, developing what many folks, including the President, have talked about but which we have not accomplished yet: a true nuclear renaissance, a true streamlining of nuclear programs so we can dramatically increase that capacity, particularly producing electricity.

Finally, let me mention the other part of the win-win-win which is in this legislation. We devote some significant portion of the new, additional Federal revenue created to alternative energy research and development. So, again, it is not either/or; it is all of the above.

This proposal has significant support. I am very proud to say we now have 18 Senators who are coauthors of the proposal. There is a companion bill in the House with 50 coauthors there. So it is a significant proposal with significant support. It represents a win-win-win for the American people and the American economy in this time of serious recession.

So why shouldn't this be actively considered and debated and voted on, on the floor of the Senate? We are supposed to be considering a jobs bill. That is progress. At least, finally, we are focused on jobs. But why is every alternative, every amendment being shut out by the majority leader, including this valid alternative?

So in that vein, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order for me to offer amendment No. 3318, which is filed at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VITTER. Well, again, I came to the Senate hearing this was the body of full and open debate, full and open consideration of amendments. The problem is my experience here in 5 years has been anything but that, including yet again this week on this legislation, as we are trying to address the top issue of the American people: jobs and the economy.

Why can't we have a full debate? Why can't we have open consideration of amendments, including this alternative model to continuing to spend

taxpayer dollars, increasing deficit and debt at an alarming rate. Again, I find it unfortunate that is the partisan procedural position we are in. But I will continue with my Senate coauthors, with the 50 House coauthors of this no-cost stimulus proposal to advance this idea as part of a reasonable solution to grow good jobs without having to spend another trillion dollars of hard-earned taxpayer dollars and increased deficit and debt.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I come down to the floor and I hear the Senator from Louisiana saying he has been in the Senate for years and he cannot believe we cannot debate these things. I have watched over the last 13 months since President Obama took the oath of office—13 months and less than a week—and I am incredulous the Senator from Louisiana would say what he says; that we, in fact, do not allow debate in this institution, when more than 100 times, just in the last 13 months—I think maybe 110 times; I cannot keep count because we add a few every day or every week—more than 100 times the other party, the Republicans, have obstructed, have delayed, have stopped us from moving forward.

We have had plenty of time to debate. We will stay here weekends. We will stay here evenings. But when it is not debate they want, it is to block things—maybe talking things to death is the way they block things; maybe they just object to things—but time and time again we have had the “slow walk” on health care, so we have not been able to put a bill on the President's desk. That is not because people do not have ideas. It is not because people want to shut down debate. It is because they have tried to stop these bills on issue after issue after issue.

I remember something so simple as the children's health insurance bill, which President Bush vetoed but many people in both parties supported. They tried to slow that down. They tried to slow the Lilly Ledbetter legislation which we passed to try to make sure women doing the same job in the same place are paid as much as men doing the same job in the same place.

I could stand here, Mr. President, as you could, representing your constituents in Santa Fe and Taos and all over New Mexico—you could do the same as I can do, representing my constituents in Toledo and Dayton and Galion and Saint Clairsville—and point out that when we have tried to get things done, they have blocked it.

We do want bipartisanship. But the public, more than anything, wants us to get things done. The Senator from Louisiana has been one of the leaders, in conjunction with one of his other regional Senators, who has said health care could be President Obama's Waterloo. There are people in this institution on the other side of the aisle—not

all of them; the senior Senator from my State, GEORGE VOINOVICH, has cooperated a lot of times on a lot of things, unlike some of his colleagues, but there are senior Senators on that side of the aisle, where their goal is to see the President of the United States fail. If the President of the United States fails, this country does not move forward.

We are in the worst economic times of my lifetime, brought on by terrible policies in the last 8 years: bank deregulation, tax cuts for the rich, a war not paid for, a giveaway to drug companies and the insurance companies in the name of Medicare privatization, causing all these problems that we inherited a year ago, and all they want to do is stop the jobs bill. They voted last night—the Senator who just complained about not being able to debate voted last night not to even allow the bill on the floor, as he did on health care, as he has done on issue after issue after issue.

It is not personal to me what they are doing, but it is certainly wrong when they try to block issue after issue, bill after bill. We can disagree on what we need to do to bring this country forward. We can disagree on the jobs bill. We can disagree on the health care bill. But we ought to be able to agree we can have full debate, move forward, work on this legislation, and pass it in a reasonable time so every Senator does not talk it to death in the way of stopping it, in the way of obstructionism.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now recess until 2:15 p.m., as provided for under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:25 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BEGICH).

COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

METRO SAFETY

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the current state of affairs in the Washington Metro and why we need to bring about change. The Washington Metro, America's subway, is in trouble. I fear for its safety. I fear for its operational reliance. I fear for the well-being of both the passengers and the workers who ride Metro.

Every morning, I am afraid to wake up and find out that there has been another accident or death on the Washington Metro. Most recently, a Metro

train carrying 345 passengers derailed underground in the heart of downtown. It was Friday when the Federal Government reopened after our big No. 2 blizzard. The train somehow managed to get on the wrong track as it was leaving the station. Thank God a safety device actually worked and pushed the train off of the wrong track to prevent it from crashing into another train. Thankfully, a near miss.

In June, there was a terrible crash of the Metro, cars upon cars upon cars. Since that time, 13 people have died on the Metro, and there have been countless injuries. That is why that terrible day after our No. 2 blizzard, many sat in the dark, scared to death. They were afraid of being crashed into, which had happened before. They were afraid of fire. They were afraid of smoke. They were afraid of being trapped and, most of all, they were afraid that Congress would fail to act.

I wish to salute the Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development chaired by my good colleague Senator BOB MENENDEZ, for taking a great interest in this and introducing legislation that the administration sanctions to begin to get Metro on the right track. We need to do this.

Last year, after the nine people were killed, I introduced legislation to give the Transportation Secretary the authority to establish Federal safety standards for Metro systems around the country. There had been none. It would require the Transportation Secretary to implement the National Transportation Safety Board's most wanted safety recommendations.

After accidents on subways, after accidents on our Metro, the NTSB comes in and investigates. Gee, are we glad to see them. They are the CSI meets Metro. At the end, they not only tell us what went wrong, but what we have to do to get it right. Well, guess what. We don't listen to them. After every accident, there is press—we are going to make changes—but nothing happens. So, for example, the issues they have recommended relating to crashworthiness standards for cars, emergency entry and evacuation standards, data event recorders, often go unheeded. We have to make those changes, and we need to take another step.

Today, I take another step by joining Senator MENENDEZ, Senator DODD, and Senator CARDIN on the Public Transportation Safety Program Act. This is an idea that we have worked on, along with the administration, to give the Transportation Secretary the authority to establish Federal safety standards. It also strengthens State oversight programs that inspect and regulate the Metro systems. Because Washington Metro is in two States and in the District of Columbia—Maryland, Virginia, and DC—it has the Tri-State Oversight Committee. But you know what. The Metro board doesn't have to pay any attention. In fact, we had to raise cane and pound the table to allow

them to work with the safety inspectors and actually walk the tracks to try to get some action. We had to muscle our way in, just trying to get the Tri-State folks involved in safety.

Well, for me, right now, the spotlight is the Washington Metro. My obligation is here. There are other Metro systems around the country that this bill will also deal with, but right now, myself and Senator CARDIN, John Warner—MARK WARNER—John Warner in his time—JIM WEBB, and Congresswoman ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON want to work together. We want to work with the Banking Committee to pass legislation that would bring about change. We want to make sure that when we make recommendations, the FTA—the Federal Transit Authority—has the authority to implement the changes and to make sure that Metros both here and around the country implement them.

We also want to require that the implementation of the NTSB's most wanted list is absolutely done so when we say let's have crashworthy standards for our cars, it is actually implemented. Did you know we have standards for everything that is involved in transportation but not standards for the safety or the crashworthiness of these cars? These two bills are important because there are no Federal safety standards for Metro systems. Rail transit is the only transportation mode without safety standards oversight or enforcement. As I said, we have safety standards for airplanes, commuter rail systems, even buses, but Metro systems do not have standards, even though the rail transit has 14 million daily riders. Up until now, safety has been left to the States. Each State has its own safety enforcement practices, but in our case of the Washington Metro, which travels in two States and the District of Columbia, we need to make sure we have a system that is appropriately regulated.

The bill that was introduced by the Banking Committee and Senator MENENDEZ yesterday, which I support, does two things. It gives the Transportation Secretary authority to establish safety standards for Metro, light rail, and bus systems nationwide. It provides a framework for developing and enforcing those safety standards, and it will look at existing industry standards and best practices. It would also have to consider the NTSB's recommendations.

I think about those 13 people a lot. I think about the people who ride the Metro. I think about the people who work on the Metro. So when we talk about this legislation, we have to think of it not in terms of rail cars and money but in terms of people and in terms of safety.

That is why I introduced the National Metro Safety Act in July after the accident, joined by my colleague Senator CARDIN. It enables the Transportation Secretary to develop, implement, and enforce those national safe-

ty standards, and it requires DOT to implement the NTSB, the National Transportation Safety Board's, most wanted safety recommendations. They have what they call their top 10. It would have standards for the crashworthiness of cars. It would mandate evacuation standards so that people could get out of these cars in the event of an accident. It would have the black box data recording device so we could trace what happens on a car and have the lessons learned. It would also deal with the hour of service regulations for train operators. It requires that we do these actions.

So for these issues—the crashworthiness, the train cars, the emergency entry and evacuation, data—all of this has been recommended in the past by the NTSB. In 2002 they recommended data event recorders. Nothing happened. They recommended emergency evacuation standards in 2006. Nothing happened. They recommended hours of service to make sure our people were fresh and fit for duty. Nothing happened. We know what happens: accidents in which people die, are maimed, burned, or injured.

It is time we listened to the experts who advise us. It is time that we ensure the safety of the people who ride the Metro here. It is time that we take action and be able to bring this under the Federal Transit Authority. The people who count on us when they get on a subway should be able to count on us to do all we can to ensure their safety.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise today to take on a cause which I know is close to the hearts of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, which is to assert the privilege of pay-go. I have heard innumerable arguments made on the other side of the aisle about the importance of the pay-go mechanisms in this Congress: how pay-go will be used to discipline our spending as a Congress and how pay-go is the way we get to financial and fiscal responsibility as a Congress. In fact, 2 weeks ago, I believe it was, the majority leader came to the floor and offered a brandnew pay-go resolution as a matter of statute and said that this is one of the key pillars of the majority party and the President in the area of how you discipline spending and bring our spending house in order. The President has mentioned pay-go on numerous occasions also.

Why all this talk about pay-go? Because I think people are beginning to realize—certainly our constituents—that the government is spending too much money; that we are running up too much debt; that we are passing bill after bill after bill in this Congress which we are not paying for. The cost of those bills is going to our children. We are going to double the Federal debt here in 2013. We are going to triple the Federal debt in 2019 under the President's budget and the budget

passed by the Democratic leadership in this Congress. The Federal debt increases by \$11 trillion over the next 9 years of this budget that is being proposed by the President—\$11 trillion. We get to a point where our Nation is basically spending so much and borrowing so much that our financial house is unsustainable.

Those are not my words. Those are the words actually of the Secretary of the Treasury and the head of OMB. They both said their own budget that they sent up here was unsustainable in its present form because it spends so much more money than we have, and those bills get passed right on to our kids.

Well, in defense of their sending up a budget that spends all of this money we don't have and doubles the debt in 2013 and triples it in 2019, they said they were going to assert pay-go rules which would discipline this Senate on the issue of spending. At the time they made that assertion I said, Oh, come on, give us a break. Over the last 3 years that this Congress has been under Democratic control, under liberal control, in over 20 instances, pay-go as it presently exists in the law was waived, costing over \$½ trillion in new spending. Approximately \$½ trillion that should have been subject to pay-go rules was waived—simply waived—by the other side of the aisle: We are not going to pay attention to pay-go rules, we are going to spend the money and add the debt to our children's backs.

I think the American people notice this and are certainly frustrated about this, because they intuitively understand—it is called common sense—if you spend all of this money you don't have, the debt is going to come back to roost on our children's backs and it reduces their quality of life. Obviously, if you have a government that runs up deficits which exceed the capacity of our ability to repay them, it is our children who end up paying the cost of that profligate spending. It is our children who end up with these bills. Their standard of living will be reduced as a result of all of this new deficit and debt this Congress has passed and which this Congress has proposed.

So for political cover, they called up a couple of weeks ago this pay-go resolution and said we are going to assert pay-go around here on everything that comes through this Congress. We are going to make sure the financial house of this Congress is disciplined by the rule of pay-go.

Well, that is why I want to help them, because here is a new bill on the floor of the Senate.

It violates pay-go. It violates their own rules. It violates this great sanctity that they claim was going to be the cause of fiscal discipline—the pay-go rule. Just a few weeks ago, we passed a pay-go resolution here. What did we get? Within 2 weeks, we have a bill that violates the pay-go rules.

The pay-go rules, as we have them—and they are the law, the rule of the

Senate today—say that pay-go will apply for any legislation that increases the deficit in the first 5-year period or in the first 10-year period. This bill has been scored by CBO as violating that rule. It increases the deficit by \$12 billion, unpaid for, in the first 5-year period. This bill is, therefore, subject to a pay-go point of order.

We are going to hear a specious argument from the other side of the aisle that, well, in the year 2020 we account for all this and we get the money back. Well, I don't believe that. I don't believe the check is in the mail either. The American people don't believe that. More importantly, the rules of the Senate don't allow that. The rules of the Senate make it very clear that if it adds to the deficit in the first 5 years, it is subject to a pay-go point of order. And this is not a small amount here; \$12 billion is a lot of money. I know that under the way we function here, and we talk about trillions—and the President rolled out just yesterday a new \$100 billion or \$200 billion package of health care, added to a \$2.4 trillion package of health care—I know that billions become lost sometimes in that debate. But \$1 billion is a lot of money, and this is \$12 billion added to our children's backs in the way of deficit and debt. Most Americans see that as a lot of money. You could run the entire State government of New Hampshire for about 3 years on that. Yet we are going to run up the deficit by \$12 billion, in violation of our own rules.

There is something even more outrageous about this bill. It is pretty outrageous that we would have all the sanctimonious discussion from the other side of the aisle about how they are going to live by pay-go 2 weeks ago and then have the first bill they bring forth violate the rules of pay-go. That is pretty outrageous in and of itself. But this bill, in an act of gamesmanship that really deserves a special award—maybe a gold medal at the Vancouver Olympics for gamesmanship in fiscal policy and how you basically pass on to your children a major new debt without telling them it is coming—certainly this bill would deserve a gold medal in that category.

On top of the pay-go violation, this bill creates \$140 billion of deficit and debt. Now, even on the other side of the aisle, that has to be considered a lot of money. Maybe they don't consider \$12 billion a lot of money, but \$140 billion has to be big money. So \$140 billion of deficit and debt is built into this bill even though the bill, on its face, states that it only spends \$12 billion or \$15 billion, something like that. How do they do that? How could that possibly be? Because what they have done here—and as I said, this deserves a gold medal for manipulating the financial house of the Senate and the Congress in a way that is avoiding actual accountability for the debt you are adding onto our children's shoulders—is they have put into the baseline the highway money. So the billions in

highway money for this year in this bill, multiplied out over 10 years, comes to \$140 billion, and then they have claimed that is all offset, all that money is offset. How do they claim it is offset? Well, it is tactical, but follow this because it is the ultimate game in double bookkeeping—something Al Capone might have done were he running the books of the Senate. There is a highway trust fund that doesn't have enough money to pay for the roads they want to build—the highway committee in this Congress, the EPW Committee. They want to build more roads than the trust fund has money coming in for, so they take money from the general fund and transfer it to the highway trust fund.

They allege that 10 years ago or so, the highway trust fund lent money to the general fund and no interest was paid on that money lent to the general fund. First off, at the time they passed the law that said no interest was to be paid on it—but it would be ridiculous to pay interest between the two funds anyway—even if you accepted that argument, you couldn't get to the numbers they are talking about. What they have done is claimed that any money that comes out of the general fund to fund the highway fund is an offset. That is an interesting concept. Therefore, it doesn't get scored against the deficit by the highway fund.

Where do we get the money we took from the general fund to fund the highway fund? The answer is pretty simple: We borrow it from China, from Saudi Arabia, from Americans, and our kids get a bill called a piece of debt that they have to pay off. This double-entry bookkeeping, in the tradition of Al Capone basically, when simplified, means that it adds \$140 billion of new deficit and debt to the general fund, which has to be paid by our kids—not offset, unpaid for, simply money spent.

Do you know something. We are spending a lot of money around here that we don't have, and it is not right. I think the American people would like us to stop that. If we are going to spend this money on roads, then let's pay for it. Don't hide the fact that you are not paying for this with some gamesmanship called offsetting highway fund with general fund money. I think that is a pretty cynical act. If you don't have the courage to stand before this Congress and say publicly that we want to spend \$140 billion and don't want to pay for it, then you are not fulfilling your responsibility to your constituents, because that is what you are doing. You have an obligation not to try to hide what you are doing in some sort of bookkeeping manipulation, which gets you a gold medal for bookkeeping manipulation but certainly doesn't do anything for transparency and honesty in government, on top of having a pay-go violation—\$12 billion as scored by CBO.

This point of order lies. There is \$140 billion of new spending proposed in this bill, which isn't paid for. It is spending

that isn't paid for, and it is authorized and going to be spent. That is pretty inexcusable because it is claimed that it is paid for, which is the real hypocrisy of what we are seeing.

My colleagues on the other side may vote against this point of order. I cannot understand how they can do that, and I cannot understand how, when the majority leader comes down here—and I am sure he will or one of his representatives will—and says pay-go should not lie here because in 2020 we are going to pay for all this, that they can claim anything other than the fact that a pay-go point of order lies. I mean, it does lie.

What is a pay-go point of order? It is the CBO telling us that we have violated our own rules, called pay-go, and we are spending money that goes to the deficit—in this case, \$12 billion.

So as a very practical matter this is a pretty black-and-white situation: either you are for enforcing fiscal discipline here with a pay-go point of order or you are not. I have to say, if this pay-go point of order fails, then I think we ought to follow it up with a unanimous consent that says we are going to rid ourselves of pay-go as an enforcement mechanism because we are then saying it doesn't mean anything. Clearly, that would be the only conclusion you could reach.

A pay-go point of order makes it clear: There is \$12 billion of deficit spending in the first 5-year window, which violates the pay-go rules set up by this Senate and specifically proposed and promoted by the Democratic majority as a way to give us fiscal discipline, and we are ignoring it, overruling it, and we are bypassing it with this piece of legislation if we do waive the pay-go rule.

At this point, I make a point of order that the pending amendment offered by the Senator from Nevada, Mr. REID, would increase the on-budget deficit for the sum of years 2010 to 2014. Therefore, I raise a point of order against the amendment pursuant to section 201(a) of S. Con. Res. 21, Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2008.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I move that the point of order be waived.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays on the motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my waiver of the relevant point of order that was re-

cently entered into include all relevant points of order that were raised.

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

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes as in morning business.

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

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today on the occasion of Black History Month to recognize the accomplishments of three leading Marylanders in American medicine. Established by Howard University historian Carter G. Woodson in 1927 as Black History Week, this now month-long celebration is an opportunity to elevate awareness of Black Americans' contributions to our Nation's history.

It is customary for American families to spend time in February learning more about famous Black Americans who helped shape our Nation, including Marylanders Harriet Ross Tubman, the "Moses of her people," who ran the Underground Railroad, and Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first black Supreme Court Justice and the architect of the legal strategy leading to the 1954 landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

Today, I come to the Senate floor to highlight the contributions of three Marylanders who are currently at the pinnacle of the medical profession—Dr. Ben Carson, Dr. Eve Higginbotham, and Dr. Donald Wilson.

I have spoken before on the crushing burden of health disparities on our health care system and the urgent need to eliminate them. It is an issue directly affecting one out of every three Americans: 37 million African Americans, 45 million Latinos, 13 million Asians, 2.3 million Native Americans and Alaskan Natives, and 400,000 Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in our Nation. While minorities represent one-third of our Nation's population, they are fully one-half of the uninsured. So when we enact legislation that expands access to millions of uninsured Americans, it will make a difference in minority communities, in minority health overall, and in the health of our Nation.

But providing access to comprehensive health insurance addresses only one of the factors contributing to health disparities. Research informs us that even after accounting for those who lack health insurance, minority racial and ethnic groups face inequities in access and treatment; and they have adverse health care outcomes at higher rates than whites. Even when insurance status, income, age, and severity of conditions are comparable, racial and ethnic minorities tend to receive lower quality health care. Therefore, coverage is not enough.

Despite many attempts over the years by health policymakers, providers, researchers, and others, wide disparities still persist in many facets of health care. When it comes to equitable care for minorities, low-income,

geographic, cultural and language barriers, and racial bias are found to be common obstacles. These inequities carry a high cost in terms of life expectancy, quality of life, and efficiency, and they cost our Nation billions of dollars each year.

Researchers from Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland found that between 2003 and 2006, racial and ethnic disparities cost the Nation more than \$229 billion in excess direct medical costs. Adding indirect costs reveals a staggering \$1.24 trillion from lost wages and premature and preventable deaths and disabilities. By elevating the focus on health disparities, we can bring down these costs and improve the quality of care across the board.

If we are to improve the health care status of Americans, we must focus on and eliminate these disparities. One step is ensuring every community has a sufficient supply of well-trained medical professionals, and this is where our Nation's academic medical centers play an essential role. All three physicians—Drs. Carson, Higginbotham, and Wilson—shine as leaders in their medical profession and have devoted their careers to academic medicine.

First is Dr. Benjamin Carson, a world-renowned pediatric neurosurgeon who works daily to save and improve the lives of children as director of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins. Dr. Carson's story is truly inspiring. He was born and raised in Detroit by a mother who encouraged Ben and his brother to work hard and succeed in school. Dr. Carson graduated high school with honors and was admitted to Yale University to study psychology. He attended the University of Michigan Medical School, specializing in neurosurgery. Dr. Carson completed neurosurgery residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital, where at age 33 he became the youngest physician ever to head a major division there. Dr. Carson has surgically separated several pairs of conjoined twins and has pioneered new, groundbreaking procedures to save children's lives.

Most notable among Dr. Carson's numerous accolades and honors is the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Nation's highest civilian award, which he received in 2008. In addition to his surgical acumen, Dr. Carson is a dedicated community activist. He is president and cofounder of the Carson Scholars Fund which recognizes young people of all backgrounds for exceptional academic and humanitarian accomplishments. He is also president and cofounder of the Benevolent Endowment Network Fund, an organization that works to cover the medical expenses of pediatric neurosurgery patients with complex medical conditions.

Second, I wish to recognize Dr. Eve Higginbotham, an internationally recognized physician who was recently appointed senior vice president and executive dean for health services at Howard University. Dr. Higginbotham is

the first woman to chair a university-based ophthalmology department in the United States, and she held this position at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore from 1994 to 2006. Her next appointment was dean and senior vice president for academic affairs at Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta.

Dr. Higginbotham is a frontline warrior in the fight to eliminate health disparities. As a member of the Friends of the Congressional Glaucoma Caucus Foundation, she developed a glaucoma screening training program that has been implemented in more than 40 medical schools nationwide. Through this program, medical students provide glaucoma screening to elderly residents in underserved communities, making possible early detection and treatment for the leading cause of blindness among African Americans.

Dr. Higginbotham was recently inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She has served on the boards of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, Women in Ophthalmology, and the National Space Biomedical Research Institute. She is also a past president of the Baltimore City Medical Society and the Maryland Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons.

Finally, I wish to recognize Dr. Donald Wilson, who was Dr. Higginbotham's immediate predecessor at Howard University. Dr. Wilson served as dean of the University of Maryland School of Medicine from 1991 to 2006. The University of Maryland's medical research funding increased nearly fivefold, from \$77 million to \$341 million during Dr. Wilson's leadership. His tenure at Maryland distinguished him as the Nation's first African-American dean of a nonminority medical school. While at the University of Maryland, Dr. Wilson also served as the director of the Program in Minority Health and Health Disparities Education and Research.

Dr. Wilson has also chaired Federal health committees at the NIH and the FDA, as well as serving on the advisory council of HHS's Agency for Health Care Policy and Research. He was chairman of both the Association of American Medical Colleges and the Council of Deans of U.S. Medical Schools. And he was the first African American to hold each of these positions. He is a member of several medical and research societies, including the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences and the Association of American Physicians. He is a master of the American College of Physicians, an honor bestowed on fewer than 1 percent of its members. Dr. Wilson also cofounded the Association for Academic Minority Physicians in 1986.

Numerous honors and awards have been bestowed upon Dr. Wilson, including the Baltimore Urban League's Whitney M. Young, Jr., Humanitarian Award. In 2003, he received the prestigious Frederick Douglass Award from

the University System of Maryland Board of Regents. Dr. Wilson is also the recipient of the Institutional Leadership Diversity Award from the Association of American Medical Colleges Group on Student Affairs-Minority Affairs Section.

Drs. Carson, Higginbotham, and Wilson are three living reasons why we celebrate Black History Month. Their contributions have made invaluable contributions to American medicine, but they are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of African Americans who have made a noteworthy impact upon our Nation.

I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the contributions of these three noteworthy physicians as this body seeks to make health care available to everyone, and join me in celebrating their accomplishments during Black History Month.

Mr. President, to clarify, my intention on my previous motion to waive was to waive the Budget Act and budget resolutions with respect to the motion to concur with an amendment and that the yeas and nays previously ordered be considered as ordered on the motion as modified. I ask unanimous consent for this request.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask to be recognized.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about two issues. First, the jobs bill and the provision that Senator HATCH and I worked on that helped break the partisan logjam, and also the need for the Senate to take up and pass up to \$25 billion in FMAP assistance to the States. First, the jobs portion.

During our break, I traveled all around my State from Cheektowaga to Oswego, from Syracuse to Poughkeepsie, from Long Island to New York City. In each place, I talked with people who had lost their jobs. It was heartbreaking. These are people who are looking desperately to find work.

One of the sadder points of this recession is, of course, its depth. It is deeper than all but one recession we have had since World War II. But, second, it seems to affect people at all income levels. If you are poor, if you are middle class, even if you are upper middle class, you can lose your job. Perhaps most painful of all, the amount of time that people are out of work is much longer than previous recessions. In

other words, in previous recessions, you would lose your job, it would be horrible, but you would say to yourself: In 3 or 4 months, I can find a new job quite easily. That has not happened.

In fact, I met people such as a woman in Rochester who worked for a major firm in human resources. She is about 50. She does not have a family, but her job was her life. She was told she had to leave a year and a half ago. She has been looking and looking. Her salary was in the low six figures. She was a very talented person upon meeting her. No work. No job.

I met somebody who came from a blue-collar background. The family had no education. He climbed his way to the top of the tool-and-die industry. He was making a good living. He has six children and a wife who stayed home because when you have six kids, it is not easy to work. He was laid off about a year ago. Again, he has been looking and looking, first with his high skills in his industry, and then he kept looking lower and lower and lower on the pay scale, to no avail. No job. I could repeat this story over and over.

I can see why the people of Massachusetts voted the way they did. I did not agree with it, but I understand it. In my judgment, what they were saying was simple. If you look at the exit polls, about 50 percent of the people in Massachusetts supported the President's health care bill and an equal number against it. But, overwhelmingly, they were saying to us, whether they were for the bill or against it, focus on issue No. 1, jobs—jobs, the economy, helping the middle class stretch that paycheck so they can make ends meet.

That is why I think Senator REID, our majority leader, was so wise to put together the bill he did, the HIRE Act. That is why he reached out to those across the aisle, as did I. That is why I am pleased this vital legislation—hardly a panacea; it is not going to cure all our problems—looks as though it will move forward late this afternoon or this evening.

I am very proud—we are all proud—that we have bipartisan support. I believe the vote later on will be even more bipartisan than the vote to move forward on the bill yesterday. Bipartisan victories such as this have been few and far between. But this could be the start of something good. I hope the bipartisanship will not end with this afternoon's vote.

Unemployment, of course, is not simply a blue State problem or a red State problem; it is an everywhere problem. It will take more than one party's solutions to solve it. So if there is only one issue that we can find common ground on this year, let it be jobs.

We all know unemployment, which is hovering just below 10 percent, is unacceptably high. When you hear the number 10 percent, it is an abstract figure. But if you are a husband or wife, a son or daughter who is out of work, or one in your family is out of work, unemployment is 100 percent.

As the economy shows signs of life, unfortunately millions of Americans remain out of work, struggling to make ends meet with savings and unemployment benefits. There are more than 15 million unemployed Americans. That is not even counting those who have stopped looking for work. There are more than 6 million people who have been out of work for 6 or more months. Each one has a story, a life, usually a family, such as the woman from Rochester I mentioned.

When I go to sleep at night, I sometimes think of the people I talked with last week while we were on break and about their pain at losing their job and their quest to find a new one. Unfortunately, despite their efforts, most of them have not found work.

This recession is unlike anything we have seen since the 1930s. It has created immeasurable hardship and heartache for tens of millions of American families. It doesn't matter if you are in a red State or a blue State. If you are unemployed, you want a job.

Last year, Congress took bold steps to bring our economy back from the brink of collapse, and GDP growth in the last quarter was as high as 5.7 percent. The purpose of the provision Senator HATCH and I have introduced is to take that growth and translate it into jobs because while the economy grew at a very rapid clip—5.7 percent—hardly a job was created. That is a problem because we cannot continue to grow at that rate unless people start going back to work. Until the unemployment rate drops significantly, Congress must do more to help families across the country who are desperately struggling to find work, and this bill is a step in the right direction.

Last year, I believe Congress was right not to add a jobs tax credit to the stimulus package. Economists told us that with the economy shrinking and losing 700,000 jobs a month when the President took office, our focus had to be on stimulating demand. But now that the economy is beginning to grow—at the very worst is flat—a tax credit is what is needed because there are companies that have seen sales blip up and they are wondering whether to hire that additional worker. The Schumer-Hatch tax credit may push them over the edge and they may say: OK, I will hire somebody. Then, instead of the vicious cycle of downward employment we have seen, a virtuous cycle will begin. That company will hire a worker, that worker will go to the stores and buy things, those stores may hire another worker and more money circulates in the economy and we start moving upward as opposed to downward.

After reviewing the criticisms of past tax credit proposals, Senator HATCH and I set out to develop an idea that would address some of the past concerns while honing in on the problem we are trying to solve, which is persistently high and long-term unemployment. I felt we needed a solution that

was simple, immediate, focused, fiscally responsible, and potentially bipartisan. That is what our proposal does.

Let me talk about each word. It is simple. Small business, we know, is the job growth engine in America. But if you tell a small businessperson they have to fill out 40 pages or even hire an accountant before they get a tax credit, they are going to say: Forget about it. But this is immediate. Again, if you tell a small businessperson: Yes, you will get a tax credit, but it will be a year from April when your tax returns come in, they are not going to do it.

Our proposal is immediate. The minute the worker is hired, the benefit begins. As I said, it is simple: All the employer must do is show that the person they are hiring has been unemployed for 60 days—and that is easy to do because they can show 60 days of unemployment benefits—and that is that.

Third, our program is fiscally responsible. It is not a big, huge bureaucracy. It is not a new government agency. The money goes directly to the small business that makes the new hire, and that is why it has bang for the buck. It is estimated that if 3 million people were hired by this credit, it would cost about \$15 billion. Mr. President, \$15 billion sounds like a lot of money, but compared to the stimulus—again, for a different purpose a year ago when the economy was collapsing—the cost of ours is about one-sixtieth, and dollar for dollar it will be focused on jobs.

So it meets all these criteria. It will focus like a laser on the unemployed and will create jobs right away at a reasonable cost. In this day when communication is so important, it can be explained in a single sentence. Any private sector employer that hires a worker who has been unemployed for 60 days will not have to pay payroll taxes on that worker for the rest of the year. That is it. Nothing else. It explains the whole program from start to finish. By the way, if the employer keeps that worker for at least a year, they will receive an additional \$1,000 tax credit.

Our plan is good for business and good for workers. The more a business pays a worker, the bigger benefit they get. Many of the previous programs were aimed, understandably, at workers at the lower income level. But these days, when you have people in our State who make \$60,000, \$80,000, \$100,000 or \$120,000 a year and who can't find work, they will benefit by the same percentage as somebody at the lower end of the spectrum. The sooner the employer hires, the bigger the break because it lasts this year. The employer doesn't pay taxes and the benefits go immediately into the business's cashflow. Unlike other proposals, there is no waiting to receive a tax credit. The employer doesn't pay the taxes to the government in the first place.

Obviously, employers decide to hire workers when it makes business sense. If your sales are declining, no tax in-

centive is going to encourage you to hire somebody. But we are now finding—at this stage of this Nation's incipient and all-too-small recovery—that many businesses, large and small, are finding orders are beginning to rise, sales beginning to increase. It is those businesses that our tax credit is aimed at. This proposal may give them the push they need to add a few workers or hire them a few months sooner than they otherwise might. Either would be a good thing.

I don't wish to delude my colleagues, and I know Senator HATCH, the co-author of this proposal, would agree, that this provision is not a panacea. There are other proposals Congress could, should, and must consider to aid job creation, but I look forward to considering those ideas in the weeks to come. In the meantime, we ought to take advantage of the bipartisan camaraderie, which I hope lasts, and move this proposal forward.

I wish to thank a number of people who helped. At the top of the list is Chairman BAUCUS. When Senator HATCH and I—both members of his committee, the Finance Committee—brought him the proposal, he thought it was a good idea and helped champion it. I wish to thank Leader REID, who jumped right at the opportunity to pass the proposal. I wish to recognize Senator CASEY and Senator GILLIBRAND, my colleague, for the hard work they put into an alternative tax credit idea, which could end up complementing, not replacing, our idea. Finally, last but certainly not least, I wish to thank my colleague, Senator HATCH, as well as Senator GRASSLEY, who worked with us on this proposal to refine it and make it possible to pass, which I believe we will do shortly.

I wish to turn the subject to another pressing issue; that is, the pressing issue of State fiscal relief. While our top priority is putting unemployed Americans back to work, nothing we do on job creation will be truly effective unless we also stop the bleeding caused by State and local budget cuts across the Nation. We cannot, with one hand, incentivize private sector employment while, on the other hand, through inaction, force State and local governments to lay off thousands of firefighters, teachers, health care providers, and other public servants.

Right now, States face the steepest ever dropoff in revenues. My State of New York and so many of the localities I have visited—from large major cities such as New York City and Buffalo, to the smaller towns and villages—are desperate for help. If they do not receive it, they are going to have to lay off thousands and thousands of workers. In the city of New York, they are talking about laying off teachers. That is hurting our seed corn. The number of police officers, at a time of crime and terrorist threats, is declining. That hurts our economy as well as our localities.

New York is not alone. From California to Arizona, to Alabama, to

Maine, and to Mississippi, State Governors have laid out proposals that will unfortunately eliminate jobs and cut critical services in the coming months. In fact, it is estimated, if there is no help, State and local governments will have to lay off 1 million workers—something we can ill afford at a time of this incipient recovery. The cuts couldn't come at a worse time for our fledgling economy. States will be forced to make massive layoffs and they will be cornered into raising taxes on hard-working, middle-class Americans at a time when families can't afford to take another hit and at a time when taking money out of the economy makes no sense at all. It oftentimes makes no sense but now more particularly.

Last week, the Nation's Governors nearly unanimously endorsed a 6-month emergency extension of FMAP, the Federal Medicaid Assistance Program, which would send up to \$25 billion to the States. They know firsthand that job losses in their States would have been much more severe were it not for the significant relief Congress provided for them in last year's stimulus package, particularly through the FMAP program. I know our economy is growing, but out in the States it sure doesn't feel like a recovery yet. Cutting off this assistance now, as the stimulus expires, would be like pulling the rug from under the States just as they are maybe beginning to turn the corner.

I was an ardent supporter of the Recovery Act's FMAP aid because, plain and simple, it saves jobs, and I argued for it then. I am especially proud to have authored a provision that ensured a stream of funding that went directly to county governments. In my State, the Medicaid burden, much of it—too much of it—falls on localities. If we were just to give Albany the money—not just the Albany share but the county share—the counties and New York City might never see that money ever again. So I was able to—with the help of Leader REID and Chairman BAUCUS—write a provision into law that said the locality gets its share directly, and I am urging the Senate to include this language in a new emergency extension as well.

We cannot afford to delay any longer. This economic downturn didn't come with an end-of-the-year deadline. This critical aid to States shouldn't either. So I hope that in the next jobs bill we pass FMAP is a vital part, and I hope, just as with the provision Senator HATCH and I put together, it will get broad bipartisan support. I believe an overwhelming majority of Governors—Democratic and Republican—have already signed a letter urging that that happen, and I hope we will get people from both sides of the aisle to make sure the next jobs bill contains a healthy and robust FMAP extension. The House has already passed it. It is up to us.

We have much yet to do on the job front, but our efforts will be under-

mined if our Nation's Governors are forced to lay off workers and raise property taxes. We need to plug the holes in the dam so our recovery efforts are not washed away. We need to put this great Nation back on a path to prosperity by passing the tax credit Senator HATCH and I have offered and then by moving forward and making sure FMAP is extended for at least another 6 months.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. GILLIBRAND). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAUFMAN). The Senator from Vermont.

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

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

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

RECONCILIATION

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I think all across this country people are wondering about what is going on in Congress and, specifically, what is going on in the Senate. People are using the expression that government is broken and that we seem to be a dysfunctional institution.

The reason for the alarm is pretty obvious. The United States today faces the most serious set of crises we have seen since the Great Depression. Today, some 17 percent of our people are either unemployed or underemployed. This is on top of coming out of a decade where the median family income actually declined. So people by the millions are today working longer hours for lower wages. They are wondering what kind of life is going to be available for their kids. They are having a hard time affording childcare. They are having a hard time affording higher education. We have 46 million people who are uninsured. We have 45,000 people who die every single year because they can't get to a doctor. If we don't get a handle on health care, their costs are going to be doubling in the next 8 years. We recently saw Blue Cross in California asking for a 39-percent rate increase for their premiums. It is not unusual. It is going on all over the country.

People are saying, What is going on? Is the middle class going to continue to collapse? Is poverty going to continue to increase? Are you guys going to get your act together and begin to do something that benefits working families in this country?

It goes without saying that the American people want—I want, you want, we all want—bipartisan efforts to solve these problems, but, most importantly, we want to solve these issues. We have to deal with the econ-

omy. We have to deal with our friends on Wall Street whose recklessness and illegal behavior has driven this country into this terrible recession. We have to deal with it. We have to deal with health care. We don't have a choice. We have to deal with the \$12 trillion national debt. We have to do it.

Unfortunately, I think what the American people are beginning to catch onto is that to have bipartisan ship, you need a "bi," you need two sides coming together. What we have here in the Senate is not two sides coming together but one side, our Republican friends who are saying: No, no, no. If it is good for Obama, it is bad for us. No, no, no. We have had a record-breaking number of filibusters, a record-breaking number of other obstructionist tactics. The end result is the American people are becoming very frustrated.

I do a national radio show every week and every week on that program somebody is calling me up and saying, I don't understand it. When the Republicans were in control of the Senate, they were able to bring forth sweeping proposals. They didn't have 60 votes. What is going on? You guys on your side, those who are Independents and in the Democratic caucus, you have 59 votes, why aren't you doing it? It is a good question.

I think more and more people are talking about using the reconciliation process, which is simply a parliamentary procedure which enables us to pass legislation with the end result of saving taxpayers' money and lowering the deficit. The beauty of that approach is you can go forward with 51 votes, not the 60 votes we are having a very difficult time obtaining, because we are not getting much support from the other side. Some people say, Well, this reconciliation approach is unfair. This is a radical idea. Why are you bringing it forth? The answer is that this has been done time after time after time, mostly, in fact, by Republicans. So it seems to me if this is a concept the Republicans have used year after year after year for very major pieces of legislation, it is appropriate for the Democratic caucus to do that as well.

Let me give a few examples. Many Americans will remember the Contract With America. That was Newt Gingrich's very big idea. I thought it was a very bad idea, but nonetheless it was a very comprehensive approach. The Contract With America in 1995 was passed in the Senate through reconciliation. This was a broad, comprehensive bill, and this is what President Clinton said. This is what the Washington Post reported President Clinton saying when he vetoed that legislation, and I am glad he did. This is what Clinton said:

Today I am vetoing the biggest Medicare and Medicaid cuts in history, deep cuts in education, a rollback in environmental protection, and a tax increase on working families.

This was Clinton's veto message of the Republican Contract With America that was passed through reconciliation.

That is not the only effort the Republicans mounted through reconciliation. In 1996, Republicans passed legislation to enact welfare reform through reconciliation. In 1997, Congress used reconciliation to establish new health coverage programs or to substantially expand existing ones, including SCHIP passed through reconciliation. In 2005, Republicans pushed through reconciliation legislation that reduced spending on Medicaid and raised premiums on upper income Medicare beneficiaries. In 2003, Republicans used reconciliation to push through President Bush's 2003 tax cuts. In 2001, Republicans used reconciliation to pass President Bush's \$1.35 trillion tax cut, much of it going to the wealthiest people in this country.

What is my point? My point is that it would be the utmost hypocrisy for Republicans to tell us we should not use reconciliation when they have used it time and time and time again.

Let me conclude by saying this country faces enormous problems. What has occurred over the last year, year and a half, is an unprecedented level of obstructionism and delaying tactics on the part of our Republican colleagues. The American people are hurting. They want to see this government begin the process of creating millions of decent-paying jobs. They want to see a transformation of our energy system so we can move from fossil fuel to energy efficiency and sustainable energy and jobs doing that. The American people want to see us rebuild our infrastructure which is presently crumbling and we can create jobs doing that. In the short term, the American people want us to do something about the high cost of a college education by expanding Pell grants and by also addressing the very serious problems with childcare and the needs for school construction. We can do that as well.

My point is the American people are angry. They are frustrated. They want action. If the Republicans choose, as is their right, to try to obstruct and try to use the rules to delay action, I think we should do what they have done time after time after time and that is use the reconciliation process. That is what I think we should do, and I hope we will.

Thank you very much, Madam President. I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of Colorado). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak as in morning business.

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

NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise tonight to express support for the Obama administration's efforts on nuclear nonproliferation. We know—and I believe this is a consensus in our country—that nuclear terrorism poses the most serious threat to our security, as well as the security of other nations around the world. I believe we have a solemn responsibility to do what we can to combat the threat of nuclear weapons.

The Obama administration has set forth a vision which puts American security first in pursuit of a world where terrorists cannot acquire weapons of mass destruction. The Senate also has an important leadership role to play. Our No. 1 obligation should be to protect the American people.

In Prague last April, President Obama described the steps the United States is prepared to take toward a world without nuclear weapons. In expressing this goal, the President acknowledged the necessity of maintaining our weapons complex while simultaneously working to negotiate agreements that decrease the number of nuclear weapons in the world. He said:

Make no mistake, as long as these weapons exist, the United States will maintain a safe, secure, and effective arsenal to deter any adversary, and guarantee that defense to our allies . . . but we will begin the work of reducing our arsenal.

This January, a bipartisan group of American national security leaders came together to help guide our thinking on these important issues. Former Secretary of State George Shultz, former Secretary of Defense William Perry, former National Security Adviser and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and former Senator Sam Nunn all have stellar national security experience and credentials. They wrote together:

Nuclear weapons today present tremendous dangers, but also an historic opportunity. U.S. leadership will be required to take the world to the next stage—to a solid consensus for reversing reliance on nuclear weapons globally as a vital contribution to preventing their proliferation into potentially dangerous hands, and ultimately ending them as a threat to the world.

President Obama is willing and able to provide this leadership at this critical point in history.

The administration is in the final stages of negotiating START with Russia. This treaty would reduce deployed nuclear weapons in the United States and Russia and would provide crucial verification measures that would allow a window into the Russian nuclear program.

While the Treaty has taken a little longer than expected to complete, I applaud Assistant Secretary for Verification, Rose Gottemoeller, for her leadership and her efforts to pursue a strong agreement as opposed to an immediate agreement.

A new START agreement is in our national security interest, especially in terms of maintaining verification and transparency measures. Once completed, this agreement can help to strengthen the U.S.-Russian relationship and potentially increase the possibility of Russian cooperation on an array of thorny international issues, including North Korea and Iran.

The START follow-on treaty is also a clear demonstration that the United States is upholding our disarmament obligation under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, one of the treaty's three pillars, in addition to nonproliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. START is a necessary step in reaffirming U.S. leadership on nonproliferation issues. Without a clear commitment to our nonproliferation responsibilities through a new START agreement, it will be increasingly difficult for the United States to secure international support in addressing the urgent security threats posed by the spread of nuclear weapons.

An essential element of securing our nuclear weapons complex begins at home. Last Thursday, Vice President BIDEN spoke at the National Defense University about the administration's efforts to maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the Vice President's speech.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

THE PATH TO NUCLEAR SECURITY: IMPLEMENTING THE PRESIDENT'S PRAGUE AGENDA

Ladies and gentlemen; Secretaries Gates and Chu; General Cartwright; Undersecretary Tauscher; Administrator D'Agostino; members of our armed services; students and faculty; thank you all for coming.

At its founding, Elihu Root gave this campus a mission that is the very essence of our national defense: "Not to promote war, but to preserve peace by intelligent and adequate preparation to repel aggression." For more than a century, you and your predecessors have heeded that call. There are few greater contributions citizens can claim.

Many statesmen have walked these grounds, including our Administration's outstanding National Security Advisor, General Jim Jones. You taught him well. George Kennan, the scholar and diplomat, lectured at the National War College in the late 1940s. Just back from Moscow, in a small office not far from here, he developed the doctrine of Containment that guided a generation of Cold War foreign policy.

Some of the issues that arose during that time seem like distant memories. But the topic I came to discuss with you today, the challenge posed by nuclear weapons, continues to demand our urgent attention.

Last April, in Prague, President Obama laid out his vision for protecting our country from nuclear threats.

He made clear we will take concrete steps toward a world without nuclear weapons, while retaining a safe, secure, and effective arsenal as long as we still need it. We will work to strengthen the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. And we will do everything in our power to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to terrorists and also to states that don't already possess them.

It's easy to recognize the threat posed by nuclear terrorism. But we must not underestimate how proliferation to a state could destabilize regions critical to our security and prompt neighbors to seek nuclear weapons of their own.

Our agenda is based on a clear-eyed assessment of our national interest. We have long relied on nuclear weapons to deter potential adversaries.

Now, as our technology improves, we are developing non-nuclear ways to accomplish that same objective. The Quadrennial Defense Review and Ballistic Missile Defense Review, which Secretary Gates released two weeks ago, present a plan to further strengthen our preeminent conventional forces to defend our nation and our allies.

Capabilities like an adaptive missile defense shield, conventional warheads with worldwide reach, and others that we are developing enable us to reduce the role of nuclear weapons, as other nuclear powers join us in drawing down. With these modern capabilities, even with deep nuclear reductions, we will remain undeniably strong.

As we've said many times, the spread of nuclear weapons is the greatest threat facing our country.

That is why we are working both to stop their proliferation and eventually to eliminate them. Until that day comes, though, we will do everything necessary to maintain our arsenal.

At the vanguard of this effort, alongside our military, are our nuclear weapons laboratories, national treasures that deserve our support. Their invaluable contributions range from building the world's fastest supercomputers, to developing cleaner fuels, to surveying the heavens with robotic telescopes.

But the labs are best known for the work they do to secure our country. Time and again, we have asked our labs to meet our most urgent strategic needs. And time and again, they have delivered.

In 1939, as fascism began its march across Europe, Asia, and Africa, Albert Einstein warned President Roosevelt that the Nazis were racing to build a weapon, the likes of which the world had never seen. In the Southwest Desert, under the leadership of Robert Oppenheimer, the physicists of Los Alamos won that race and changed the course of history.

Sandia was born near Albuquerque soon after the Second World War and became our premier facility for developing the non-nuclear components of our nuclear weapons program.

And a few years later the institution that became Lawrence Livermore took root in California. During the arms race that followed the Korean War, it designed and developed warheads that kept our nuclear capabilities second to none.

These examples illustrate what everyone in this room already knows—that the past century's defining conflicts were decided not just on the battlefield, but in the classroom and in the laboratory.

Air Force General Hap Arnold, an aviation pioneer whose vision helped shape the National War College, once argued that the First World War was decided by brawn and the Second by logistics. "The Third World War will be different," he predicted. "It will be won by brains."

General Arnold got it almost right. Great minds like Kennan and Oppenheimer helped win the Cold War and prevent World War Three altogether.

During the Cold War, we tested nuclear weapons in our atmosphere, underwater and underground, to confirm that they worked before deploying them, and to evaluate more advanced concepts. But explosive testing

damaged our health, disrupted our environment and set back our non-proliferation goals.

Eighteen years ago, President George H.W. Bush signed the nuclear testing moratorium enacted by Congress, which remains in place to this day.

Under the moratorium, our laboratories have maintained our arsenal through the Stockpile Stewardship Program without underground nuclear testing, using techniques that are as successful as they are cutting edge.

Today, the directors of our nuclear laboratories tell us they have a deeper understanding of our arsenal from Stockpile Stewardship than they ever had when testing was commonplace.

Let me repeat that—our labs know more about our arsenal today than when we used to explode our weapons on a regular basis. With our support, the labs can anticipate potential problems and reduce their impact on our arsenal.

Unfortunately, during the last decade, our nuclear complex and experts were neglected and underfunded.

Tight budgets forced more than 2,000 employees of Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore from their jobs between 2006 and 2008, including highly-skilled scientists and engineers.

And some of the facilities we use to handle uranium and plutonium date back to the days when the world's great powers were led by Truman, Churchill, and Stalin. The signs of age and decay are becoming more apparent every day.

Because we recognized these dangers, in December, Secretary Chu and I met at the White House with the heads of the three nuclear weapons labs. They described the dangerous impact these budgetary pressures were having on their ability to manage our arsenal without testing. They say this situation is a threat to our security. President Obama and I agree.

That's why earlier this month we announced a new budget that reverses the last decade's dangerous decline. It devotes \$7 billion to maintaining our nuclear stockpile and modernizing our nuclear infrastructure. To put that in perspective, that's \$624 million more than Congress approved last year—and an increase of \$5 billion over the next five years. Even in these tight fiscal times, we will commit the resources our security requires.

This investment is not only consistent with our nonproliferation agenda; it is essential to it. Guaranteeing our stockpile, coupled with broader research and development efforts, allows us to pursue deep nuclear reductions without compromising our security. As our conventional capabilities improve, we will continue to reduce our reliance on nuclear weapons.

Responsible disarmament requires versatile specialists to manage it.

The skilled technicians who look after our arsenal today are the ones who will safely dismantle it tomorrow.

And chemists who understand how plutonium ages also develop forensics to track missing nuclear material and catch those trafficking in it.

Our goal of a world without nuclear weapons has been endorsed by leading voices in both parties. These include two former Secretaries of State from Republican administrations, Henry Kissinger and George Shultz; President Clinton's Secretary of Defense Bill Perry; and my former colleague Sam Nunn, for years the Democratic Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Together, these four statesmen called eliminating nuclear weapons "a bold initiative consistent with America's moral heritage."

During the 2008 Presidential campaign, both the President and Senator McCain supported the same objective. We will continue to build support for this emerging bipartisan consensus like the one around containment of Soviet expansionism that George Kennan inspired.

Toward that end, we have worked tirelessly to implement the President's Prague agenda.

In September, the President chaired an historic meeting of the UN Security Council, which unanimously embraced the key elements of the President's vision.

As I speak, U.S. and Russian negotiators are completing an agreement that will reduce strategic weapons to their lowest levels in decades.

Its verification measures will provide confidence its terms are being met. These reductions will be conducted transparently and predictably. The new START treaty will promote strategic stability and bolster global efforts to prevent proliferation by showing that the world's leading nuclear powers are committed to reducing their arsenals.

And it will build momentum for collaboration with Russia on strengthening the global consensus that nations who violate their NPT obligations should be held to account.

This strategy is yielding results. We have tightened sanctions on North Korea's proliferation activities through the most restrictive UN Security Council resolution to date—and the international community is enforcing these sanctions effectively.

And we are now working with our international partners to ensure that Iran, too, faces real consequences for failing to meet its obligations.

In the meantime, we are completing a government-wide review of our nuclear posture.

Already, our budget proposal reflects some of our key priorities, including increased funding for our nuclear complex, and a commitment to sustain our heavy bombers and land and submarine-based missile capabilities, under the new START agreement.

As Congress requested and with Secretary Gates' full support, this review has been a full interagency partnership.

We believe we have developed a broad and deep consensus on the importance of the President's agenda and the steps we must take to achieve it. The results will be presented to Congress soon.

In April, the President will also host a Nuclear Security Summit to advance his goal of securing all vulnerable nuclear material within four years. We cannot wait for an act of nuclear terrorism before coming together to share best practices and raise security standards, and we will seek firm commitments from our partners to do just that.

In May, we will participate in the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. We are rallying support for stronger measures to strengthen inspections and punish cheaters.

The Treaty's basic bargain—that nuclear powers pursue disarmament and non-nuclear states do not acquire such weapons, while gaining access to civilian nuclear technology—is the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime.

Before the treaty was negotiated, President Kennedy predicted a world with up to 20 nuclear powers by the mid-1970s. Because of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the consensus it embodied, that didn't happen.

Now, 40 years later, that consensus is fraying. We must reinforce this consensus, and strengthen the treaty for the future.

And, while we do that, we will also continue our efforts to negotiate a ban on the production of fissile materials that can be used in nuclear weapons.

We know that completing a treaty that will ban the production of fissile material

will not be quick or easy—but the Conference on Disarmament must resume its work on this treaty as soon as possible.

The last piece of the President's agenda from Prague was the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

A decade ago, we led this effort to negotiate this treaty in order to keep emerging nuclear states from perfecting their arsenals and to prevent our rivals from pursuing ever more advanced weapons.

We are confident that all reasonable concerns raised about the treaty back then—concerns about verification and the reliability of our own arsenal—have now been addressed. The test ban treaty is as important as ever.

As President Obama said in Prague, “we cannot succeed in this endeavor alone, but we can lead it, we can start it.”

Some friends in both parties may question aspects of our approach. Some in my own party may have trouble reconciling investments in our nuclear complex with a commitment to arms reduction. Some in the other party may worry we're relinquishing capabilities that keep our country safe.

With both groups we respectfully disagree. As both the only nation to have used nuclear weapons, and as a strong proponent of nonproliferation, the United States has long embodied a stark but inevitable contradiction. The horror of nuclear conflict may make its occurrence unlikely, but the very existence of nuclear weapons leaves the human race ever at the brink of self-destruction, particularly if the weapons fall into the wrong hands.

Many leading figures of the nuclear age grew ambivalent about aspects of this order. Kennan, whose writings gave birth to the theory of nuclear deterrence, argued passionately but futilely against the development of the hydrogen bomb. And Robert Oppenheimer famously lamented, after watching the first mushroom cloud erupt from a device he helped design, that he had become “the destroyer of worlds.”

President Obama is determined, and I am as well, that the destroyed world Oppenheimer feared must never become our reality. That is why we are pursuing the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. The awesome force at our disposal must always be balanced by the weight of our shared responsibility.

Every day, many in this audience help bear that burden with professionalism, courage, and grace.

A grateful nation appreciates your service. Together, we will live up to our responsibilities. Together, we will lead the world.

Thank you.

May God bless America. May God protect our troops.

MR. CASEY. Mr. President, the Vice President said that recent years have seen a slow but steady decline in support for our nuclear stockpile and infrastructure and for our highly trained nuclear workforce. The four national security statesmen I previously referred to agree. In January, all four of these experts wrote:

These investments are urgently needed to undo the adverse consequences of deep reductions over the past 5 years in the laboratories' budgets for the science, technology and engineering programs that support and underwrite the Nation's nuclear deterrent.

We know that JASON, an independent defense advisory group of senior scientists, has also echoed these same concerns in a recent study. The JASON group found that the lifetimes

of today's warheads could be extended for decades. That was the good news. While the weapons are in good shape, JASON is concerned that maintenance of the stockpile relies on the “renewal of expertise and capabilities in science, technology, engineering, and production unique to the nuclear weapons program” and that this expertise was “threatened by lack of program stability, perceived lack of mission importance, and degradation of the work environment.”

The Obama administration's budget request reflects these concerns. The fiscal year 2011 budget request devotes \$7 billion to maintaining our nuclear weapons stockpile and complex and for related efforts. Delivering on promises made in Prague and elsewhere, this administration has demonstrated a clear commitment to a nuclear nonproliferation strategy that is an integral part of our security and that of our allies.

As Under Secretary of State for Arms Control in International Security, Ellen Tauscher, a former Member of the House, said recently:

Nuclear disarmament is not the Holy Grail. As long as we see the rise of nuclear weapons in other countries, we will maintain deterrence that is second to none.

This approach by Ellen Tauscher is smart, strategic, and measured, and it puts American security first.

As I stand in support of full funding for the administration's nuclear weapons stockpile and complex request, I believe it is very important that we stand together—all of us, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.

Key dimensions of our nuclear stockpile are the nuclear labs and resident scientific expertise. We need to be able to continue to recruit the most highly qualified and motivated experts tasked with stockpile maintenance. Our three National Laboratories—Lawrence Livermore in California, Los Alamos in New Mexico, and Sandia in New Mexico and California—are staffed by gifted public servants who have established methods for verifying the safety, security, and reliability of our stockpile. This budget presented by the administration will help to ensure that the most talented scientists continue to be attracted to our labs and that these labs continue to be state of the art.

The administration's 2011 budget request also bolsters the case for eventual ratification of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. A full investment in our nuclear weapons infrastructure will mean the United States can continue to maintain its nuclear weapons infrastructure without testing. We have not tested a nuclear weapon since 1992 because we now have the technical means to ensure the reliability and safety of our stockpile without testing.

This is an issue of national security and preventing nuclear terrorism. By working to diminish access to fissile material, by working to ensure Russia and the United States decrease nuclear stockpiles, and by promoting a ban on nuclear testing and by ensuring our nu-

clear arsenal is safe and secure—all of these measures, as well as others—will help to create an international environment where a terrorist's access to fissile material is diminished.

I should mention as well the work of Senator LUGAR. Senator LUGAR has been a remarkable leader in regard to promoting the Nunn-Lugar program all these years. I agree with Senator LUGAR's efforts to secure more funding as the mandate of the program is expanded without commensurate resources. Senator LUGAR reports that the program “has eliminated more nuclear weapons than the combined nuclear arsenals of France, China, and the United Kingdom for less than \$3 billion—a striking return on investment.” I have to agree that is a striking return, indeed.

Finally, I also express support for the administration's requested increase in funding for the International Atomic Energy Agency, which we all know by the acronym IAEA. For too the long, the IAEA's technical assistance and cooperation programs have been underfunded. International nonproliferation efforts face an uncertain future. Iran and North Korea are our primary concerns, but potential nuclear flashpoints remain between India and Pakistan, and the security of fissile material, while improving, remains a vital concern. In order for the IAEA to be best positioned to confront proliferation efforts in North Korea and Iran, as well as monitor the peaceful nuclear energy programs in countries around the world, its budget needs to reflect this growing portfolio. U.S. leadership in nonproliferation is essential. A fully funded IAEA will complement U.S. efforts to combat proliferation at this critical time.

These investments in our national security are substantial, but there is no greater threat than that of nuclear terrorism. We must remain vigilant in doing everything we can to ensure terrorists do not get their hands on weapons of mass destruction. The nonproliferation measures mentioned above all help to address this threat.

To keep America safe, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents must work together—let me say that again—must work together to promote nonproliferation and confront nuclear terror by ensuring that our existing nuclear arsenal is safe, secure, and effective.

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

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MR. ENSIGN. Mr. President, in a moment, I will ask unanimous consent to be able to offer an amendment, but

first I wish to talk about that amendment because I understand the other side is going to object.

Currently, there are seven States that collect no income tax from their residents. Those States are my home the State of Nevada, Florida, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming.

Under current Federal tax law, in all the States that have an income tax, individuals are allowed to deduct those income taxes from their Federal tax form. Your property taxes can also be deducted. Even when you register your car and pay your registration fee on your car, you are allowed to deduct that because that is a local tax. The tax that you are not allowed to deduct, if we don't extend current law, will be the sales tax.

My State relies more on a sales tax for its revenue sources. That is what it decided to do. Other States have chosen to set their taxes up differently. But States have the flexibility to set up their taxes in the way they feel is best for their residents. My State actually has a constitutional amendment against collecting a State income tax from its residents.

Nevadans don't want a State income tax, but they want to be treated fairly. So a few years ago, we passed a law so that Nevada and these six other States would be treated fairly; so that residents would have the option of deducting a sales tax or an income tax. It is just a matter of fairness, but it also allows people to keep more of their own income. At the end of last year, the deductibility for the sales tax expired, and I would like to be able to offer an amendment to extend it in this jobs bill.

I believe if people have more of their own money—money they can count on—they will make good decisions, and they will actually go out and spend some of that money. I believe this would actually be a good measure to put in the jobs bill. It was in the original bipartisan bill that Chairman BAUCUS and Ranking Member GRASSLEY came up with and introduced. So I am hoping the other side will not object, although I understand they are going to.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to offer an amendment to allow for the deduction of State and local sales tax.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

In my capacity as a Senator from Colorado, I object.

Objection is heard.

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I knew that was going to happen because the majority party has decided to allow no amendments on this bill, which is a shame. It is the reason I voted against cloture on the bill yesterday, because I think it is only fair that we get to offer amendments on such an important and expensive bill. This is one of the amendments that I think should be allowed.

We will be making other efforts during the year to get the sales tax deductibility enacted into law because it is a question of fairness for these seven States. I know the Senators from those seven States join me in fighting for this. We fought together before, and we are going to continue to fight to try to make sure this deductibility, as a matter of fairness for our citizens, is maintained in Federal law.

I yield the floor.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, as I stated earlier today, I had worked to put together a bipartisan package with my colleague, Finance Committee Chairman BAUCUS, to address some time-sensitive matters that need to be considered.

I was under the impression that the Senate Democratic leadership genuinely wanted to work on a bipartisan basis but, unfortunately, I was mistaken.

Although the majority leader was deeply involved in the development of our bipartisan bill, as soon as it was released he announced that he would not take it up, and he arbitrarily decided to replace it with a bill he plans to jam through the Senate.

I addressed my concerns earlier about the removal of the tax extender provisions.

Now I want to discuss another significant change between the bipartisan package Chairman BAUCUS and I put together and the Senate Democratic leadership's bill that we will be voting on this week.

A package of expired and expiring Medicare health provisions has been removed without any explanation. These bipartisan provisions are essential to the health and well-being of Medicare beneficiaries. They have been routinely supported by both sides and passed repeatedly in recent years.

So where does that leave us? We are now less than a week away from the end of February, and Medicare beneficiaries around the country will suffer from the Senate Democratic leader's decision to remove these provisions without any explanation. Medicare beneficiaries should not be held hostage to whatever partisan goals the Senate Democratic leadership envisions.

To make matters worse, they have decided to "fill the tree," as the procedure is called, so there will be no opportunity to offer these essential health provisions known as "Medicare extenders" as amendments to his bill.

The decision to abandon a bipartisan approach is especially ironic considering the fact that later this week President Obama is hosting a bipartisan meeting with Senators and Members of the House to discuss health care reform.

It is too early to tell if that meeting will lead to a true bipartisan effort to address health care reform issues, at least in some areas where there is broad agreement on both sides. But I commend the President for his bipar-

tisan outreach and invitation to meet and discuss these important issues. It is an approach that the Senate Democratic leadership abandoned last year.

Apparently, political games have become more important than ensuring that critical legislation is passed to protect Medicare beneficiaries' access to health care.

Many individuals, in fact, are already in jeopardy of suffering adverse consequences to their health because of the failure by the Senate Democratic leadership to ensure that these critically needed Medicare provisions would be enacted by the end of last year. These are the same provisions that had broad, bipartisan support when they were considered by the Finance Committee and included in the health care bill the committee reported last fall.

I am going to review some of these provisions and the impact they have on Medicare beneficiaries and their access to health care.

First, there is the need for a physician payment update, what we commonly refer to as the "SGR" or the "doc fix." A 2-month extension that was passed in December is scheduled to expire on February 28, just 5 days from now. Unless a physician update is enacted by March 1, physicians, nurses, and other health care practitioners will experience severe payment cuts of 21 percent as of that date.

These payment cuts would be even more disastrous for physicians in rural States, such as Iowa, where Medicare reimbursement is already about 30 percent lower than in other areas. But payment cuts of this magnitude will severely impact physicians and health care practitioners throughout the country, and they will significantly threaten beneficiary access to care.

Should these cuts occur and continue for any length of time, they will have a truly disastrous effect on the ability of seniors to find, or keep, physicians who take Medicare patients.

I am appalled that Medicare beneficiaries' access to physicians and other needed medical care is being jeopardized because of the political games that are being played by the Senate Democratic leadership.

Let's look at beneficiaries who are already being affected by other Medicare provisions that should have been extended, as they have been in the past, but that were allowed to expire at the end of last year.

One of the most pressing is an extension of the exceptions process for therapy caps. The law puts annual payment limits or financial caps on therapy services. There are annual dollar limits on outpatient physical therapy and speech-language pathology therapy combined and on occupational therapy.

While the law provided for an exceptions process to these caps when additional therapy was medically necessary, that provision expired at the end of 2009. Medicare beneficiaries who have suffered strokes or serious debilitating injuries, such as a hip fracture,

have significant rehabilitation needs. Some of these beneficiaries have already exceeded their therapy limits for 2010.

Since the exceptions process that would have allowed these patients to receive more needed therapy has expired, beneficiaries with the greatest need for therapy will be the hardest hit. Congress must address this issue immediately.

A second issue of major concern is the need for additional payment for mental health services. A provision that expired at the end of last year provided an additional 5-percent payment for Medicare mental health services provided by psychologists and mental health counselors. This provision has been key to improving access to mental health care services for veterans and other military personnel suffering from post-traumatic stress and other disorders since TRICARE coverage is based on Medicare rates.

Significant shortages of mental health personnel have made it exceedingly difficult for Medicare beneficiaries and some of our military returning from overseas to find this critically needed help. The expiration of this provision has made it even more difficult for them to obtain these services. Congress needs to act immediately to help Medicare beneficiaries and members of the Armed Forces in need of mental health services.

A third issue concerns additional payments for ambulance services that are routinely extended, year after year. Many ambulance providers need them to survive. But those provisions also expired at the end of last year.

Another provision would ensure that Medicare beneficiaries can continue to get vital medical supplies such as diabetic test strips, canes, nebulizers, and wound care products from their local community pharmacies.

Under current law, suppliers of durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics, and other supplies must get accredited to prove they comply with quality standards. Many eligible professionals, such as physicians, nurse practitioners, physical therapists, and others are specifically exempted from this requirement. This provision would exempt pharmacies from being accredited under certain circumstances. Pharmacies must have been enrolled as a Medicare supplier with a provider number for at least 2 years, have DME billings that are less than 5 percent of their total sales, be in good standing with Medicare, and meet other criteria.

Medicare beneficiaries living in rural and underserved areas are particularly at risk of losing access to these critical medical products. This provision is essential to ensure they do not.

There are also a number of expired provisions in this package that improve payment for hospitals, especially rural hospitals. These hospitals rely on these provisions to keep their doors open.

The impact of a hospital shutting its doors would be especially hard on rural

and underserved areas where hospitals are the only point of access for health care.

Our country is facing record unemployment and Americans are struggling to make ends meet. The failure to extend these essential Medicare provisions immediately will make access to health care or needed medical services simply unavailable for many beneficiaries. The impact will be even worse for those in rural areas already facing health care access problems.

These examples show some of the damage that failing to extend these Medicare provisions will do to our seniors' health care.

We need to get back to work on the bipartisan package that was in the works until the Senate Democratic leadership's dramatic change in direction.

Medicare beneficiaries are counting on us to work together and get this done.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and 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. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate convenes Wednesday, February 24, all postcloture time be considered expired, except for any time available until 9:55 a.m., and that at 9:55 a.m. the Senate proceed to vote on a motion to waive the applicable budget points of order; further, that if the points of order are waived, without further intervening action, the second-degree amendment be withdrawn and no further amendments be in order; the Senate then proceed to vote on the Reid motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 2847, with amendment No. 3310; provided further that upon disposition of the House message with respect to H.R. 2847, the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

GUNS ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, in 2009, bills aimed at weakening the ability of universities to regulate the possession of firearms on campus were introduced in 12 State legislatures, including the

Michigan State Legislature. In 2008, 17 States saw similar legislation introduced. Fortunately for the safety of students, faculty, and visitors, none of these bills passed. In fact, according to the Wall Street Journal, as of July 2009, State legislative efforts to allow firearms on college campuses had been defeated 34 straight times nationwide. However, while this statistic demonstrates a clear national consensus that guns do not belong at universities, the National Rifle Association, NRA, continues to push for weaker gun regulations.

Already in 2010, efforts have been undertaken that would weaken the ability of colleges to determine their own security needs in Arizona, Georgia, Virginia, and Colorado. These legislative efforts are part of a strategy to pressure State legislatures into passing legislation that would force colleges to allow the possession and use of firearms by students, faculty, and others on campus. According to a report from the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, entitled "No Gun Left Behind: The Gun Lobby's Campaign to Push Guns into Colleges and Schools," this strategy can be seen as a response to the horrific shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007. According to this strategy, the way to prevent future violence on college campuses is to have more guns on campuses.

Increasing the number of guns in university settings is likely to increase the threat of violence. Every day at colleges across the country, young people engage in risky behaviors involving alcohol and drugs. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, binge drinking and illegal drug use is highest among 18- to 24-year-olds. Furthermore, a report by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University found that "nearly half of America's full-time college students abuse drugs or drink on binges at least once a month." This behavior is dangerous enough without introducing a weapon into the environment. Additional threats to public safety stemming from firearms on campuses include the high risk of gun thefts in typically insecure college living environments, as well as an increase in the number of accidental shootings.

Students and faculty should feel safe while on campus. Contrary to the claims of some, more guns on campus will not create a more secure campus. More guns will increase the threat of violence, and that is why legislation that would force universities to allow firearms on campus is misguided.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SPECIALIST MARC DECOTEAU

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise today to remember and honor Army SPC Marc Paul Decoteau of Waterville Valley, NH, for his service and supreme sacrifice for his country.

Specialist Decoteau demonstrated a willingness and dedication to serve and