

what is taking place right now in Cote d'Ivoire.

Let me mention, there is only one thing I take issue with in the letter that has gone out to make the request. One sentence says:

Mr. Gbagbo has sought to forcefully thwart the will of the Ouattaran people and his forces, reportedly, including mercenaries, who have targeted innocent civilians, including women, as well as United Nations missions.

I only want to get into the RECORD—I have already done this. I have given three very lengthy speeches about what is happening over there. I have been there, I am sure, more than any other Member of the Senate. I would say that if you read the Guardian, the British Guardian, in their—I am quoting now—two big slaughters have taken place, one in a small western town called Duekoue and another in Abidjan, the capital. The article says:

The UN mission said traditional hunters, known as Dozos, fought alongside Ouattara's forces.

Let's keep in mind who we are talking about here. The President, who has been now for the last 10 years, has been President Gbagbo, Laurent Gbagbo, and the person who had run against him 10 years ago, and then this time, and who was declared to be winning the election, is Alassane Ouattara. Anyway, they are talking about Ouattara in this case.

The UN mission said traditional hunters, known as Dozos, fought alongside Ouattara's forces and took part in killing 330 people in the western town of Duekoue.

Then the Red Cross weighed in and they came in with a new count. They said they are responsible for 800 who have been killed. Recently—and I certainly want my friend from Delaware to know this—I have talked to close friends of mine who are in Abidjan now. Abidjan is where the bad things are happening. I hope anyone who questions the fact that it is Ouattara's forces that are creating the problems in Abidjan access my Web site and pull up the YouTube video that was taken of what happened on what I call "Black Monday," Monday night, when they went out with helicopters and they mowed down thousands of people. We don't have a death count of how many people have been murdered in the last 5 days.

This could not have been the former President—or maybe he is still the President—in fact, he is, since he has not been replaced, President Gbagbo. It is factual that he had no one in the field, so as of an hour ago, I have had reports that these forces, Ouattara's forces, are going around knocking on doors and murdering people, stealing everything in the houses and then burning them down. Yet no one can go out and even move bodies out of the streets because they will get shot by snipers. Are those President Gbagbo's people? No. He doesn't have anybody. He is hunkered down in the basement trying to save the lives of himself and

I think 15 of his relatives along with his wife Simone.

I only want to say while I am very happy we are going to have the hearings, it is going to be necessary—I have witnesses. I have one witness whose name is Mel Phiodore. Mel is actually the head of the opposing party to Gbagbo.

He is the one who actually ran against him for President one time and lost. He is currently a Parliament member. Yet he is defending him, saying he is the one who is right in this case and they stole the election. This needs to come out.

I will make one comment. I am equally troubled. I tried to explain to people in Oklahoma how all these billions and trillions of dollars we talk about really affects the people who pay the taxes. Back during the time we spent on the floor trying to defeat the efforts of the EPA in their cap-and-trade efforts, the costs put on there were between \$300 billion and \$400 billion. I recommend particularly to some of the new Senators to count the number of tax returns the families file in their States, and then do the math. In that case, that would have cost—if they had been able to continue, and right now they are trying to continue, or if any of the legislation had passed cap and trade, that would have cost each family who files a tax return in Oklahoma \$3,100 a year.

When we start equating that to some of the numbers floating around, it is just—I remember so well coming here and standing at this podium in 1995 when Bill Clinton was President. He came out with his budget for fiscal year 1996, I think. It was a \$1.5 trillion budget. I was outraged and said we can't do that, it is not sustainable. Yet this last budget from the Obama administration has deficits that are higher than \$1.5 trillion. In other words, the deficits are higher than the amount it took to run the entire country of the United States of America in 1996.

It is something that everybody knows is not sustainable. We looked at these large numbers, and we know it will be difficult. My major concern, as second ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, is our troops. We have an opportunity to do something right now with our troops, help them to be funded. I think this offer from the House is good. I opposed the last three that came over. This one I am supporting. Why? Because not only does it have cuts—and it is also only 7 days, and I understand that—but it takes the innocent defense and all of our troops there in harm's way out from under all this foolishness going on on the floor of the Senate now and funds them through the rest of the fiscal year. It funds them at a low level.

With all the high spending coming out of the Obama administration, DOD funding has remained level, while the rest of the funding has averaged an increase of 25 percent. So they have already taken a hit. Let's at least make

sure we can make the payroll, that we can support our troops and, to do that, we can take up the House bill and pass it. It is only for 7 days. If somebody doesn't like it, they can try something else. It takes care of our military.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I agree with my colleague from Oklahoma. I don't think there is a single Senator in this Chamber who doesn't recognize that we have to deal with the debt and the deficit this country is facing. But the reality is that we are not going to deal with that on the 12 percent of the budget that is nondefense discretionary spending. We have to look at mandatory spending and tax reform, and we need to do it in a thoughtful way that recognizes that we need to invest in our future and make the cuts where we can do it, without harming the future of this country.

Mr. President, I am really sad that we are here at the eleventh hour on the floor of the Senate looking at a probable government shutdown at midnight tonight. It didn't have to be this way. I was disappointed to read accounts of some of our colleagues in the other Chamber, on the other side of the Capitol, who were literally applauding when they were told that a government shutdown was coming. The people of my State of New Hampshire are not applauding. They don't want a shutdown because they know that a shutdown of the Federal Government is bad for the country, bad for the economy, and it is bad for the people of New Hampshire.

Let me begin by going over some of what is going to happen in New Hampshire if the government shuts down. I have spoken before about companies in my home State of New Hampshire who are affected by our inability to get a budget done—companies such as Velcro USA. I think we all know what Velcro is. I am proud to say it is produced in New Hampshire, and it was invented there. The United States military is a major customer for Velcro. It is a major customer of the company, Velcro USA, because Velcro is used in soldiers' uniforms and equipment. Normally, the government is a steady customer of Velcro USA, but now they have been waiting for months for us in Congress to pass a full-year funding bill for the government. A shutdown will mean increased uncertainty for the company and for the hundreds of employees who work there.

We heard from another company in my home State, a small, innovative, high-tech company which has said even the smallest shutdown is going to have dire effects. They said they would lose 95 percent of their revenue if we have a shutdown. This is a small business that has about 45 employees, but it is a

business that has a lot of growth potential. It is exactly the kind of innovative company that will keep America's economy competitive. They were planning to hire 16 people this year—increasing their workforce by about one-third. But that will be put on hold if we have a government shutdown.

Then there is the housing market. In New Hampshire and across the country, it is still very fragile, probably the slowest to recover sector of our economy. In New Hampshire foreclosure rates are down 12 percent from a year ago, but they are still at historic highs. FHA home loan guarantees have been critical to the recovery in the housing market.

Again, all of that is going to stop in a shutdown. No new FHA loans could be approved. If there is a closing scheduled or someone is trying to buy a foreclosed home or any home, with FHA help, the deal is off—or at least it will be on hold.

With all of the problems that have been caused by the housing crisis, we should not be hamstringing one of the most effective programs we have for assisting homeowners; and that is what we are going to do if there is a government shutdown.

A shutdown would also close the Small Business Administration's lending programs. We all know how important working capital is for small businesses, which is still a problem.

Then, of course, there are the 7,400 Federal workers in New Hampshire. That makes the Federal Government one of our State's largest employers. They don't know when paychecks are going to start again or if they are going to get backpay. Their salary just isn't important for them and their families, but these 7,400 hard-working New Hampshire citizens are critical to their local economy. When their pay stops, they stop making their mortgage payments, they stop paying their utility bills, they stop shopping at local stores. These are just some of the effects of a shutdown on the economy in my State of New Hampshire.

New Hampshire is a small State, but if we multiply these economic impacts across our entire country, this shutdown carries the real risk of undermining our fragile economic recovery. Why is this happening? We have an agreement, pretty much, on how much we are going to cut in spending. In fact, the Senate has gone more than 50 percent toward meeting the House in the cuts they want to make in the budget.

This is not about how much money we are going to cut from the budget; this is happening because we have a small minority in Congress who wants to use the Federal budget to prevent women from having access to family planning and other reproductive health care services.

My colleague, Senator COONS, talked very eloquently about what title X does. Title X funding provides reproductive health services to women who

otherwise could not access those services. That includes contraceptives, screening for sexually transmitted diseases, screening for breast and cervical cancer. It provides preventive care for women who, in so many cases, in New Hampshire and across the country would not be able to get access to that health care.

In New Hampshire we have 28 clinics that receive title X funds, including community health centers, health department clinics and hospitals, outpatient clinics, as well as Planned Parenthood.

This fight is not about reducing our debt. It is time now to put ideology aside, to work together in a bipartisan way, to get this budget back on track and passed so the people of this country can be confident that we are going to continue the economic recovery that has started and make sure we can put people back to work and support the small businesses and the people of this country who depend on the work we do in Washington.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, before the distinguished Senator from New Hampshire leaves the floor, I want to commend her on a number of things, but most important is her hard work with me and many others on the biennial budget bill, which we hope will come to the floor in the future.

I want to comment, because this potential shutdown, which I hope doesn't happen—we have been speculating or asking the agencies to speculate on what this means. If you read yesterday's Washington Post, you saw that the only agency of the government that will work seamlessly through a shutdown, without any shortcoming or deficiencies, is veterans health care. That is because we biennially appropriate for that. The one thing that will be open during the shutdown is the one thing we do in the 2-year process rather than a hit-or-miss process like the current appropriations act.

So the distinguished Senator, who was Governor of her State that has a biennial appropriations process and has worked with it, knows what I know. If you can plan and make things predictable, you will save money and improve the quality of your service. I hope we can get this country to a position where we do biennially appropriate and can spend 1 of every 2 years doing oversight and find waste and find ways to do things better and less expensively.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Will my colleague yield for a question?

Mr. ISAKSON. Yes.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I appreciate the Senator's kind remarks. Doesn't the Senator think if we had that biennial budget process in place now, we would not be on the floor debating whether we are going to have a shutdown, and that we would have a budget process that was going forward? As he points out, we have next year to provide over-

sight and accountability on that budget, and we would have the dependability and certainty that businesses and the people of this country are looking for; isn't that right?

Mr. ISAKSON. There is no question that the Senator is correct. We are predictably unpredictable here. We need to be predictably predictable when it comes to the efficiencies we can bring about and how we spend our money. We need to do what people do, which is sit around their kitchen tables and prioritize what comes in and what goes out. And they balance their budgets. They have to. It is about time we have the same discipline the American people have.

I thank the distinguished Senator.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I thank the Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, in the South we have an old saying: If you find yourself at the bottom of a hole, stop digging.

We are at that point. We accomplished some amazing things in the last 3, 4 weeks. I commend the House on the cuts that have taken place, but we ought to remember we are focusing on the minnow, when the big fish is on the horizon. There is only so much we can cut when 50 percent of a fiscal year is gone. People are talking about how little we are cutting out of small areas. That is because it is all there is to cut from. The cuts have demonstrated that we can begin to get our house in order. The big enchilada is coming up with the big 2012 budget.

I did a little research on what we have done in the last 3, 4 years. In the last 3 years, we spent all our money on omnibus appropriations, except one Defense appropriations act. In doing the research, we spent on average 4 days of debate on those three bills. We have had the small business bill on the floor for 12 days, and we haven't finished it yet. We spent 12 days on the small business reform bill, and we only spent an average of 4 days on spending over \$10 trillion. It is time that we got the current agreement—and I understand there is one—on how much we cut done. If we have differences on policy, we can reserve them for debates on the 2012 appropriations act.

Let's get moving. Everybody here knows we have two big votes on the horizon. One is the pending debt ceiling vote at some time in May or June, and the other is the fiscal year 2012 appropriations. We will not get a second chance on those. The world markets are not going to give us another year to spend our money in a helter-skelter manner. We have the ability and the brain power, and we need the commitment in this body to spend money like the American people have to spend theirs. That is all they ask of us. We don't need to be extravagant, frivolous, and wasteful.

Another thing on the current, pending, looming possible shutdown is that it is absolutely crazy, when we have committed our sons and daughters to

harm's way—right now, they are in three countries: Libya by the Air Force, Iraq, and Afghanistan. To put them in a position of accruing their income because we have shut down the government is just not right. It is not the right thing to do. We ought to debate these matters on the Senate floor with the government functioning.

I hope all of my colleagues will recognize that we are about to take defeat from the jaws of victory. We have won the battle on the short term with the cuts we needed. Let's get this short-term cut done, let's get the CR done, and then let's get to the kitchen table of the American people and get it done for fiscal year 2012 and the years ahead. We have to find out how to pay back over time \$14 trillion. That is going to take a lot of commitment, work, and time. Let's get to it. Let's get the CR done. Let's come back next week and finish dotting the i's and crossing the t's and commit ourselves that the rest of the year is about America's future, it is about our children and grandchildren; it is about beginning to rein in expenses and spend our money accountably and predictably so the American people can expect of us what we always demand of them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEVIN). The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Georgia for those very moving and powerful remarks. I differ with him only in recognizing that the saying about digging a hole is not only a southern saying, but I think by now it is a national saying, thanks to my southern colleagues and others.

Let me just say about this debate that it has been very eloquent on both sides, but there is an unreality to it. In the real world, Americans are struggling to find jobs or keep them, striving to stay in their homes, working hard to keep their families together. In the real world, economic growth has to be a priority.

We are on the verge of a failure of action that threatens the fragile economic recovery that right now is a priority for most Americans, and it is unnecessary. We are truly in danger of distracting ourselves from what should be the main task and the central reason we should be seeking a budget, which is to fund the Federal Government for the remainder of this year and ensure that we continue economic growth and provide more jobs for the American people.

There is agreement on the numbers, on the dollars, on the figures for spending the remainder of this year. My colleague from Georgia has just confirmed what others have said on this floor repeatedly, what the majority leader said this morning. There is agreement on the cuts and the savings. The distraction is on an ideological war on women's health. A small minority—a very small minority—is holding this budget and this Nation hostage in this ideolog-

ical war on women's health. That is a disservice to the American people who want us to go back to basics: jobs and the economy, get a budget done, avoid a shutdown that threatens that fragile recovery.

Again and again on this floor, my colleagues have made the point that uncertainty and unpredictability are enemies to small businesses and large in this country and elsewhere in the globe that count on American leadership, count on our leadership in achieving a budget.

This war on women's health care cannot be allowed to succeed. I have spoken about it, along with other Senators who have spoken on this floor, most recently the Senator from New Hampshire, who has been a leader on this issue, along with the Senator from California, BARBARA BOXER, Senator GILLIBRAND, Senator FRANKEN, Senator LAUTENBERG, Senator MIKULSKI, and others who have spoken out in favor of title X and Planned Parenthood funding.

The unreality of this debate reflects a failure to appreciate what these dollars mean to the women who depend on these services. They are women who cannot afford the kinds of screenings for cancer and cholesterol and other problems that are so vital to preventing those problems that cost us all larger dollars if they go untreated. These services are vital to the testing for other kinds of problems that may be more expensive to treat if they are not dealt with and, of course, contraception that prevents exactly the kinds of problems or issues on which many in this body have focused. In Connecticut alone, we are talking about more than 60,000 patients served by Planned Parenthood, including 30,000 title X patients, 18 health centers that are imperiled by this rider or the conditions that would be attached, and almost 100,000 preventive screenings that are vitally important to low-income women and men who need access—the key is access—to contraceptive services and preventive screenings, vital health care.

There is a silver lining to this cloud. This moment is teaching us something. In reality, it is a teaching moment. I think it will alert a lot of Americans to the importance of preventive services—testing, screening. If it draws one more woman or man to seek these kinds of testing services, it will have accomplished something.

The debate over these social issues will not be resolved in this budget and should not be resolved in the remaining few hours we have left. There will be other occasions when we can debate and resolve these social issues, the ideological divides that have been with us for decades and will remain after this budget, hopefully, is resolved in the next few hours.

My hope is that there will be other teaching moments but, most importantly, not only about health care but about the way the democratic process works.

In the short months I have been privileged—and I deeply mean privileged—to be part of this body and sometimes to preside in the very chair where the Presiding Officer is now, I have often looked around this Chamber and have seen the students and others who come to visit us and thought of the millions of Americans who are watching us and who hope that we will recognize we have more in common than in conflict as Americans; recognize that a shutdown of this government cannot happen consistent with our duties to seek what we have in common over what we have in conflict; that it would be devastating not only to American leadership around the globe but to the military men and women who are depending on our judgment and leadership, to the veterans, to the folks out there searching for jobs, trying to stay in their homes, keep their families together; recognize that the reason they sent us here is to do what is right for this economy now and to reach agreement and to do the kinds of things Americans do in their homes over that kitchen table when they disagree. They come together. They see what they have in common. They do not walk out of the house. They do not shut off the lights. They stay together, and they do what they think will best serve the common interest, which for us is to recognize that we have an agreement on the budget numbers, that we cannot be distracted by the ideological war on women's health, and that we should stay true to our principles.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise because obviously we are talking a lot today about—and really the eyes of our Nation are looking at what Congress is doing because there is so much negotiating going on. I am one who wants to have a long-term continuing resolution to the end of our fiscal year that makes the responsible budget cuts, that funds our troops and gets us on to the next item of business, which is the one we really must address; that is, the huge debt that is facing our country. That is what we should be doing.

We are now in the throes—and I am told there are serious negotiations going on that we hope still will have a result before the midnight deadline. But if everything breaks down, I have a bill that now has 74 cosponsors in the Senate out of 100. That bill is very simple. It says that if everything else falls through, even though everyone I am talking to wants us to have that agreement that will not shut down the government, that does fund our Army, our Navy, our Air Force, our Marines, our Coast Guard, all of those in the Transportation Security Administration, all of those personnel who are waiting to see if their financial lives are going to be disrupted—I want to make the deadline so it will not be.

However, I do have a simple bill because there are some people who are

not in the United States right now, who are overseas protecting our freedom. They are serving in Iraq. They are serving in Afghanistan. Their loved ones are mostly at home watching what is going on.

I have been looking at the comments of the wives of the personnel, who are worried about what effect this is going to have on them because they have actually gotten notices that their pay is going to be cut, that it is going to be less than their full pay on the 15th because they are accommodating a potential government shutdown. We cannot let that happen.

I have introduced S. 724. I have 74 cosponsors. Senator INHOFE and Senator CASEY stepped up right from the beginning, and now we have 74 Senators ready to ensure that if things break down, we will fix this problem.

I am very moved by a Web site that was created by one individual today—early this morning, I think—and her name is Hope Gwen Bradley. I did not know her name earlier today when I spoke. She said: I am going to do something. I am one person, and I am going to do something.

I do not know Ms. Bradley. I do not know if she has a connection to the military, but she opened a Facebook with the name of my bill, “Ensuring Pay for Our Military Act of 2011.” As of when I left the office to come to the floor, there were 906,412 people on this Web site who agreed with her that we must at all costs alleviate any fears of our military families when they are doing so much for our country and fighting for what we are trying to do right here.

I commend Hope Gwen Bradley—and I surely hope I can meet her some day—for this kind of grassroots groundswell to support our troops with a simple bill that says if there is a government shutdown, our troops will be paid on time, full pay. That is what the bill does. It has 74 cosponsors.

I will say that Senator ROCKEFELLER, my esteemed colleague, the chairman of the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, is on the floor, and I am going to stop in just a minute because I am sure he is here for his time in morning business.

We now have the support of the Military Officers Association, which has 377,000 members who sent me a letter supporting S. 724. We have the letter from the National Association for Uniformed Services, with 180,000 members and supporters, signed by Richard Jones, their legislative director, in support of this bill. We have just received the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America letter saying they strongly support S. 724.

Here is what they say in the letter:

This bill ensures that all members of the Armed Forces will continue to receive the pay and allowances they have earned despite any lack of interim or full-year appropriations. Our men and women in uniform protect our Nation and continue to do so despite budget disagreements in Washington. The members of our Armed Forces are essential

to the defense of our Nation and must be treated as such. Many young servicemembers and their families—

Remember, so many of those over there are young. They are in their twenties. So they are not in the high levels of compensation. Continuing with what this letter says, and this is the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, so they know what they are talking about; they have been there—

Many young servicemembers and their families are dealing with multiple deployments and often live paycheck to paycheck. Military families should not be asked to bear further financial stress in addition to fighting the war on terrorism. This legislation protects the men and women who protect us.

The letter is signed by Paul Rieckhoff, the executive director of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. They are the ones who have most recently come back, and they are too coming forward and saying we must do this.

I am for the bills that would come through. I think the House bill is a good bill. The 1-week continuing resolution does take care of the military. But the chances of it passing here are probably nil. I think if the other body was to have a clean continuing resolution, I would support that too. But I don't think that is going to have a chance either. So the only thing that is going to have a chance is if we get a real agreement between Senator REID, Speaker BOEHNER, and the White House that we can do a long-term continuing resolution that will truly fund our troops and that will have the necessary cuts to show we are serious about this budget deficit and we are going to correct the course of our country financially. That is what we all hope for.

But if we don't get that, my bill, 724, has 73 cosponsors, our Members speaking in large numbers, saying this is the right thing to do. I hope we can pass this bill as soon as it is clear we are not going to have a real agreement. We can do no less.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to add Senator FEINSTEIN to our bill as a cosponsor.

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

The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, it is quite an honor to speak while the Presiding Officer is in the Chair. I think I have not seen him there before, so I will have to give a good speech. I will probably have to give a little longer speech simply by virtue of his presence.

I think most people who choose a career in public life do so because they have a genuine, huge feeling in their heart that they want to help people. It is kind of simple. I know I have spent the better part of my career in West Virginia and in Congress looking for any way I possibly could—succeeding in some cases, failing in some cases—in trying always to make life better for West Virginians and for the American

people as a whole. Perhaps it is a simple idea, but I can say with some pride that over the years we have made a lot of strides.

It is popular, these days, I know, to beat up on the government. It always has been. That goes back to George Washington's time. But the truth is, the government does an incredible amount to help people in their lives every single day. The benefits of government are not always visible. They do not usually make the evening news, but they are enormously important and specific and make a large difference.

This government looks after veterans; otherwise, they wouldn't be looked after. The private sector wouldn't do it. The private sector is sometimes very reluctant, actually, to participate in helping them. But when they come home from battle, the government is there with an expanded Veterans' Administration system and superb medical health care to take care of them.

The government takes care of seniors with Medicare and our Social Security programs. We also have Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, which is vastly important in a State such as my own or anybody's State because it provides comprehensive health coverage to our most vulnerable populations, including children. We passed this because it is morally right. It is the right thing to do and in the best interest of our Nation to be sure children get a decent start in life—in health care, maybe even before education, because the health care part starts very early with early tests.

The government builds the roads, the bridges, and other infrastructure that connects small towns and communities and helps make us a larger community. It is the fabric that links families and businesses all across this country.

Federal agencies also make sure the food we eat is safe and the water we drink is clean. They help communities pay for public safety and all kinds of law enforcement to help keep our streets safe.

People don't generally know where money comes from. That is pretty understandable. They just need to know, if they are sitting out in the evening on a summer's night, that the streets they live on are being patrolled or being watched, et cetera. I could go on and on. There are literally thousands of things government has done over the years to improve the quality of life for every single man, woman, and child in this country. It is indisputable, and there is a glorious tale in all that.

But in recent weeks, we have seen the discussion about the role and the purpose of government take what seems to be a very nasty turn. Some of my colleagues on the other side have lately taken up the call to arms to do whatever it takes to slash, to close or to shut down the government. We are faced with that, and we may get that. They want to hold the American people

hostage with a ransom note that keeps getting higher and higher every time negotiations go on.

There is no question we must get our growing deficit under control, and Democrats have taken responsible steps to do that. In fact, in the larger scheme of things, we have gone 75 to 80 percent toward the Republican position. But at every turn, Republicans have blocked reasonable attempts to rein in government spending. They say they want it to happen, but if there are reasonable attempts to do that, they stop it. Instead, they make unreasonable demands and they change the goalposts on a repeated basis.

Last December, Democrats produced an Omnibus appropriations bill to fund the government for 2011 that would have reduced spending by \$20 billion, a level endorsed by a bipartisan group of Senators. Incoming Speaker JOHN BOEHNER, however, launched a campaign to oppose that bill. Republicans ramped up their opposition to the bill and, instead, all we were able to pass was a short-term extension of funding to 2011, which was very frustrating.

In February, Republicans offered a long-term proposal to fund the government through the end of fiscal year 2011 with \$32 billion in cuts. But tea party Republicans, who are in control, rejected the \$32 billion and, instead, insisted on deeper cuts of \$61 billion that Republicans knew and openly admitted were both dangerous to the economy and totally unlikely to pass the Senate.

In the meantime, Democrats have fought to keep our government operating. We have passed \$10 billion in cuts since March. It is harder for Democrats to make cuts than Republicans because we believe in doing things that help people directly, that keep them safe—such as the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Who knows about that? Senator BOXER does and I do. They make sure our toys and other products people use are safe. Somebody has to always be watching over what goes on.

We have passed \$10 billion in cuts since March and offered another \$20 billion in cuts to the Republicans so we can end this standoff and not shut down government. Just when we thought we had finally reached an agreement on \$33 billion in additional cuts below the 2010 enacted levels—which is \$73 billion below the President's 2011 budget proposal—not interesting, all these statistics but profoundly important in the function and the possibilities of government. So this was at the end of March. But Republicans then changed the rules again. They demanded \$40 billion in cuts to appease the far right—the tea partiers.

Some of my colleagues on the other side have lately taken up a call to arms to do whatever it takes to close the government. Despite a previous commitment from the Speaker, middle-ground funding cuts of \$33 billion are no longer good enough.

Then, as the final bomb, they passed the seventh short-term spending measure that is loaded with \$12 billion in spending cuts—which, by the way, is six times more than the agreed-upon rate of \$2 billion a week, which includes the Department of Defense appropriations bill and all those 66 riders that have absolutely no place on any appropriations bill.

What is required is less concern about the tea party messaging and total attention to the well-being of the American people and the health of our Nation. The tea party cry—delivered in gleeful shouts and rants on the floor of the House, in the Senate, and frequently in rallies outside these buildings—is nothing like I have ever seen before. I have been here 25 years—something like that—and I have never seen anything like it. But they want to close the government down, and they love the theater of it.

Recently, we watched as an extremist crowd, standing on the lawn outside, waved flags with snakes on them and shouted: Shut it down, shut it down, shut it down, as if this is a sporting event—you know, the Roman Coliseum. Let the gladiators compete, the heck with the people. Let the Roman Senate take care of that. Even the leadership on the other side has joined in—with one Republican Member telling the crowds and people everywhere, therefore, because it was televised, that he wants to see the government shut down. He flatout said that.

I believe they want that. I believe they want that. So really? You have such disdain for our constitutional government, you so disrespect our fellow citizens—the people who sent us and who count on us to help and protect them—that you want a government shutdown? That is the deal, I guess.

Has anyone else noticed that in many parts of the world today there are protests in the streets about basic freedoms? Here, where we are privileged already to enjoy these freedoms, we are stuck in the middle of a political debate with extreme positions and Members of Congress who seem not to care what happens as long as they win or score points for the next election—a cynical thing to say, but it happens to be true.

Frankly, this cynical posturing from the other side has not only brought us to the brink of a government shutdown—only a few hours from now, perhaps, though I hope not—it has taken us to a point where we are forgetting what it is we are arguing about in the first place. What should be a serious, thoughtful debate about finding reasonable ways to cut the budget and scale back our deficit has, for some, instead, turned into a game. I say that because what we are hearing from the other side is that they want mostly to move in an extreme agenda. They care about that. They have their markers. They have to meet those markers; no matter the effect on the people, they have to meet the markers.

They ran, some of them without any intention—many of them without any intention of running again so they can't be held accountable, so they can work on shutting down government which they do not like for various reasons. So it is no longer on agreeing on a dollar figure to cuts from the budget. It is about turning the government into a boogeyman and closing its doors.

Let me tell you why I think that is unacceptable. It is because this is not a game at all, this is real life and the decisions we make here have real world implications for the people of West Virginia and every other State and all over the world.

Let's consider what would happen if the extremist wing of the Republican party gets its way and the government does in fact shut down. Soldiers would not get their paychecks if there is a shutdown, if we cannot pass something. That is right, the service men and women who risk their lives so we may live in freedom might not get paid. You can talk, maybe someday they will be repaid, but in the meantime they are living week to week, and their families are, and they don't get paid. That doesn't sound like a sane policy.

In my State of West Virginia there are more than 6,500 people serving in the National Guard. Nationally, about half of the young men and women in the military are 25 years old or younger, and about 40 percent of them have children. Many of the families are on one income and some are living paycheck to paycheck. They don't know what they are going to do. That is one more thing they should not be thinking about. They should be thinking about surviving and carrying out their mission.

The chair has indicated that I have gone on a little bit too long so I am going to beg for 1½ more pages. That being granted, I will proceed.

There is so much more on the chopping block if the extremists in Congress get their way. The Federal Housing Administration wouldn't be able to process mortgage loans. Social Security claims would freeze. I am not sure that Medicare could take in any new members, several thousand people every day who qualify for Medicare. I am not sure they could be taken in.

We remember that during the 4 days of the 1995 shutdown, 112,000 claims for Social Security retirement and disability benefits were not taken, they were not received, they were not processed, they were not dealt with, and 800,000 callers were denied service on the Social Security Administration's phone.

I am going to stop with that. I think you get the drift of my feeling, and what I feel. But I do not consider it a game if the IRS could, would, stop refund checks. More than 235,000 West Virginians will file their taxes using paper forms this year. Computers are not all the rage in all parts of West Virginia. So they will wait longer for their returns to be completed.

I could go on with small business and the National Institutes of Health and all the rest of it. Federal mine safety inspection will shut down. The mines will continue to run but there will be no Federal inspectors. I respect the State inspectors but I have a lot more respect for Federal inspectors. Mines operating with nobody inspecting? It is a horrifying thought.

I hope somehow this will come out to be a good result. There are reasons why it could be, and there are reasons both to be pessimistic and to be a little bit optimistic. I cannot at this time call it either way.

We would turn the lights off on the NIH—and tell scientists working on developing life-saving treatments or finding a cure for cancer, that their work will have to wait. And they will have to turn away patients whose best or only hope is to join a clinical trial for new treatments or medicines.

We would shutter the agency responsible for regular Federal mine safety and health inspections—should I remind my colleagues here that this month marks 1 year since the worst mining accident in recent history at Upper Big Branch?

Inspections of stock brokers and routine oversight of financial markets by Federal agencies would cease. Enforcement actions would be postponed. Do we need to review where that might get us?

West Virginia is set to receive \$416,590 in Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program—LIHEAP. But that stops in a shutdown.

Some of the FEMA flood mitigation and flood insurance operations would stop. Have we forgotten the lessons of Katrina so quickly? In West Virginia, spring storms often brings torrential and devastating floods that can wipe out entire communities.

Most veterans' benefits services would stop; we know the last time that extremists on the other side closed the government more than 400,000 veterans saw their disability, pension or educational benefits delayed.

I could go on.

What is more ridiculous is that even the leaders on the other side have conceded that the vast "shutdown" movement is not even sound fiscal policy.

The Speaker of the House, who is not as extreme as others in his party, said recently that if you shut the government down, it will end up costing more than you will save.

A new study from Goldman Sachs said that a Federal shutdown would cost \$8 billion a week. And the economist Mark Zandi predicted that a shutdown would have a detrimental impact on our recovery.

Why? Because many of the contracts and other services that are interrupted do not go away—they just get delayed. So you often end up paying more in the long run.

It is tempting to wonder if the other side is interested in anything more than finding clever new ways to attack

the White House and score political points. We started this debate earlier in the year with a mutual agreement that we need to find ways to pay down the deficit and make some cuts and somewhere along the way we went off the rails.

During the last couple of weeks, as extremists on the other side have prevented us from arriving at a deal, Congress has resorted to short stop-gap funding measures that cut billions of dollars from Federal programs as part of a deal to buy more time.

Instead of just tossing out a claim that we must cut \$33 billion more from the budget without any distinction on what is valuable, wouldn't we be better off having a conversation about reforming the Tax Code to end the disgraceful tax breaks for the rich at the expense of the middle class?

I have tried for years to work towards a tax policy that would do less for corporate America and more for Main Street America; less for offshore operations and more for seniors and families; and less for big oil companies and more for investment, infrastructure and innovation.

Does the other side realize that at a certain point we are mocking the American people, we are mocking the legislative process and we are mocking the entire Congress by turning this issue into a game of chicken where the other side just doesn't care about consequences?

To the cynics who recklessly argue that the government should "shut down" I ask: Do you realize the impact of your words? Do you see what would happen to the people of West Virginia or any other State in this great Nation, if we just tell everyone that the government can't function right now?

I want to make a point here. The other side likes to go on and on about how important it is for us to get the economy back on track and keep the recovery going.

Have any of them who keep crying that we should "shut it down" stopped and thought about the economic impact on families of sending home thousands of hard working Americans without a pay check?

During the two government shutdowns in 1995–1996, about 800,000 Federal employees were unable to work. Is cheering for a repeat a good path towards prosperity?

Is the best way to curb spending really to just tell people go home and sit? To tell them that they may have a job at some point but for now we are closing programs, parks, grants, inspectors and everything else they can think of?

With workers facing frozen wages struggling to pay their mortgages, coping with trade deficits, and closed factories—is this really the best we can do for them?

Shutting down the government is a simple and easy way to pander to the tea party and the extremist elements of the far right. By insisting on their way or no way, the tea partiers are

squandering precious time and resources. The best part of what we do here is working together. Finding the best ideas and working until we have a solution.

This squabble should be settled by a reasoned discussion and a thoughtful exchange of ideas between Democrats and Republicans.

I call upon the other side to show some leadership and bring us back from the brink.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the important issue of the day. Sometimes complex challenges present clear and compelling choices. That is the case for the fiscal challenge before us today. We have a choice between delay and disruption or progress and accord. The Nation's eyes are upon us. We need to vote to keep our government running, to pay our military, and at the same time take essential steps to tame our uncontrolled spending and deficit. Most important, we need to ensure that our men and women in uniform continue to receive their well-earned pay while we undertake the work of balancing America's books and they undertake the vital work of defending our Nation, both here at home and abroad.

In that regard, I am proud to be one of the sponsors of a bill introduced by Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON that will make sure that happens, even after the work of the 111th Congress is finished. I am also pleased to report that we are now up to 74 cosponsors.

But in the final analysis we need to reduce our overall spending, which Americans recognize is necessary, necessary because every day we delay we are spending ourselves \$4 billion deeper into debt. Right now, this fiscal year, we are on a path to spend \$3.7 trillion, but we are taking in only \$2.2 trillion in revenue, leaving a deficit of more than \$1.5 trillion. To make up for that shortfall the Federal Government is borrowing 40 cents out of every dollar that we spend, with a national debt of more than \$14 trillion. Our largest lender is China, which now holds more than \$1 trillion in American bonds.

No American family would practice that kind of fiscal management, and neither should our country. Reducing our debt and deficit is something the American people understand and support because the American people are the ones suffering the impacts. Nearly 14 million of our country men and women are out of work and another 8 million are underemployed because they have had their hours cut back or they cannot find a full-time job. Sadly, 1 million more have stopped looking.

As private investment has plummeted, unemployment has climbed sharply to levels we have not seen in decades. For those who are fortunate enough to be working, the American dream is getting more and more difficult to achieve. In response to growing inflationary pressure, the Federal

Reserve Bank now says that interest rates are likely to rise at the end of the year to tighten our money supply. Every percent increase in interest rates adds \$140 billion to our debt. Higher interest rates will erode the income of every American and make it harder to buy a home, a car, or a college education. Spending more will not help them. In fact, spending more will prolong the problem.

In the 1990s, when government spending as a share of GDP shrank, employment grew. Despite the surge in government spending over the past 2 years, unemployment still hovers stubbornly at about 9 percent. We do not need more public spending. What we need is more private investment. When private investment grows, unemployment shrinks. The American people understand all of this and that is why they want us to arrive at a plan that keeps our government running, that respects the sacrifices of our military in real terms, and puts us back on the road to fiscal health.

We owe it to these hard-working men and women to bring the 2011 budget to a reasonable and realistic conclusion and then move on to the important matters that still lie before us, including the 2012 budget. That is where we can address all of the substantive and urgent issues that we must resolve to get America's financial house in order; issues such as making sure we have a prudent level of spending, reforming our Tax Code, and making entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare solvent and more secure for our seniors, both now and long into the future. We owe that not just to our current constituents but to future generations of Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. BOXER. I ask unanimous consent the period for morning business for debate only be extended until 8 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, and the majority leader to be recognized at 8 p.m.

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

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I came over here at this very precarious moment, hours away from a possible shutdown, to basically say there is absolutely no reason to shut this government down, absolutely no reason. Why? Because both sides agree that we need to cut the budget. Both sides agree that we need to reduce the deficit. When the debate got started, the Republicans put out a number and, guess what. We came to their number. We came all the way to their number.

Then they said, whoops, no, we don't like that, we are going to go to a bigger number. We said we are worried because, as my friend from North Dakota said, we care about job creation, and

Mark Zandi, the key economic adviser to JOHN MCCAIN's campaign, said if you do what the Republicans want to do, that is the Republicans in the House on H.R. 1, that will cost 700,000 jobs. Can you believe that? After we are finally coming out of this recession—thank the Lord God we had a quarter of a million new jobs last month—and here they are going to take a meat axe to this budget and according to outside experts going to destroy the economic recovery and set us right back into a recession.

So we said hold off here, we believe we need to be wise about this. We went to your number that you originally put out there. Why do you keep moving the goal posts?

They said: Well, that is the way it is. We moved the goal posts. Take it or leave it.

We said all right, we are going to go back and we are going to go as far in your direction as we possibly can do and not jeopardize jobs. We went back and here is where we are. We went 78 percent of the way to the Republican new number.

Here is the deal. I want the American people to be the judge of this. There was an election in 2010. The Republicans won big in the House and they took it over, so they run the House. The Democrats retained control of the Senate. I know very much about it because I was one of those seats that was being watched. We kept control of the Senate and of course the President is a Democrat and he is there for a couple of years. Of course some of us hope for a lot longer, but here is the deal: Out of the three parties to the negotiations, Republicans control one-third of the government and Democrats two-thirds. We did not look at our Republican friends and say we control much more than you do, so we will only go a third of the way to you. We were willing to give and give and to look at expenditures that we believe are key, and we said we are willing to give some of this up, and we marched over to their side 78 percent of the way.

If I stopped someone in the street, a person who maybe did not have much experience about beltway politics, and I said if you were negotiating with two of your friends and they saw something their way and you saw it your way and they came 78 percent of the way to what you wanted, what would you do? I think the average person would say: Hurray, let's get this done.

Well, that is what I say tonight. Let's get this done. There is no reason to shut down the Federal Government when we have come—the Democrats have come, by way of cuts, 78 percent of the way to our Republican friends.

But let me tell you the bad news. It turns out this is not what the fight is about at all. At the eleventh hour, our Republican friends are holding this country hostage to an agenda which is about cutting women's health care.

Now, you may say: Could you say that again, Senator BOXER. What?

Yes, this debate over the budget, where we have come 78 percent of the way and made painful cuts, is not about budget cutting; it is about women's health. Let me tell you specifically what it is about. It is about a women's health care program known as title X.

I am sure people are saying: What is that?

It is very simple. In 1970, a Republican President named Richard Nixon signed this bill. And do you know who voted for it in the House? President George Herbert Walker Bush. We are talking about a bipartisan bill to give women the health care they need. And the Republicans, to date, have moved so far away from their own legacy, from their own history, that they are off the charts in extreme land somewhere.

I want to share one reason women use these title X clinics as their first line of health. And by the way, millions of women do—and men—because they get help for high blood pressure, diabetes checks, they get help for breast cancer screening, they get help for pelvic exams, they get help for sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS testing, referrals for additional medical screening and diagnostic testing, blood screening, smoking cessation, cholesterol screening, infertility counseling, and, if asked for, birth control, which, when it is counseled in the right way, birth control will prevent unwanted pregnancies and therefore bring down the number of abortions.

Somebody explain to me how our country is better off when our American families are shut out of health care, health care that is so cost-effective, that for every dollar that is spent through the title X health care program, which goes to local clinics—and 75 percent of the funding does not go to Planned Parenthood. Can we be clear here? Planned Parenthood gets 25 percent and does a fabulous job. But the fact is, not one penny can ever be used for abortion or people could go to jail. There is no money in here for abortion, period, end of quote. It is because of the Hyde amendment—I know this because I was in the House of Representatives when we dealt with the Hyde amendment. We said there ought to be an exception for rape and incest, OK? So I personally know the Hyde amendment is the law of the land. So if anyone tells you they are closing down the government because of abortion, it has nothing to do with abortion. It has to do with mainstream health care for women and their families.

So here we are. We have come 78 percent of the way to them on cuts. By the way, they announced last night that was it. We agreed that was fine. But now we don't have an agreement.

I have my fingers crossed that at 8 o'clock, the majority leader will say that we have overcome our problems; that he will say we go back to agreeing on the number that was agreed to last night. It is well above \$70 billion. Remember, we cut that out in just the