

This legislation is very clear and simple: that no company should be allowed to put their profits before our national security.

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.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

APPROVING THE RENEWAL OF IMPORT RESTRICTIONS CONTAINED IN THE BURMESE FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY ACT OF 2003—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.J. Res. 66, which the clerk will report by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to the consideration of a joint resolution (H.J. Res. 66) approving the renewal of import restrictions contained in the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I rise to speak about the need to have a disaster assistance effort to support those in New York, your State, as well as across the country and the tremendous needs we have as a result of what has happened regarding the weather. This year we have seen a terrible string of natural disasters that have shut down businesses, farms, and left families homeless all across our country. As chair of the Agriculture Committee, I am particularly focused, of course, on what has happened to our farmers in America.

I am concerned about the flooding along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, the record droughts that have devastated the livelihoods of men and women who grow our food all across America. Earlier this year we had the worst drought in recorded history in Oklahoma, with about \$1.6 billion in crop losses. In Kansas I have had the opportunity, and my staff has, to join with my ranking member, my colleague, Senator ROBERTS, to talk with folks and a chance to see that the drought had wiped out about \$2 billion in crops.

Floods in the Mississippi River Valley washed over 3 million acres—3 million acres—of farmland. Hurricane Irene destroyed more than 450,000 acres of cotton and 300,000 acres of corn in North Carolina. In New York we have

seen similar damage to corn, soybeans, alfalfa, fruits, and vegetables. In Vermont crop losses are estimated at more than \$5 million.

All across our country we have serious challenges that are creating hardships for our businesses, our farmers, and our families. We need to respond. That is our responsibility. Right now the droughts are worse in Texas where the damage is also in the billions of dollars. We have more than 1,000 homes that have been lost.

Already this year there have been natural disasters in 48 of our States—48 out of 50 States have had natural disasters. Michigan, thank goodness, is one of the two States that has not been affected by the weather. But throughout our Nation's history when men and women in one part of the country were hit with a natural disaster, all of America came together to support them and to help rebuild.

That is what this effort is about, coming together as Americans. That is who we are as Americans. We stand with each other in times of trouble. This is not the time to play politics, not when hundreds of thousands of families, farmers, and businesses have been devastated by an unprecedented string of floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires, and other natural disasters.

Already, FEMA has had to halt rebuilding efforts in 41 States. So it is critical that we get this done. This legislation in front of us needs to pass, and it needs to pass quickly.

But I also want to tell you about another emergency that has taken place in my State and in too many other States. It is called a jobs emergency. We may not have been affected by the natural disasters of the weather, but as we look over the last decade in a global economy, as the economy has changed we have been through the same kind of devastation—over a longer period of time, but our people are affected as much as any other State disaster.

We have 14 million people out of work in this country—14 million people out of work. We have a huge national deficit. We will never get out of debt with more than 14 million people out of work. We have to make smart decisions on cutting what is not important, and we have to grow. We have to create jobs for people and support the efforts of the private sector to create jobs.

For each and every one of those families, their job search is an emergency. It is an emergency every time they think about how to put food on their table. It is an emergency every month when they have to scrape together money for the rent or the mortgage. It is an emergency every minute of every day when those men and women are filling out applications, going to job fairs, trying their best to get back to work.

So I find in the middle of all of this, in the middle of support for all that is going on around the country in terms of natural disasters, it is extremely concerning—and in fact outrageous to

me—that the House Republicans have proposed a job-killing offset to pay for the help that is critically needed for natural disasters; that would pull the rug out from under businesses and families all across our country and put up to 50,000 American jobs at risk. That is what they are proposing.

I absolutely oppose this. They propose paying for this critical disaster bill by taking dollars out of a very successful advanced manufacturing retooling program that we passed in the 2007 Energy bill—and it took a while to get it up and going. The previous administration never administered it. I thank the Obama administration for coming in in 2009 and beginning the process of putting it together and all of the rules it took, and so on. So it took a while to get up and going. It has not moved as fast as I would like at all. But, thank goodness, the Obama administration saw it as a priority and has moved forward to put it in place.

So what has happened already? Well, these retooling loans have meant 41,000 jobs in Tennessee, California, Indiana, Michigan, Delaware, Illinois, Kentucky, Ohio, and Missouri. These retooling loans have helped companies retool older manufacturing plants to build the products of the future in America rather than shipping those jobs overseas. It has been extremely successful.

In Michigan retooling loans made it possible for Ford Motor Company to save 1,900 jobs at the Michigan assembly plant in the city of Wayne so they could build the all new Ford Focus and the battery-electric Focus in America. In the process of that, as we partnered with them on battery funding as well—in the process of that, with the help of these retooling loans they are bringing jobs back from Mexico to support the work they are doing on the new vehicles.

I do not know how many economic development efforts we can stand on the Senate floor today and talk about in the Senate or House that are actually bringing jobs back from overseas. This is the program that the House Republicans want to cut. This loan—and it is a loan, so it has to be repaid—is allowing them to be able to have lower costs to be able to do the retooling on those older plants, to be able to make these new high-tech vehicles.

As I said, in the case of the Ford Motor Company, they have saved 1,900 jobs and are bringing jobs back from Mexico. Another Michigan company, Severstal North America, was able to secure a retooling loan to retool an old steel mill, the Rouge steel mill in Michigan, into a cutting-edge plant building advanced, high-strength steel for automotive production.

Jobs here. That does not count what is happening in States across America. That loan, along with private loans and a billion-dollar investment from the company, will help create over 2,500 constructive jobs and will bring the total number of permanent manufacturing jobs at that plant, again, to

1,900. That is a pretty good investment from a loan that is going to be paid back while creating jobs.

These are the kinds of things that we need to be doing—we need to be doing—to address the jobs emergency that Michigan and States all across the country are feeling and have been feeling. Right now there are 35 to 40,000 jobs at stake in this proposal by the House Republicans.

We have other companies that want to use the retooling loans to make things in America—in Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Louisiana, and Florida. These loans are expected to be approved in the next few months. They are very close, and we would see 35 to 40,000 jobs disappear—the opportunity for those jobs to disappear—if we were to accept the House proposal.

After the next round of manufacturing retooling loans, we could see another 10,000 jobs created across the country. But if these retooling loans do not happen, those jobs will not happen either. To add insult to injury, these companies have been working closely with the Department of Energy, in some cases for several years, in order to qualify for these loans.

They have had to undergo the most rigorous screening to make sure the products and companies are in sound financial shape, as they should. We need to make sure they are going through rigorous screening not only so they can be successful but to make sure that we are making products in America. It is an important project and partnership.

These companies have invested countless hours and, frankly, a lot of money to get these projects off the ground and to get to this point. As I indicated, we have a number of companies in States around the country that are within a month or 2 months or 3 months from being able to complete the deal and create the jobs.

We are so close, and the rug will be pulled out from under not only the companies but the communities and the families who are affected. These businesses are America's job creators. They are doing the right thing. They want to invest in America. While others have been on the sidelines waiting, they have jumped in. They are committed to creating jobs. They want to make things here, and they have moved through a process, spent time, money—a tremendous amount of time. In fact, in my judgment, it hasn't moved as fast as it should. But they are now at a point to actually make it happen.

I am outraged that we would see an effort to end the creation of these jobs. There is no question, as I said, that we have had a series of natural disasters, and families, businesses, and farmers who are affected across this country. Even though those natural disasters, fortunately for us, did not come to Michigan, I support the effort to address them. We are all in this as Americans. But I will not—I will not—support an effort that, in the process,

takes tens of thousands of jobs away, because the crisis for Michigan is a jobs crisis. We were the first ones in it. We have been in it the longest. We are coming out of it now but way too slowly. We are coming out of it because we have been creating partnerships to support the private sector to make things in America again.

I strongly urge everyone involved not to come forward with something that will in fact jeopardize these jobs. It makes absolutely no sense to me, and it is certainly something I will strongly oppose if it does.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I ask unanimous consent that I speak as if in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IRS TAX SCAM

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, there is a tax scam that is going on in this country for which you certainly have to give some creativity to these thieves and robbers—and that is exactly what they are.

I first started to get wind of this when people in the Tampa Bay region of my State called in saying an interesting thing happened. They had sent in their income tax return, and they got back a notice from the IRS that their return had already been filed. What they found out was that somebody had stolen their Social Security number, had in their name filled out a tax return, and then, guess what. It showed they had a tax refund due.

When I started hearing from about 25 or 30 people, I knew there was something going on. Sure enough, law enforcement in the Tampa Bay region—the sheriff's office, the city police, combined with the State attorney and the U.S. Attorney—a couple of weeks ago had a bust and arrested 49 people who were in a scam whereby they procure people's Social Security numbers. What is unbelievable is the amount of money they were getting back, estimated at being just in the Tampa Bay region, something like \$100 million in refunds. That is a rip-off of the American taxpayer because that is their money.

But the story doesn't stop there. Oh, if you were one of the victims whose Social Security number had been stolen and you wanted to file your tax return, the IRS is telling you you can't do it because you have already filed a

tax return. Guess what a nightmare that is for the legitimate taxpayer.

So we have filed legislation. A number of Senators have joined me. No. 1, one of the unbelievable things was that it was difficult to get the IRS to cooperate with the local and State law enforcement agencies, because the IRS is prohibited because of privacy from sharing any of this information. And, of course, we want to protect the privacy of people, but we also want to go after these crooks.

We had done it a few years ago with regard to inmates in the Federal prison system by allowing the IRS, under the law we passed back in 2008, to cooperate with the Federal prison system in order to get the inmates who were filing false tax returns to get tax refunds. That was extended administratively into the State prison system with the IRS. But then this has been taken to a new level, one in which it is a great rip-off of the taxpayers.

What was incredible is when the Tampa police department and the sheriff's department ended up arresting some of these people, it was as if they didn't know they had done anything wrong.

What is going on? They did not know they had done anything wrong, and they are driving around in BMWs, with Rolex watches and gold chains all over them. It is the use of tools in the electronic age just the same as yesterday, when the thief used a crowbar to break in and steal somebody's possessions. This has to stop.

What we do not know is the extent to which this is all over the country. So the first thing we have to do is get the legal ability for the IRS, without divulging people's private financial information, to be able to cooperate with local and State law enforcement and the U.S. attorney to be able to go after these people, to identify them so the U.S. attorney and the State attorney can prosecute.

Additionally, we have to help the victims. In this legislation we filed, we say the IRS will give the victims a special PIN number so they can file a return and that PIN number will identify them as a victim and it will not be kicked out of the system.

Additionally, since so much of this is being done electronically, we have to give the taxpayer the option to file what we called in the old days a paper tax return and in the process see if we can stop this; otherwise, if \$100 million has been stolen from the American taxpayer just in the Tampa Bay region of Florida, you can imagine how extensive this crime probably is across the entire country.

It is important we act and that we get to the bottom of it. If we pass a law, a crook will try to figure out a way to get around it. But when somebody in this electronic age can just sit at a computer, steal a Social Security number and then file a false tax return, enough is enough.

It is my delight to see my colleague from Maryland. It looks as if he has some good stuff to tell us.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I am not sure it is good stuff, but it is what has happened in our State. I thank the Senator from Florida for his leadership on so many of these issues and his comments on the floor of the Senate.

About 2 weeks ago, right before Hurricane Irene struck, I was at the Maryland Emergency Management Center located in Reisterstown, MD. I was with Governor O'Malley, the Governor of our State, and other leaders. I saw our team there to prepare the people of Maryland for the onslaught of Irene and later from Tropical Storm Lee. I saw Maryland preparing the best it possibly could to minimize the risk to the people of our State from a natural storm. I saw the local officials do the right thing and tell people in our coastal areas to evacuate their homes because of the potential risk to life and property from this massive storm.

I also saw another agency that was located right there, side by side with the Maryland agencies, and that was FEMA, the Federal officials. These were people I met for the first time. They were not from Maryland. They had come in from other States to help the people of Maryland and provided the expertise to our State officials so we could properly prepare for this storm that was potentially damaging to the people of Maryland. They were there.

I thank President Obama for declaring, before the storm hit, emergency declarations to Maryland so we could utilize Federal resources and we could take maximum steps to minimize the loss of life and property. It was the right thing to do.

I take this time on the floor—I am going to talk a little bit about the damages that occurred in my State—to point out that we have always come together as a nation to stand by those who have been devastated through these natural disasters. This has been a particularly rough year. We have seen hurricanes and storms and tornadoes and flooding and even an earthquake on the east coast of the United States. This has challenged our ability to respond in a timely way. We have a responsibility to make sure our Federal agencies have the resources to respond—how they were able to be about Maryland before the storm, during the storm and after the storm and they are there now to help the people of Maryland. Our governments—our local governments, our businesses, and our residents are counting on that continued Federal purpose to get us through this very difficult period.

Hurricane Irene caused severe storms, flooding, and strong winds in the State of Maryland. It was followed by Tropical Storm Lee, which aggravated the flooding and other damage throughout the State, including damage to roads, water treatment plants,

and agriculture. Our agricultural community was hit hard. Our water treatment facilities, the plants we depend upon to keep our waters clean and to keep our neighborhoods safe, were damaged severely by this storm. I have talked to our transportation people. Roads were knocked out. Damage was caused.

On the Eastern Shore of Maryland, as I have already indicated, there was a mandatory order for evacuation of Ocean City the weekend before the Labor Day weekend, resulting in heavy economic losses during one of the most profitable periods during the summer for that city. The flooding in Queen Anne's County destroyed railroad tracks. I have a photograph. This is, by the way, railroad tracks. They have been knocked out by the hurricane. As you can see, this required emergency attention.

Multiple roads were closed and numerous homes were flooded in the town of Millington after the Chester River flooded over its banks. In Millington, the wastewater treatment plant was disabled, also affecting the residents in Kent County. The storm in Talbot County caused roads and pipeline damage.

Let me show you this photograph, if I might, because I think it points out the problem. When that amount of water goes through the storm pipes, it can cause significant damage because these pipes were not able to handle the amount of water that was brought down by the hurricane and tropical storm. As a result, the pipes burst, causing the road which the pipe was under to give way, bringing about a road closure. That was terribly inconvenient, of course, to the people of that area, the businesses, et cetera. I am showing an example in Talbot County, MD, on the Eastern Shore. We could show numerous other examples of the failure of stormwater management pipes as well as roads that had to be closed for public safety. In Caroline County, the towns of Federalsburg and Greensboro experienced major flooding of the Choptank River, including the malfunctioning of a wastewater treatment plant. In Cecil and Harford Counties, Irene led to the opening of a significant number of floodgates at the Conowingo Dam, due to rising water levels feeding in from the Susquehanna River. This was the first time the engineers took such measures since Tropical Storm Isabel hit Maryland in 2003. Opening the floodgates led to flooding and property damage in many areas, and mandatory evacuation orders were issued for Port Deposit and Havre de Grace, in Maryland.

People had to leave their homes. The streets were underwater. When the water receded, there was muck and damage to the towns.

In southern Maryland, damage from metal on a roof that was blown into a transformer forced the shutdown of a reactor at Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant. In Calvert County, many of the

substations were damaged and rendered inoperable during Irene, resulting in widespread power outages for many customers and that forced businesses to close for several days. You heard about power outages. We had whole counties where everyone was out of power—everyone. In most of our counties the majority of people lost their power, not for a couple hours, for many days, causing major disruptions to our businesses, to our families, to schools that could not open and, therefore, parents who could not go to work because they had to deal with the unexpected news that the schools would be closed because there was no power in the schools themselves.

In the Washington metro region, Irene and the additional storms caused severe power outages and flooding in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. In Prince George's County, the loss of power caused thousands of basements to flood. As you know, without power you cannot use your sump pumps. Without that, there is significant damage.

Frankly, because the water came in from the low level rather than from the roof, these property owners are now being challenged as to whether their insurance will cover this damage. That raises the importance, I might say, of the Federal protections that are available when a disaster is declared an emergency by the President because of the altercations over what insurance does not cover. All the more reason why the Federal Government must be there in its traditional role to help communities when a storm or emergency occurs.

Hurricane Irene and subsequent storms required governments to incur additional expenses due to overtime needed for first responders who save lives and property after the storm. I must tell you, I saw those first responders. I saw them out there working 24-hour shifts in some cases. They didn't get home to their families because they were there to help us maintain order and help reduce the loss of life and the loss of property. I thank President Obama for making a timely major disaster declaration for the State of Maryland in advance of the hurricane. Maryland is now eligible for Federal disaster recovery dollars through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The State budget has already been very much impacted. We all understand our States do not have the flexibility of our country. It is during emergencies that our State and local leaders look to Washington, look to their Federal Government to be there as a partner to deal with this issue that States cannot deal with.

Congress has always acted in a bipartisan manner to help Americans and their communities recover from natural disasters. Congress has never insisted that disaster fund being offset.

Let me explain this issue because it may be confusing to the people who are watching. Yes, the Federal Emergency

Management Agency has a budget. FEMA has a budget. But you cannot predict the number and scope of natural disasters. No one had predicted this storm would be as widespread as it was. Hurricane Irene affected the entire east coast of the United States. FEMA did not have in its budget that type of a scenario, along with the tornadoes we had, along with what has happened in the Midwest. During this period, we have seen 48 of our States declared eligible for FEMA assistance. This affects our entire country. Now the people on the east coast of the United States are looking to the Federal Government to be there. We have always done this, as I said, in a bipartisan manner, without the requirement that if additional moneys are needed, those moneys will be appropriated by Congress. We will not ask other agencies to have to contribute toward that because that was not anticipated when we did the budget. I might point out that we had a very contentious fight over the Budget Control Act. That is the bill we passed that allowed us to increase our debt ceiling and set our budget allocations for fiscal year 2012, the year that will start on October 1.

As you know, there was an agreement in that Budget Control Act that permits the modification of the fiscal year 2012 discretionary cap to be adjusted to accommodate additional disaster relief funding without an offset. That is what we did. We came together as one entity recognizing we cannot predict the next hurricane, storm, earthquake, flood, or tornado. We just cannot predict that. Therefore, Democrats and Republicans said adjust the cap. Meet whatever disaster is out there. Whether it was Katrina in Louisiana, whether it is a bridge falling down in Minnesota that the Presiding Officer had to deal with, whether it is tornadoes as we had in the Midwest, droughts and floods that occurred in our country, we will be there to help the people of America. We helped rebuild countries around the world. We want to make sure we help the communities.

I was with my colleagues from Vermont, and they shared with us the number of bridges that had been wiped out, people who have been isolated as a result of Hurricane Irene and then Tropical Storm Lee. We have a responsibility, and we recognize that in the budget agreement, that we adjust the caps without setoffs so the Federal Government can be there as a true partner in dealing with these issues. We were there for preparation. It is now time to help restore the communities. In some cases it will take months before we are back to normal. We know that, the people know that, but they have a right to expect that the Federal Government will be there to help.

I commend Senator LANDRIEU, the chair of the Homeland Security Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee; Senator INOUE and the mem-

bers of the Senate Appropriations Committee. They recognize that. They have given us a budget that will accommodate the extra needs so FEMA will have the resources it wants.

I thank President Obama. His budget request to us reflects the resources we need so we have the recommendation from our Appropriations Committee. We have the leadership from the White House. Now it is time for us to act. We have the vehicle on the floor of the Senate. It is time for us to give the resources to the Federal agencies so they can be there in all parts of this country—including helping the people of Maryland cope with the disaster of Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee and the other natural disasters that have happened in other parts of the country by—taking up this issue now, passing it at this moment so the funds are there and the resources are there.

We can live up to the historical mission of the United States to always be there to help any part of our Nation affected by a natural disaster. I hope we will be able to bring up this issue quickly. As the vote in the Senate Appropriations Committee indicated, it should not be delayed because of offset issues. We should get the needed funds and resources to the agency, working with our State and local governments, working for our local communities so we can try to restore and rebuild those areas that have been devastated by these natural disasters. I would urge us to do that as quickly as possible.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRANKEN). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO TIM O'KEEFE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to bid a fond farewell to a man who has been a fixture in the Senate for 33 years. Mr. Tim O'Keefe of the Senate Disbursing Office is retiring today after more than three decades of service to this body and his country. Known to many as a loyal friend and well liked by nearly everyone he has met in these halls—including most of my colleagues and thousands of Senate staffers—he will be greatly missed.

Tim began his career with the disbursing office, and in the Senate, in 1978. Every Senate employee becomes familiar with that office early in their tenure because that is the office in charge of the Senate payroll as well as everything relating to an employee's compensation, payroll deductions, retirement, life and health insurance, and other benefits. The disbursing office used to be located in the Capitol when Tim started. In fact, it was located in S-233, which is now part of the Republican leader's office. During

Tim's early years on the job, staffers and Senators alike would line up in the hallways on payday to receive their paychecks. Maybe that is how Tim became legendary for never forgetting a face or a name for so many members of this very large Senate family, and always having a kind word for every one of them.

The disbursing office moved in 1980 when my predecessor, Howard Baker, expanded the Republican leader's suite of offices. That is how Tim and his co-workers ended up in their now familiar location on the first floor of the Hart Building. Tim has kidded me about that a few times over the years. So on behalf of the Republican leader's office, let me take this opportunity to apologize to him for being booted from his perch.

Tim is a native Washingtonian. He attended St. John's College High School and the University of South Carolina, which has a heck of a good football team this year. Just as Tim is loyal to the Senate, he is a loyal alumnus of both those institutions. He goes to Columbia, SC, every year to see South Carolina play football. Tim is also a great fan of the Washington Redskins who, amazingly enough, are off to a good start this year. He has season tickets, and has been attending their games since his boyhood. He loves to talk football, college or pro, with folks in the office, but be careful if you are a Cowboys fan.

Tim's father George O'Keefe was a distinguished veteran who fought in World War II. His mother Gisela O'Keefe worked for the District of Columbia school system at Alice Deal Middle School. I know they would both be proud to see how well liked and well respected their son has become. Tim also has a brother, Dennis, who lives in South Carolina, and Tim lives in Alexandria with his teenaged son Connor.

When the disbursing office held a retirement party for Tim a few weeks ago, he got quite the sendoff. It was the day of the historic earthquake, felt all along eastern North America from Quebec City to Atlanta and centered about 90 miles away in central Virginia. As Tim was opening his presents, the ground began to shake and the Capitol complex was soon evacuated. It is almost as if Washington, DC, itself was protesting that it did not want Tim to go.

Indeed, it will be hard for many to imagine the Senate with Tim gone. He has the longest tenure of anyone in the disbursing office today, and thousands of Senate staffers know him as the man who led them in the Federal oath of office they take on their first day on the job—the same oath the Vice President of the United States administers to Senators at the beginning of their 6-year terms.

In his retirement, Tim will have time to pursue his many interests, including his love of horse racing. He is particularly a fan of Lexington, Kentucky's Keeneland racetrack. And I would be

remiss if I didn't mention that today, the day of his retirement, is also Tim's birthday.

I know many on Capitol Hill, after hearing about his retirement, have taken a moment to say thank you and goodbye to Mr. Tim O'Keefe. I wanted to make sure I was one of them. He will be missed here in the Senate, and we are very grateful for his 33 years of service.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

POVERTY IN AMERICA

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, yesterday the Census Bureau released information about poverty, income, and health insurance in our country, and the news was, in short, devastating. The number of people in poverty is at an all-time high. Income gains over the last decade have been totally wiped out. Americans are struggling more than ever before.

I am appalled by these facts and I know my colleagues are too. Today I wish to talk about these numbers, but I wish to talk about what we can do about them and about where our country's priorities must be and how we have to focus on rebuilding the middle class in light of the new census numbers.

Yesterday we learned that 46.2 million people in America were poor last year. That is more than 15 percent of Americans. Let me remind my colleagues what this means. The poverty line for a family of four with two adults and two children is \$22,000—just slightly over \$22,000 a year. Can anyone here in this body—and we all know what we make; every Senator, every Congressman, except leadership who get paid a little bit more, makes \$174,000 a year. If we think to ourselves: Could we and our spouses and two children live on \$22,000 a year, \$425 a week? But, beyond that, we also learned that deep poverty; that is, families with incomes less than half the poverty line, is also at the highest rate on record. More than 20 million Americans lived in deep poverty last year. That is just over \$11,000 a year for a family of four. That is almost mind-boggling. How do people live like that?

Our children are suffering incredibly high levels of poverty. The Census Bureau pointed out that 22 percent—1 out of every 5 kids in America—were poor last year. When compared to other industrialized nations—the OECD countries—the United States has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the world. That is inexcusable. It is a national crisis. It is something we should be discussing here on the Senate floor daily.

In addition to our children, other vulnerable populations are suffering as well. People with disabilities continue to face higher poverty than people without disabilities. About 28 percent—almost 1 out of 3 individuals with disabilities in America—are poor, compared with 12.5 percent of those without disabilities. That is twice the amount.

Minorities also face devastating levels of poverty. More than a quarter of Blacks and Hispanics—more than 25 percent or 1 in 4—are in poverty in America. Again, keep in mind, for a family of four, that is just \$22,000 a year. So 25 percent of Blacks and Hispanics are in poverty, 10 percent of Whites, 13 percent of Asians. These disparities are deeply troubling. More than 10 million Black and Hispanic children woke up this morning in a household struggling with poverty.

Again, we have to remember, while I talk about these as numbers, there is a real story, there is a real family, a real individual, a real child behind every one of them.

There are 46 million stories about families sitting around their kitchen table—if they are even lucky enough to have one—struggling to figure out how to make ends meet, stories of people choosing between whether to pay the rent or pay the utility bills, choosing whether to pay for diapers or medication for their kids, choosing whether to put food on the table or gasoline in the car—so they might get to a minimum wage, part-time job someplace. This should not be happening in America.

We have heard a lot of talk and I have heard Senators and Members of the House in speeches recently talking about how we cannot afford this and we cannot afford that because, let's face it, we are broke, we are deeply in debt in this country and we are broke. I beg to differ. The United States of America is today the richest country in the world—the richest country in the history of the world.

If we are so rich, why are we so broke? We are not poor. We are the richest country in the world. So what this census report yesterday points out is this is a wake-up call that we are failing. We are failing our most vulnerable citizens. We are failing to provide a ladder of opportunity for people to become part of the middle class. We are destroying futures, destroying hope among our children.

First and foremost, I think this report yesterday graphically illustrates how dangerous it would be if we as lawmakers give in to the current atmosphere of budget hysteria—budget hysteria—fear, and fatalism that is now going on on Capitol Hill. By giving in to it, we eviscerate the essential economic security programs just because somehow we want to score political points.

Well, people all know that most people in poverty have a higher rate of not voting than wealthier people. We know that. So I guess, if you want to get

votes, you appeal to people who have money. If you want to get elected, you appeal to people who have money because they are the ones who give you money to get elected by, like big corporations. So the poor are kind of forgotten about. So if we give in to this budget hysteria, the first people who are usually hurt are the most vulnerable of our citizens.

The Census Bureau's numbers show, again, without question how effective and important these safety net programs are to keeping millions of people out of poverty. Social Security alone—according to the census numbers, kept 20 million people above the poverty line. Unemployment insurance kept 3.2 million more people out of poverty.

We have always known these are crucial programs, but now we know just how important they are. And other programs, if they were counted by the official poverty measure, which they are not, would have lifted millions more people out of poverty. For example, the SNAP program—food stamps—would have lifted 3.9 million people above poverty. The earned-income tax credit would have lifted 5.4 million people. Without these crucial safety net programs, the poverty situation would be much worse. Yet, mark my words, with this supercommittee that is meeting or whether we go into some kind of a sequestration or whatever that means around here, are we going to cut back on the food stamp program, are we going to cut back on unemployment insurance, maybe cut back on Social Security, as some would want to do, and Social Security benefits? That just means more people will fall below the poverty line.

I think the second lesson we can learn from this report is about the crippling effect falling paychecks and rising inequality are having on our economy. Income went down again last year. Real median household income was \$49,500. That is down 2.3 percent from the year before and down 6.4 percent since the start of the recession. This is not just the effect of the recession; these are long-term economic trends that have caused a dramatic increase in the income inequality in this country, and it has been going on for at least the last three decades, little bit by little bit by little bit, to the point now where we have a huge disparity in income equality in this country.

Again, paychecks for American workers are not falling because they are not working as hard or producing less. According to testimony from former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich to the HELP Committee, the typical American family is working more than 500 hours longer per year now than they were in 1979. Got that. The typical American family is working 500 hours longer per year than they were in 1979. In addition to working longer, their productivity, as measured by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, has continued to rise.

So what has happened? People are working longer. There is more production, more units per person per hour worked, and yet wages have fallen. Why is that? You would think wages and benefits would have gone up with longer hours and more productivity. Well, that is not what happened. It is not that companies cannot afford to pay their workers more. Profit margins of Standard & Poor's 500 companies are at their highest levels since the late 1960s. So what has happened during the last three decades, since 1979, is that the executives have shifted revenues from workers' paychecks to the corporate bottom lines and their own pockets—more to profit, more to capital, less to labor.

We cannot allow these trends to continue. Economists across the political spectrum agree that a major cause of our current economic stagnation is a chronic lack of demand. For nearly three decades, workers' incomes have been stagnant. Working families lack the purchasing power to drive America's consumer economy. Without adequate demand, businesses are reluctant to invest and hire. Simply put, until we raise the numbers on people's paychecks and the number of people working and making a paycheck, the economy will never recover.

The final lesson I think we can learn from yesterday's census report is about health care. There is a small silver lining here. While the recession is obviously continuing to impact health care coverage, there are some signs that the early stages of implementation of the affordable care act, that is, the health care reform bill, are making a difference. While the census data shows that the number of uninsured increased from 16.1 percent to 16.3 percent of the population—the Census Bureau deemed this “not statistically different”—the affordable care act's requirement that health plans provide dependent coverage to young adults to stay on their parents' policy until age 26 is making a difference.

The data from the Census Bureau shows that the 18-to-24 age group was the only group “to experience a significant increase in the percentage with health insurance over the past year,” up to 72.8 percent from 70.7 percent in 2009. So, again, there is a small silver lining there in terms of health care coverage for our younger population. So it is a modest step forward for young Americans.

But the overall picture the census report reveals is a nation—the United States of America—on the brink of a crisis. It should be a call to action. I think the President's jobs bill is a good start. We have to create more jobs, not just any job but good-quality jobs that pay decent wages and benefits, a job to lift a family out of poverty and not to keep a family in it.

Again, I have been paying attention a little bit to some of the debates that have been going on in the other party.

I was looking at the figures from the State of Texas that more jobs have

been created in Texas than any other part of the country. Well, when you look closely, Texas had by far the largest number of minimum wage jobs than any other state, and the number of minimum wage workers more than doubled between 2007 and 2010. That is our future—minimum wage jobs at \$7.25 an hour? That is barely \$15,000 a year, under the poverty line for a family of four. Is that something to brag about, that we are creating more minimum wage jobs that will just keep families in poverty? As I said, we need jobs to lift families out of poverty, not keep them down, under the poverty level.

Lastly, I have said so many times here on the floor that we will not be able to tackle the problem of poverty in this country until we have a strong middle class and a clear path for people to become middle-class citizens. That means we should invest more in education, more in innovation, more in infrastructure-building in this country. It means restoring a level playing field with fair taxation—fair taxation. To repeat something the President said the other night—why should Warren Buffett pay less of a percentage of his income than his secretary? You wonder why people get cynical about government. Of course they are cynical. They have every reason to be cynical when we pass these laws around here and we tax capital at a lower rate than we tax labor. Why should someone who is laboring and working be taxed at a higher rate than a wealthy person who maybe invested a lot of money, and they are putting it all into capital gains, and they are paying a lower rate of taxes than someone who is out there working for a living? Why is that fair?

Well, we also need vibrant unions, vibrant unions that can bargain collectively for their people for wages, hours, conditions of employment. We need a strong ladder of opportunity to give every American access to the middle class.

So, again, yesterday's poverty numbers told a bleak story about 46 million Americans who cannot make ends meet. I hope that next year at this time, when the new census numbers come out, we can begin to tell a different story about how we acted boldly, with imagination and vision, to help these people turn their lives around and build a better future. In a nation as strong and as vibrant and, yes, as rich—as rich—as the United States of America, no one who works hard for a living should have to live in poverty, and we should not rest until that vision becomes a reality.

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 (Mr. UDALL of New Mexico). Without objection, it is so ordered.

SPIRIT OF COOPERATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, there has been a promising new tone in Congress since our return from the summer recess. It has taken some by surprise. But even more striking than the new tone is that it has brought with it a few modest signs of a new spirit of cooperation.

The House this week sent us the highway extension and an aviation extension that are clean. During August, there were clamors from some corners in the other party to mount a fight over the gas tax or insist on harmful cuts to road and bridge repair, even if these demands risked a shutdown of road construction projects. As recently as last Friday, Republicans were planning to insist on a 5-percent cut to the FAA budget—a move that could well have threatened another shutdown of that agency like we saw in August. But both fears, fortunately, have receded. Barring a setback in the Senate, we should be able to extend both the FAA and highway measures on time and without controversy.

This is a very positive sign. There was a sour taste left in everyone's mouth at the end of the debt ceiling debate, and that is causing a change in behavior. It is actually bringing us together. That process was made unnecessarily difficult because of the extreme tactics of a bloc within the House. The political process broke down and the public noticed.

In the aftermath of that debate, it seems everybody finally realizes there is a premium on reasonableness. The public does not want to see more of the “my way or the highway” approach that has been exhibited by some in the House. That is why there was head scratching earlier this week to hear a new rumor in the Capitol that the House Republican leadership might consider seeking to reopen the debt ceiling fight, ignoring the agreed-upon spending level for the 2012 fiscal year. As you know, the deal included a top-line budget number of \$1.043 trillion for the fiscal year that begins October 1. This was a significant cut, an actual cut from the fiscal 2011 level of \$7 billion. This agreement was ratified by all of those who voted for the final debt ceiling agreement. It was hailed as one of the better aspects of the overall debt ceiling deal because it would mean a lesser likelihood of another budget fight on September 30.

However, since this number was agreed to, some extreme Republicans have started looking to cause trouble. They have tried to see the \$7 billion in cuts represented by the \$1.043 trillion figure as a floor, not a ceiling. This would be a violation not just of the spirit of the debt limit deal but the letter of it.

The public will not stand for another budget fight. Republicans should understand that more brinkmanship on

the budget at the end of September is not in either side's interest. Some, thankfully, in the House leadership seem to realize this. Majority Leader CANTOR, in a memo to the House Republican caucus sent in August, warned against picking another budget fight on the CR. Leader CANTOR wrote:

While all of us would like to have seen a lower discretionary appropriation ceiling for the upcoming fiscal year, the debt limit agreement set a level of spending that is a real cut from the current year. I believe it is in our interest to enact into law full-year appropriation bills at this new lower level.

Leader CANTOR affirmed these remarks earlier this week:

I say to my Republican colleagues, a deal is a deal. It's hard to imagine you would go back on the debt limit agreement, but if you are even considering it, please stop.

We already will likely need to take time next week resolving what level of FEMA funding we should appropriate for fiscal year 2012. Earlier indications are that some House Republicans may want to shortchange the level of funding FEMA says it needs for next year. I can't imagine why anyone would want to play games with disaster relief. But if they want to debate that, they should not also be tying it to another budget fight that we have already resolved and that nearly caused a default for the first time in American history. We should not go back over those pages. We have had enough debates on the docket without reopening the ones we have already done.

The public is tired of these fights, and the public understands who keeps instigating them. To the House Republicans I say: Don't go back on your word on the CR. Leader CANTOR was right when he said in August you should abide by the level agreed to over the summer. Stick with that decision and let's move on to other issues.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I am very happy to announce to the Senate that today NASA announced its new, big rocket design, with the President stepping forth to indicate that he will request funding for the design and building of this rocket.

I want to take the opportunity to share with the Senate what this rocket is going to be. To set the stage, you will recall that we have the International Space Station up in orbit now. There is a combination of six astronauts on board. It is an international crew. The space station itself—people don't realize how big it is. If you think about sitting in a football stadium on the 50-yard line, and looking from one end zone to the other, that is how big the space station is—120 yards long.

The space shuttle has been the vehicle that we have used now for 30 years, the last 10 of which have been used to build the International Space Station. The Russians have been taking up some components, but the major com-

ponents, the heavy components are being taken up in the cargo bay of the space shuttle and assembled over the last decade into the station. We have six astronauts doing research in the zero gravity of orbit.

The future rockets going to and from the space station—a space taxi, if you will—are a competition among commercial rocket companies, and we think that competition will bring down significantly the cost of those rockets to take cargo and crew, and at the end of this year one version of those rockets will in fact launch, rendezvous, and dock with the space station and deliver cargo.

To make those human rated, with all of the redundancies and escape systems to save human life, it is going to take another few years. Of course, it is a disappointment for so many of us that the new rocket, ready to go to and from the space station, as the space shuttle used to, is not ready for humans, even though we are launching cargo. Thus, in the interim, we have to rely on the Russians with their spacecraft, which we have done before, because when the Space Shuttle *Columbia* was destroyed on reentry back in 2003, for well over 2 years we were down and not flying the space shuttle, until we could make sure that it was fixed. We relied on the Russian Soyuz to get to and from the space station.

All right, that is going to low-Earth orbit. But NASA, with its human space program, has another mission. Now, with the nonmanned space program, we just launched to Jupiter, we just launched a mission to the Moon, next month we are going to launch a mission on Earth observations, and before Thanksgiving we are launching a Volkswagen-size Recovery to Mars, with six wheels powered by a plutonium source so it doesn't have to go to sleep in the Martian night. This will rove all over.

It has a pole that will stick up, with a laser, and it can zap rocks so we can analyze their chemical content. It has a big scooper that can also get us additional samples. It has two eyes that will pop up as it roams around so we can see in real time the surface of Mars.

So we have a vigorous space program. But we still have to do what NASA is supposed to do; that is, leave the orbit of the Earth and venture out into the heavens with humans. That is what was announced today—announced by Senator HUTCHISON and myself, with NASA Administrator General Charlie Bolden making the formal announcement. The President has signed off on the specifics.

I am going to explain this rocket. But before I do, let me say there have been a lot of critics saying: Oh, it will cost too much. Remember, last year we passed the NASA bill unanimously in the Senate and passed it in the House with an overwhelming three-quarters vote. That set the parameters on the funding for this new rocket, and all of

NASA's figures have come in underneath those levels that we set in the NASA authorization bill. Those are the numbers the Office of Management and Budget and the White House have scrubbed to make sure they are realistic, and that is what has been announced today.

Here it is. This is the rocket. Just to give an idea of the scale of this monster, the space shuttle in the stack, with the external tank and the two solids on either side, the tallest point of that stack is the top of the external tank. From here that would come up to right there. That gives an idea of how much larger this rocket is. This rocket will launch more payload than any rocket in America's space program and probably the Russian/Soviet space program, certainly, now. Back in the old Soviet days I don't think the Soviets had one that was anywhere near this one.

What this rocket has is a core, and this is a core with liquid oxygen, liquid hydrogen fuel tank. It is taking the space shuttle engines—so we can keep the cost down, and a lot of this has already been developed—and putting five in the tail of this first stage. So first stage, liquid hydrogen, liquid oxygen. But it is boosted on either side by those solid rocket boosters—in this case a new one. Under the space shuttle it was four segments, but this one has five segments. So it is elongated and gives more thrust. These, on future versions, will be competed as to whether it is going to be solid rockets—and, by the way, the consistency of this pencil eraser is what the solid rocket material looks like—or whether those in the competition will be liquid boosters.

All right, that is the core. That comes up all the way to here. Then there is the second stage. We have second-stage engines we have been using in the past called the J-2. They are now updated with a new, more powerful version called the J-2X. So we have a lot of history on these engines. That is what is going to be the second stage, which then takes the housing for a lot of the electronics, and then the capsule.

The tower at the top is an escape tower. We could actually have an explosion right here on the pad, and the crew could survive because they would eject in the full capsule, being thrust away from the explosion, and then the parachutes would deploy and the crew saved; likewise, we could save the crew on this rocket all the way to orbit. So if there was a problem, we could still save the human life of the four to seven astronauts who are going to be in this crew capsule. We could save their lives, and that was one of the mandates after we lost *Columbia* in the reentry over Texas. The investigation board said: Build a safer rocket, and certainly one that is more economical.

This is now on a schedule for its first test—this version. This is the smaller version. This thing can evolve. This is

about 70 to 77 tons. This thing can evolve to 150 tons, and then we are talking about a monster. On this version they will test it on a schedule for 2017. They will have several other tests, and they are on a schedule to put a crew into this rocket in 2021. They are then scheduled to rendezvous, or land, on an asteroid—this will be the first time that has ever been done—as a way of preparing us to then go to Mars.

So that is what NASA has announced today. I want to give great credit—great, great credit—to Senator HUTCHISON. She has been the ranking member and, alternately, chairman of the Subcommittee on Science and Space and is now the ranking member of the full Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. She has been a princess in helping guide, first of all, the NASA authorization bill and the funding. Tomorrow, she and Senator MIKULSKI—the chair of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations—will be taking up NASA's budget as they get ready to come to the floor.

This rocket will now allow us to get out of low-Earth orbit, assemble components—heavy components—that ultimately will take us out into the heavens exploring in ways we never have even started to design. Remember, 40 years ago we went to the Moon. That was quite an accomplishment. But the Moon is about 250,000 miles from Earth. With rockets like these, we are going to go far out into the heavens to explore the origins of the universe, to explore that which we have never even dreamed of, as we fulfill our destiny as a people who are explorers and adventurers by nature.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina is recognized.

Mrs. HAGAN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mrs. HAGAN. Mr. President, I rise to join my colleagues in imploring Congress to provide needed assistance to our families, our communities, and our businesses suffering from the rash of natural disasters that have hit our country hard this year.

While many of us who represent States on the east coast planned to spend our final week of our August work period traveling our State, touring factories, stopping by schools, and visiting military bases, Mother Nature had other plans.

We still traveled to our States, but we saw a very different scene: whole streets and towns flooded, homes and businesses washed away from their foundations, destroyed crop fields, and

constituents worried about the loss of their homes and mourning their loved ones.

Over 2 weeks ago, Hurricane Irene barreled down our eastern seaboard, and early estimates suggest it could be one of the top 10 costliest disasters in U.S. history. I am here to tell the story of North Carolina.

In the early morning of August 27, Irene first touched down over eastern North Carolina's Outer Banks. Even before it made landfall, the storm brought on several tornadoes along the coast that swept away entire homes.

This is a photo of what is left of three homes hit by tornadoes in Tyrrell County. I was there, and it was truly devastating. One elderly man who had one of these homes was there the next day with a rake, forlorn look in his eyes, and said: The only thing I own now are the clothes on my back.

By the time Irene finally moved beyond the State of North Carolina, six North Carolinians had been killed, storm surges 6 to 9 feet high had flooded many towns, more than 500,000 were without power, and countless homes, businesses, and schools had been destroyed or severely damaged.

Fortunately, our State had prepared diligently for days leading up to the storm, boarding up houses and businesses and declaring mandatory evacuations for tourists and residents in our most at-risk towns.

A lot of pundits woke after Irene hit and started saying: Hey, it wasn't that bad. I wish to invite those individuals to come to eastern North Carolina and see what I saw in the wake of Hurricane Irene.

I saw small business owners in downtown Manteo emptying stores they have run for decades, tossing their waterlogged inventory, moving their furniture to the curb, moving out carpet totally destroyed, and these business owners wondering if it was even worth reopening their stores.

There was a bookstore, and a resident in the community came up to me and he said: Senator HAGAN, I have raised my children by sitting on this man's knees having books read to him day in and day out. We need this bookstore back in Manteo.

I wish to be sure it gets there.

I also saw crops that had been beaten by wind and rain for 15 hours, and it looked like they had gone through the spin cycle of a washing machine. I saw flooding in the fields so severe that Agricultural Secretary and former Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack said it was the worst agricultural flooding he recalled seeing.

I saw families clearing and burning debris, pumping floodwater, tossing aside their soaked possessions that were beyond saving.

I also stood along Highway 12, eerily quiet, a highway that is usually busy with traffic, totally still at the point where Irene had left a gaping hole, blocking any vehicle travel to and from Hatteras Island and the towns of

Rodanthe, Waves, Salvo, Avon, Buxton, Frisco, and Hatteras. We can clearly see the breach of the highway here. It actually breached in three separate points along Highway 12. The only way to get to the island now is by ferry; and, according to local reports, the line for that ferry was 15 miles long this weekend.

That is the picture in North Carolina. It is not the only picture. While there were scenes of destruction and loss, I also saw tremendous acts of determination and kindness. If winds and rains may have swept away our possessions, they also stirred up the best parts of North Carolina spirit. Our intrinsic devotion to community and to assisting those in need produced countless heroes across our State the past 2 weeks.

Everywhere I went, I saw emergency workers, volunteer organizations, and members of the community reaching out to their neighbors in need. In Craven and Tyrrell Counties, the American Red Cross and the North Carolina Baptist Men and Women provided hot meals. The North Carolina Baptist Men and Women were there, distributing 5,000 meals one afternoon when I was with them and also helping shelter and debris removal for those affected by the hurricane.

The North Carolina National Guard activated 400 members—including a member of my own staff who serves in the Guard—to provide emergency water, food, and supplies to some of the hardest hit areas. Emergency workers throughout the State continue to help families, businesses, and entire communities recover and rebuild.

While the people of the great State of North Carolina are committed to getting themselves and their neighbors back on their own feet, we have to do the same in Congress. For the North Carolina families, farmers, fishermen, educators, seniors, and small businesses struggling to recover, government assistance cannot come fast enough. It must not leave too soon.

Here is my bottom line: Congress must fully fund Irene recovery efforts now. But we must also fund the emergency funding needs in tornado-devastated Joplin, MO, and Alabama, and the flooded communities of the Midwest, also, and in the wildfire disaster currently in Texas.

Without a doubt, this year, our country has been ravaged by an unprecedented series of natural disasters. Since January 1, the President has issued disaster declarations in 48 States, and the hurricane season is far from over.

We are aware of this trend all too well in North Carolina. Just about 4 months before Irene hit, 28 tornadoes touched down across central and southern North Carolina, the most severe weather to hit our State since 1984. More than 20 North Carolinians were killed, 6,200 homes damaged, and about 440 homes were completely destroyed;

21 businesses, including the largest employer in the town of Sanford, were demolished, with another 92 significantly damaged, leaving at least 2,000 North Carolinians in that one area out of work. Shaw University, located in downtown Raleigh, was forced to close for the remainder of the semester due to the immense damage to its campus.

We will never be able to predict the whims of Mother Nature, but we are able to prepare and prepare we must. Right now, FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund is running dangerously low. Even before Hurricane Irene arrived we were using \$400 million a month on disaster relief efforts. Today the fund is down to \$377 million, not enough for a week of spending before Hurricane Irene hit, and we still have 3 weeks to go in this fiscal year.

If we do not act now to fix this shortfall, millions of Americans will be left behind. Already, FEMA is shifting funds away from vitally needed reconstruction projects in previously hard-hit areas to what they call "immediate needs" assistance. I do not believe any one of us wants to be in the position of telling one of our constituents—one of our small business owners, one of our school principals—that we can't help because they are not considered an "immediate need." American victims of natural disasters should not be left at the mercy of a rob-Peter-to-pay-Paul system. That is not who we are as Americans.

We have a choice right now. In my mind and in the minds of all North Carolinians affected by the storms of Irene and the tornadoes that took place in April, the choice is clear: Congress must make these FEMA supplemental funds available.

The Budget Control Act that we passed in early August established strict spending caps to get our fiscal house in order while also allowing for a limited amount of funds to be made available in case disaster struck. Disaster struck, and now is the time to make those funds available. Meeting these needs is not just a necessity for the people of my State and many others, but it is also wholly consistent with the fiscal discipline that we agreed on and voted on in August.

But FEMA funding is not enough. Our farmers in North Carolina and across the eastern coast were devastated by Irene, and they are in desperate need of assistance. North Carolina is an agricultural State. Agriculture generates about \$78 billion a year in economic activity, and it employs close to one-fifth of the workers in North Carolina. Our agricultural industry, particularly our cotton and tobacco farmers, are in trouble.

At the end of the day, when all of the damage assessments are completed, our farmers could be out more than \$400 million from Hurricane Irene, and these crops were just getting ready to be harvested. Our farmers in our State absolutely cannot afford a blow like this one. We in Congress need to work

together so assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture can be expedited and delivered in a timelier manner. We need to act soon.

I want to end with a story from my State that I believe is particularly relevant at this time when communities across the country are in the process of recovery. Back in April, one of the most recognizable scenes from the post-tornado coverage was of a Lowe's store in Sanford, NC. Unlike with Irene, there were few warnings of the tornado's arrival. But when Michael Hollowell, the store manager, saw the storm approaching his store—and it was very fast—he calmly moved every customer to the back corner where he knew—because he had been trained—they would be the safest. I saw that Lowe's the very next day.

This is what that store looked like. It was completely demolished. But every single person in the store when the storm hit was alive. Mike Hollowell is a hero, not just to those people in the Lowe's store but to people all over North Carolina. Last week, not even 5 months after this devastation, that same Lowe's reopened, and it reopened with 2,000 more square feet than it had before. It just shows that North Carolinians and people across the country are committed to a recovery that will leave our communities better than ever.

The people of this great country are stronger than any storm. They will rebuild and recover. But that process may take many months, it may take many years. As their representatives, we have a responsibility to provide a reliable, comprehensive program of relief for that duration. To do any less is a dereliction of duty.

I call on all my colleagues to pass this FEMA supplemental bill as soon as possible.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARDIN). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

STIMULUS BILL

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, in recent days the President has repeatedly told Congress to pass the stimulus package immediately. This began during his joint address to Congress last week when he said at one point:

I am sending this Congress a plan that you should pass right away. You should pass this jobs plan right away. Pass this jobs bill—pass this jobs bill.

Immediately following the President's joint address to the Congress, Press Secretary Jay Carney declared:

The President will submit a bill early next week, the American Jobs Act, which will specify how he proposes paying for the American Jobs Act.

As ranking Republican on the Budget Committee and wrestling with these

difficult issues—I know Senator CARDIN is a member of the committee—we tried to figure out what this means and how much money the spending will be. But the bill that was transmitted to Congress Monday afternoon does not contain any fiscal tables, costs for any of his provisions, actually how those provisions will be paid for and when the pay-for will occur, or even an overall pricetag for the bill.

How can the President call on Congress to "pass this bill immediately" when no one even knows how much it will cost or where the money is coming from?

I sent a letter yesterday to the President's Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Jack Lew, asking that this information be provided to the Congress at once. But so far we have had no response. Part of the reason we need this information is that the total cost of the President's bill may be much higher than advertised. That has been the pattern around here. No one should be surprised. When the President said his plan would be "paid for," he did not specify if he meant the total cost—to include increased interest resulting from the borrowed money to be spent immediately—or just the cost of the jobs provisions alone, actually how much goes out the door. Depending on whether the money is spent out and when it is paid back—assuming it is ever paid back—interest costs resulting from just this bill's borrowing could top \$100 billion. In other words, the interest on the money over the 10-year window, the 10-year budget we are talking about—if we spend \$450 billion now, we pay interest on that money. It is borrowed money. People loan us the money and we pay interest. Interest rates alone now—CBO projects them to go up, our Congressional Budget Office. Certainly they will. They are extraordinarily low today. But, at any rate, we could easily see the interest on this money over 10 years reaching \$100 billion.

The problem with looking at it as a 10-year scenario is that the debt is probably not going to be paid off in 10 years. Most of the debts we run up will be part of our deficit. If we want to raise taxes to fund a new program, maybe we ought to raise taxes to pay off the debt we have instead of spending it on a new program. The debt we have distributes American wealth to people who hold our debt all over the world.

In my letter to OMB, I request tables showing the year-by-year data for this bill's budgetary impact, including projected changes to the deficit for each of the next 10 years. In other words, how will it play out? If we spend \$450 billion in 1, 2, or 3 years, how much does that run up the debt? When does the repayment begin? How will it be paid, and at what rate? If the President wants to advocate for a sharp, near-term increase in the deficit in exchange for the possibility of some undefined economic future, with the possibility of a

stimulus, he ought to make that argument clearly to the American people.

I believe the President also needs to be honest in admitting that the bill's short-term costs would wipe out—obliterate—the \$7 billion in savings next year resulting from the debt limit deal. In other words, we went through this long, painful exercise that resulted in an agreement in the eleventh hour and the 59th minute to save \$900 billion, and then, hopefully, form a committee that would save another \$1.1 trillion to \$1.5 trillion, only a fraction of this \$2.1 billion in savings, of the \$13 trillion the Congressional Budget Office tells us will be added to the debt in the next 10 years. So it would save a little over \$2 trillion over 10 years but, at the same time, we are running up over \$10 trillion in debt. So it is not a big enough step. It is a step. There is progress. I certainly respect that, but it wasn't much.

To show us how small it is, next year we are projected, under the agreement Congress ratified, to reduce spending by \$7 billion. That is all. That is all it would be reduced from this year to next year in actual spending levels. So I ask my colleagues: Don't we need to be careful? After all the effort we took to achieve that much savings, shouldn't we think very carefully about a new stimulus plan that would spend \$450 billion, obliterating that savings? I think we should. But, at any rate, we do need to know precisely how much it is going to cost and precisely how the money would be spent.

Let's flash back to February. The Office of Management and Budget Director, Jack Lew, said this. This was when the President submitted his budget for the next 10 years. It was brought up here on the floor of the Senate. In fact, I brought it up. It was voted down 97 to nothing. But this is what Mr. Lew said about that budget:

Our budget will get us, over the next several years, to the point where we can look the American people in the eye and say we're not adding to the debt anymore; we're spending money that we have each year, and then we can work on bringing down the national debt.

We all know there is a certain amount of political license people get to utilize in the political world, and exaggeration sometimes is forgiven. But let me tell my colleagues, this is the Office of Management and Budget talking about the President's budget that he had just submitted to Congress. He said:

Our budget will get us, over the next several years, to the point where we can look the American people in the eye and say we're not adding to the debt anymore; we're spending money that we have each year, and then we can work on bringing down our national debt.

What is the truth? The Congressional Budget Office scored this budgetary plan and this is what they concluded: that over a 10-year period there would be huge deficits every single year. In about year 6 or 7, the lowest deficit would occur—\$750 billion would be the

lowest annual deficit that would occur—and by the 10th year we would be back up to \$1 trillion. President Bush's largest deficit he ever had was \$450 billion and he was criticized for that. So we are going to have the lowest—and he says this is going to pay down the debt and wouldn't be adding more to the debt if we passed his budget, when his budget spent more, taxed more, and ran up more debt. I believe this is the most irresponsible budget ever submitted to the Congress of the United States, at a time of national crisis, when all experts are telling us the greatest threat to our national security is our debt.

Forgive me if I want to see the fine print on this legislation, when an administration tells us that—and the President said very similar things; the President himself said very similar things—we would not be adding more to the debt.

We in Congress raised the legal debt limit—I did not vote for that particular bill—but we have breached, I am afraid, our economic debt limit. America's \$14.5 trillion gross debt is now 100 percent of our GDP, our economy. Experts tell us we have already crossed a dangerous threshold. Our debt is pulling down growth and putting a damper on job creation right now.

We have to ask ourselves: Can we continue to borrow, running up even more debt in the hope that we can spend it today in a sugar-high type stimulus to create jobs in the short run? The Congressional Budget Office scored the first stimulus package 2 years ago that has come nowhere near achieving what was promised for it. They said, OK, if you spend \$825 billion now, you will get some short-term economic benefit, but scored over a decade, we would have an economic decline. The net growth of the United States would be less over 10 years than if we didn't pass a stimulus package at all. When we get up to 100 percent of GDP, I submit it is even more dangerous to keep running up debt.

This is a dilemma. We are in a fix. The economy is not growing the way we wish it to grow. CBO was projecting in January of this year that economic growth for the first 6 months would be about 2.9 percent. We were hoping that would be true. But what happened? The first quarter of this fiscal year it was .4 percent—not 2 percent, not 2.9 percent—and the second quarter was extremely low also. We have averaged about 1 percent growth the first half of this year.

We want to do something to help this economy grow. I submit we should do everything we can that would help our economy grow now that does not run up the debt. What are some of those things? Producing more energy at home, creating jobs here; pumping more energy supply which could bring down the cost of energy. We can bring down the cost of energy, create jobs, create tax revenue, and create growth that way. We should eliminate every

regulation that is not beneficial to this economy, and there are a lot of them. Some regulations are good. Many of them add costs to the entire economy for little or no benefit. We need to have the kind of tax reform of a permanent nature that creates confidence in our economy—the kind of tax reform that advances economic growth rather than increasing taxes to give Washington more money.

Those are my suggestions about how to deal with this. First and foremost, we are going to look at this proposal. We certainly are worried about the status of the economy today. We are deeply disappointed in the job numbers that continue to fall and, hopefully, we will find the key to changing that. But fundamentally the economy will come back and jobs will come back when growth occurs and growth will occur not in the public sector but in the private sector. We need to ask ourselves what it is we can do to create a better climate for growth and job creation. We need to be rigorous in analyzing the President's proposal, and to look at the details of it and how much it is going to cost and how we plan to pay it back. I think at a very minimum, we are entitled to that.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant majority leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank my friend and colleague from Alabama who has come to the floor. We see the world differently, but we both acknowledge we are at a moment where action is the only alternative. Doing nothing is unacceptable. When President Obama came to speak to us in a joint session of Congress last week, that is what he told us. He basically said, Let's roll up our sleeves, work together, both parties in Congress, for a change, and do something about this economy.

There are 14 million Americans out of work. The report now from the Joint Economic Committee and others cites the highest level of poverty in our country in decades; the problems working families are having week to week, month to month, and year to year, falling behind, despite all of their hard work. Their wages aren't rising to keep up with the cost of living. Many are surviving paycheck to paycheck.

A survey was taken recently across America asking working families the following question: Could you come up with \$2,000 in 30 days if you had to, either from savings or borrowing it? Fifty-three percent of working families said yes and 47 percent said no. That is how close to the edge almost half of working families are living. A \$2,000 medical bill at an emergency room is almost nothing these days—it is for a minor injury—and these families could not come up with it. That is what they are facing. That is why the President said let us focus on doing things that will help these families and equally, if not more importantly, help small businesses create jobs.

There is no argument here about creating an army of government jobs. That is not even on the table. The President is not proposing that. Here is what he said: Let's give a tax cut, a payroll tax cut to working individuals so they have more take-home pay. I took a look at what it would mean in the State of Illinois. It would mean that for the average income, which is \$53,000 a year, that family would get \$1,400 in tax cuts or \$120 a month. I think it is worth something to working families to have that much more in their pockets to meet the needs of their families and perhaps make some critical purchases for their children, for their future, whatever it might be. That is a tax cut the President has proposed.

He also proposed a tax cut for small businesses if they will hire unemployed people, a tax credit of up to \$4,000 to hire these folks, take them off the unemployed rolls, and put them to work.

I went to several job centers during the August recess. One was in McHenry, IL, and one was in Elgin, IL. I spent the better part of the day sitting with unemployed people and talking to them. You ought to go there. If you think unemployed Americans—the 14 million on whom we hear the statistics—are living the life of luxury on their unemployment checks, they are not. Most of them are struggling to survive, and many of them come each day to a job center to brush up their résumé, to find out the latest people asking for new workers and put in new applications day after day. Many of them are discouraged after submitting hundreds of applications with no response. Some go back to school. I met a few who really made the right life choice by going back to take courses at community college, where they could afford it, or at job-training centers where there would be no charge to them, so they could pick up a new skill in an area in which they could get a job. That is the reality. The President is trying to create tax incentives for small businesses to hire those people.

Usually the Republicans who come to the floor applaud tax cuts. My experience is that they are for tax cuts when times are good and bad, but this time they are against these tax cuts. What is the difference between these tax cuts and the ones the Republicans historically support? There are two differences: The President's tax cuts are focused on middle-income families, not the wealthiest, and they are the President's tax cuts. Those are the two differences.

I hope some on the Republican side will reflect on the fact, as the President said, that the American people are not going to reward us for our campaign rhetoric if this economy does not turn around. They want us to work together to solve the problems facing our economy. They want tax cuts for working families. They want small businesses to have an incentive to hire people. They want us to focus on creating

good-paying jobs here at home. What kinds of jobs? Building America.

As the President said, if we are going to succeed in this world, we need to outeducate our competitors, outinnovate our competitors, and outbuild them.

I went to China over Easter. What is happening in that country is incredible. They are building in every direction—building cranes and construction activity everywhere. They are building the infrastructure in China to become the No. 1 economic power of the world in the 21st century. What are we doing? We are hearing speech after speech saying that because of the deficit, we cannot invest in America. Some say we cannot invest in education. They argue that we cannot invest in research, we cannot invest in building America. I think they are wrong.

The deficit is a serious challenge. Even the Bowles-Simpson Commission, which I served on and voted for, said: When you get serious about cutting spending, do it when this recession is behind you. They know, we know you can't balance the budget with 14 million Americans out of work.

Let me say a word about the safety net in America. I made a visit in Champagne, IL, to a food-distributing operation. They distribute food to pantries and soup kitchens all around central Illinois. Unfortunately, their business has never been better. More and more families are showing up in these places for a helping hand. I went in there to hear how they are doing. They are getting a lot of help from the private sector that donates food that is near expiration, for example, and a lot of contributions from churches and charitable individuals. It is very heart-warming to see it.

As I went to tour this place, there was a young woman there. She was an attractive, well-dressed woman. I assumed she worked for this food depository. She said to me that she had a job in a local school district as a teacher's aide. I was a little bit puzzled as to whether she was on the board of directors or what her connection was. She came there to tell me that as a single mom with two little kids, even with a job in the school district, which she was happy to have, she still needed food stamps to put food on the table every day for her kids.

I don't think Americans—those of us lucky enough to never have to worry about the next meal—know what families are going through, working families struggling with low income, trying to keep their kids well-fed and to do what every parent wants to do. More and more of these families are going to soup kitchens very quietly because that is a meal they don't have to pay for. They are going to the pantries to pick up the groceries. I have seen them in one of the nicest and most prosperous counties in my State, DuPage County. I went to the pantries there, and I saw the people coming through the door. You would not be able to pick

them out, but they are working families who need a helping hand. That is the reality. That is why the safety net is so important.

I am troubled that so many people today are on food stamps. I am not troubled that they are on food stamps; I am troubled because they have to be on food stamps. I hear critics come to the floor who say: There are too darned many people on food stamps. There is something wrong here.

What is wrong is not the food stamps; what is wrong is hunger and low-income and working families struggling to get by paycheck to paycheck. That is what is wrong. The number of Americans now qualifying for this food stamp assistance is even going up among those who are employed, such as the lady I met in Champagne, IL. That is a reality.

Something else is happening too. As more and more people lose their jobs, they lose their health insurance. When I sit down with the unemployed, that is one of the first items that comes up. Once you have lost that health insurance premium your employer helps you pay, most folks can't afford it. It is just way beyond them. So they are out there without insurance, and they are vulnerable. Some of them have sick kids, chronically ill children, and they worry about it. They go to the free clinics. We are seeing more and more working families showing up at free clinics across America. That is a reality of this economy too.

When we talk about cutting spending on Medicaid, keep in mind who receives Medicaid payments in America. In my State of Illinois, 36 percent of Illinois children are covered by Medicaid insurance. When it comes to births in the State of Illinois, 52 percent of all births in Illinois are paid for by Medicaid. But the biggest single expense in Medicaid is neither one of those. Mr. President, 20 percent of the Medicaid recipients in my State account for 60 percent of the cost of the program: the elderly—parents, grandparents, great-grandparents in nursing homes and convalescent centers, on Medicare and broke and stay there because Medicaid steps in and helps them keep things together, so they have at least some care and some attention in the late years of their lives. When we talk about cutting spending in Medicaid, we are talking about hurting the most vulnerable people in America: children, such as the kids of that single mom I met; those who need prenatal care so their babies will be healthy; and, of course, the elderly who are stuck in that situation.

The same thing is true with Medicare. I understand Medicare costs are going up dramatically. I also understand the number of people under Social Security and Medicare is going to rise as baby boomers reach that age. But we have to take care that at the end of the day we protect the basic premiums and benefits that are presently available under Medicare. For a lot of

seniors, it is their only health insurance. It is what keeps them independent and strong. We can't compromise that basic protection by privatizing Medicare or raising the cost of Medicare beyond the reach of senior citizens.

Finally, when it comes to Social Security, let me just say that this is a program which means a lot. For 70 percent of Social Security recipients, it is a majority of their retirement. For 25 percent of the Social Security recipients, it is all they get. That is it. So guarding Social Security and protecting its future is important for our parents and grandparents. It is important for our country and for its future as well.

The President came forward, and he said: This is my jobs bill. This is what I think will help move America forward, put more spending power in the hands of working families, create incentives for small businesses to hire people, focus on putting firefighters, cops, and teachers back to work. That is a priority in our country for sure, and investing in building in America.

One of the few lines the President had that got a bipartisan standing ovation—and there were not many last Thursday—was when he said it is an embarrassment that 10 percent of our returning veterans are unemployed. Let's put our veterans back to work. That is part of our President's plan.

When I listened to the Senator from Alabama—he doesn't like the way the President is paying for the plan, but he does pay for it. How does he pay for it? One thing he does is he reduces the Federal subsidy to oil and gas companies. Filled your tank lately? Take a look at what they are charging at the pump. In Illinois and most places, it is over \$4. That is translating into the highest reported profits in the history of American business. Oil companies have never ever had it so good. President Obama has said—and I agree with him—that if there were ever a moment in time when the Federal subsidies to these oil companies should come to an end, this is it. The money saved should go to small businesses and families across America in this difficult economy.

The President also believes—and I agree with him—that the wealthiest among us, those who are most comfortable, should be asked to share in the sacrifice. There are some on the other side who would not accept one penny more in taxes on the wealthiest people in America. I don't get it. As I travel around Illinois, a lot of families are sacrificing in this tough economy. They know they have to. It is the only way they are going to make it. They know that some of the government programs which have been around in the past are not going to be there in the future or may be not as generous.

If working families and middle-class families across America accept that reality, why can't the wealthiest families in America accept it too? Honestly, I

think they can. By and large, the people I know who are blessed with a lot of wealth and a pretty comfortable life have said to me: Senator, I don't need all of this. I don't need all of that Social Security payment. I can get by without it. I don't mind paying a little more in taxes.

Those are the people I run into. But you hear from the other side that is totally unacceptable. Some of them have said the President's plan is going to fall flat on its face because it taxes the wealthy in America. I think the wealthy should pay their fair share, and I think the President's plan is an honest, good plan that moves us forward. So for those who are critical of it, give me your alternative.

I wrote down here what the Senator from Alabama suggested. He wants more energy produced here at home. I am for that. I think we ought to go to places where it is environmentally responsible and produce more energy here in the United States. But I will say two things to keep in mind:

No. 1, all of the known oil and gas reserves in the United States of America that we could reach onshore and offshore equal 3 percent of the known oil and gas reserves in the world. Each year, the United States of America consumes 25 percent of the oil and gas consumed in the world.

We cannot drill our way into energy independence. We can expand the base and do it in an environmentally responsible way, perhaps find better sources, newer sources for things such as natural gas, but this is not the answer to our prayers.

Secondly, moving toward energy efficiency is not only good for the environment, it is good for the bottom line for a family and for a business, promoting efficiency.

My wife and I take a little pride in the fact that we own a car, a Ford Fusion Hybrid, and we were kind of patting ourselves on the back a little bit. As we came back from vacation in Michigan, we were getting 36 miles a gallon. We felt pretty good about it. I was bragging to my friends about it, and now I am bragging on the Senate floor. It can be done. We can create more fuel-efficient vehicles. We didn't compromise anything, and we bought American.

I think that is what we need to encourage in this country: cars and other energy-saving equipment made in this country, creating jobs, reducing the need for energy to be imported from overseas and reducing the pollution that, unfortunately, hinders our environment and our health. I think that is a good thing.

So on the Senator's first point, sure, more energy at home, but put it in perspective. That is not the answer to America's economic needs.

The second point he says is to eliminate certain regulations. That could be true. I am sure the President agrees there are regulations now that don't make any sense. Get rid of them. I am

not sure this is a big ball and chain being dragged around by our economy, but there is no sense in wasting time or money on regulations that really don't serve a good public purpose.

The final point he said—and I couldn't agree more—tax reform. We lose \$1.2 trillion a year to the Tax Code. Credits and deductions and exclusions and special favors written in the Tax Code for businesses and individuals have to come to an end. I actually think that is a good way to raise revenue and maybe even reduce marginal tax rates for corporations and individuals in the process.

That is what Bowles-Simpson said. So even my friend from Alabama who spoke earlier—even he and I can find some common ground. I hope he will agree with me and the President: doing nothing is unacceptable. The President has said: No more games, no more delay, no more politics. Do something. That is the message I got in August, as I returned to Illinois. It is a message I hope my colleagues share as well.

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

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant editor of the Daily Digest proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

A SECOND OPINION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor, as I do almost on a weekly basis, to talk about the health care law and, I do that as a physician, someone who has practiced medicine in Wyoming for a quarter of a century, taking care of Wyoming families. I come to the floor because I have great concerns about this health care law.

We know—history proves—that landmark pieces of legislation written in Congress often contain drafting errors at one stage or another during the bill's development. This is one of the main reasons most landmark bills are written and negotiated in an open and transparent manner. Writing and negotiating bills in this way helps Members of Congress minimize mistakes. It helps uncover any unintentional consequences. It helps fix problems. This is done through rigorous committee and floor debate, as well as House-Senate conference committees, as the bills go through the process.

Most importantly, doing something in an open and transparent manner gives the American people, the folks at home, an opportunity to read a bill, to study it, to think about it, to discuss it during townhall meetings with their Members, and ask questions and weigh in.

Well, unfortunately, we all know the largest health care law ever enacted did not undergo an open, transparent, or bipartisan process. President Obama

promised the American people they could watch the discussions and the writing process—he said—on C-SPAN. Well, instead, the President and Democrat leaders in both the House and the Senate sealed themselves behind closed doors. Their strategy? Pass sweeping health care legislation based on stealth and speed. Use sound bites to sell America about expanding coverage, about cutting costs, about improving quality, and then offer very few details explaining exactly how the bill would impact individual Americans, nor what it would cost the country.

Well, while this entire strategy was being played out, the President and Washington Democrats were writing the legislation behind closed doors. Why? Well, to limit the time the bills could be read and reviewed by the American public. Some in Washington thought rushing a health care bill into law before America could read it was the perfect way to avoid public debate and public questioning.

Many of us recall when former Speaker of the House NANCY PELOSI infamously said: First, you have to pass the bill to find out what is in it. Well, the President passed his health care law, and the American people continue, on a daily basis, to find out what is in it. They do not like it, and it is easy to understand why.

As the American people had a chance to read the details, they started asking more questions. The numbers simply were not adding up. Health care costs, they were seeing, were going up, even though the President promised that health care costs would go down. There were costly mandates on small employers, and that was going to discourage hiring. NANCY PELOSI said they would hire 400,000 people immediately. They have not been hired. She said 4 million new workers would be hired ultimately. We have not seen it yet.

Mandates we have seen come out of the health care law do nothing to spur economic growth and help the 9.1 percent of individuals nationwide—14 million Americans—who are currently unemployed and are looking for work. Then there are even more government orders forcing individuals to buy one-size-fits-all, government-approved insurance or face a fine.

The American people have had 17 months to find out what is in the President's health care law. One news report after another has been uncovering a laundry list of so-called glitches in the health care law. Well, former Speaker PELOSI wanted the American people to find out what was in the law, and 17 months later the American people are finding out that the President and Washington Democrats did not even write it correctly.

On Wednesday, September 7, of this year, Investor's Business Daily printed an article titled, "Oops! No ObamaCare Tax Credit Via Federal Exchanges?" The article explains that the way ObamaCare was written, individuals who qualify for a taxpayer-funded sub-

sidy to buy government-approved health insurance in the new State exchanges may not get it. Section 1311 of the health care law requires the States to set up a State-run "exchange." This State-based exchange is a place where individuals can use their government subsidy to buy health insurance. Now, if a State declines to set up their own exchange, then section 1321 mandates that the Federal Government set it up and run it for them.

Here is the catch: The health care law, as written, as signed by the President, explicitly says the taxpayer-funded subsidies can only go to people who are enrolled in exchanges set up by the State. Nowhere does the health care law mention that the subsidy can be given to people enrolled in the Federal exchange.

So the American people are now finding out that their family might actually qualify for government help to buy health insurance, but they are not going to receive the help. Instead, individuals enrolled in federally run exchanges could be forced to buy health insurance that, absolutely, they cannot afford.

Not only might this law cause individuals to spend money they do not have, the law may also offer taxpayer-funded subsidies to people who do not actually need it. Let me repeat that. The law may actually offer taxpayer-funded subsidies to people who do not actually need it.

At a time when our country can hardly afford to spend money we do not have, Medicare's Chief Actuary, Richard Foster, exposed yet another glitch in the President's health care law. The law allows approximately 3 million middle-class early retirees to qualify for Medicaid. Well, Medicaid is a safety net program designed to help low-income Americans.

Here is how this one works: The health care law defines how the Federal Government will set an individual's Medicaid eligibility. The calculations are all based on income. Here is the glitch: The health care law excludes a large part of an individual's Social Security income from that calculation. Well, today, Federal low-income assistance programs are required to count Social Security benefits as part of an individual's income. Thanks to the health care law, early retirees earning up to \$58,840 a year could now be eligible for Medicaid.

Here is what Mr. Foster said in an Associated Press article. He said:

I don't generally comment on the pros or cons of policy, but that just doesn't make sense.

This is the Chief Actuary of Medicare. "I don't generally comment," he says, "on the pros or cons of policy, but that just doesn't make sense."

Well, I agree. That is why I cosponsored legislation introduced by Senator MIKE ENZI closing this loophole. Senator ENZI's bill, S. 1376, changes the health care law subsidy eligibility calculation to include all nontaxable Social Security income.

The Congressional Budget Office and the Joint Committee on Taxation estimate if we enacted Senator ENZI's bill, we will save the Federal Government and the American people about \$13 billion. The Senate should immediately take up S. 1376 and pass it. This is \$13 billion we can save right now, today. Let's show the American people that when we see our country spending money that it shouldn't, we will take a stand, collectively as a Senate, and stop it.

These examples—these two examples—inevitably beg the question: What next? Clearly, the self-described "most transparent Administration in history" has a lot of explaining to do. I do not believe my friends on the other side of the aisle, who wrote this very flawed health care law—and they did it behind closed doors—I do not think they knew what they were doing when they wrote these provisions. How do I know that? Well, if they understood how devastating their policies would be, I think they might have had second thoughts.

How many more disruptive, ticking time bombs are there lurking in this law and in the regulations that still have not been written about this health care law that was signed a year and a half ago? We do not know. We do not know because many of the provisions do not even go into effect until the year 2014 or later.

As a physician who has practiced medicine a long time, cared for patients all around the State of Wyoming, been active in the Wyoming health fairs, bringing low-cost health screenings to people all around the Cowboy State, I intend to fight each and every day in this Senate to make sure the American people will not have to find out what kind of additional ticking time bombs there are in the health care law. That is because I am more committed than ever to repeal the health care law and replace it with patient-centered care, replace it with health care reforms that help American families get the care they need, from the doctor they want, at a price they can afford.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant editor of the Daily Digest proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Louisiana is recognized.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I know we have had several speeches over the last couple of hours on very important topics—the jobs bill, our efforts to stimulate the recovery, a response from one of our Democratic leaders to Senator SESSIONS, and the good Senator who was just speaking talking about health care—but I have

come to focus our attention, if I could, again this afternoon on a particular issue. We spent most of yesterday talking about a matter that is absolutely right at hand; that is, disaster relief funding and calling on this Senate and the House of Representatives to focus some immediate and comprehensive thought and attention on this subject, which is affecting so many of our constituents—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents—in big cities, small towns, and rural areas all over this country.

In fact, this is the first year in our memory and in, I think, the recorded recent history, we have had a Presidentially declared disaster in 48 of our 50 States. Just a few days ago, we along the eastern seaboard and the gulf coast, where I am from representing Louisiana, suffered from the original hit and then remnants of Tropical Storm Lee and then Hurricane Irene.

There are some Senators who joined me in a press conference earlier today. I think it was the Senator from North Carolina who said it has actually been three disasters: an economic disaster, in terms of an economy that is weak and fragile and we are doing our best to lift it and to strengthen it, and then Tropical Storm Lee and then Hurricane Irene.

It has been millions and millions of dollars of damage. Unfortunately, we on the gulf coast tragically are getting to be experts in this field because we, as Senators and House Members from the gulf coast, have battled multiple disasters over this last decade. Katrina and Rita, which broke all records, surpassed any planning this government has ever done.

We had a FEMA that showed up not ready, not comprehensive enough in its view. Our people have suffered. But we have made a lot of changes since then, and here we are today with actually a better FEMA, from all accounts. I wish to give a lot of credit to this administration, particularly, and not just Homeland Security. But the Cabinet of this President has been extraordinary in their reasonableness when it comes to this subject.

I have seen the opposite. So I think I am in a position to see the difference. It is a big difference in this Obama administration in terms of the Cabinet. They want to say yes to disaster victims. They did not want to say no. That is very important. They cannot always say yes to everything, to rebuild every building, repave every street, elevate every home. But they are trying to say yes. Most importantly, the lawyers have been instructed to find a way forward, as opposed to instruction that came from the last administration which was to find a way to say no.

So let me give credit where credit is due, to the Obama administration and their willingness to be flexible, to be forward leaning, to have attorneys who are trying to be on the side of the taxpayer, on the side of the victims, and

not shortchanging people in times of desperate need.

Having said that, the administration cannot do it all on its own. They need Congress, as the Constitution says, to provide the funding so the executive branch can do its job. The executive branch, by all accounts, even Republicans have come to the floor from States that have been hard hit and said: It is a more muscular FEMA, it is a more dynamic FEMA, it is a more flexible FEMA.

I wish to thank Senators LIEBERMAN and COLLINS. They are the authorizers. Yes, I have had a part of it—others have, but they have worked tirelessly after Katrina and the disaster that happened on the gulf coast, where we were all shamed when we saw what did not happen that should have.

We fixed a lot of it, and that is something to be happy and proud about. When government does set its mind to improve things, it can. But we cannot do anything without the funding. Right now, FEMA is empty. The pot of money is empty. Projects, millions, hundreds of millions of dollars today, not just in my State but in California, in Tennessee, in Iowa, in Texas, and in North Dakota—and I could go on and on—but for the Record let me say a couple.

In Tennessee, mitigation of private residences from the 2010 floods has been halted. For those who might not be familiar with the word “mitigation,” which most people are, it means one could be elevating their house, one could be putting shutters or storm windows on their windows. Let’s see what else. A person could be potentially strengthening the frame of their house if they are trying to mitigate against high winds from a tornado. There are rules that allow people to try to improve their home so the next time it happens not only are they not homeless, but taxpayers are not paying again for the same sort of incident.

The Federal Government, under good policy, requires a certain portion of all disaster funding to be specific, to go to mitigation because taxpayers think, when we are trying to rebuild from a flood or a storm or a tornado or a bridge collapse, do not just build the same old thing, try to mitigate so it does not happen again. That is smart because then we are not double, triple spending taxpayer money.

But in Tennessee this family, let’s say, is in the middle of elevating their home. Let’s say they have gotten it off the ground by 2 feet, and the contractor showed up on Monday. They were sent home because this project has been stopped. So somewhere there are homes in Tennessee—I am not sure in what particular community—where private sector contractors, many small business owners and their employees, showed up to work and were told: Go home. FEMA is out of money.

We have to fix this this week before we leave and, if not, at the latest by next week.

In Iowa, repairs for an electric utility—I am not sure who provides utilities in Iowa. Potentially, it may be, as in my State in rural areas, the local rural co-op. Everybody knows what a rural co-op is. Their project has been shut down. Potentially, people are still receiving electricity. I do not think people are sitting in the dark. I am hoping not. But whatever they were planning to repair and fix in Iowa has been halted because we have run out of money.

In Texas, repairs to the University of Texas medical facility have been stopped. In Louisiana, roadway construction has been stopped. In fact, there was an article in our paper, the Times-Picayune, just this week that said \$100 million for Jefferson Parish—\$100 million—that is just 1 of my parishes, 1 of 64, the suburban parish that sits right beside Orleans that was very hard hit by these storms, not as hard as Orleans Parish but received billions of dollars of damage—those projects have been put on hold while we move that money to help the victims in the Northeast. That should not be the case.

We need to act quickly to refill the FEMA funds. In addition, I understand in North Dakota and in other places there are problems. It is not just the DRF. The Corps of Engineers in its budget last year did not have enough money for emergencies. I slipped out of the Chamber a few minutes ago to go actually meet with the mayor of Grand Isle, who was here, as he is quite often, advocating on behalf of the only barrier island that is inhabited in the State of Louisiana, and he brought up pictures. Again, they are too small to see, but I am going to have them blown up for tomorrow. But I have in my hand pictures of the levees that were just ripped up and destroyed again from Tropical Storm Lee. These were levees on the gulf that we just completed.

But because the Corps of Engineers, when they rebuild levees, in their authorizing legislation are prohibited—which makes no sense whatsoever, it is a complete waste of taxpayer money—they are prohibited from betterment. They can build back what was there, but they cannot build it better or higher, unless they are directed to do so.

I am about ready to direct them because I am tired, on behalf of my people and the people of this country and the taxpayers, from rebuilding levees 10 times in a matter of 5 years. It is a waste of money—it is aggravating to the people whose homes are behind these levees—because we do not even have a policy, when we are building levees, to be ordered to build them stronger, higher, except, of course, in the case of some levee systems in Katrina. That was specifically directed, and it is being done.

We are building around the city of New Orleans a much stronger, much better system. One would think that would be being done all over the country. It is not. Why? Because we are

short on funding, short on political will, and short on imagination and creativity when it comes to building infrastructure in this country. I, for one, am tired of it. So are the people I represent.

I am asking the other side of the aisle to step up and to provide funding, funding that is not offset in the middle of a disaster. We will figure out how to pay for these later—these disaster funds later. But as I think Senator LEAHY said so eloquently in our press conference today: Do the Republicans, some people in the Republican Party, actually believe we want fire departments all over the United States, when someone's house is on fire and they show up with the engines, to debate in the middle of the street how they are going to pay for the extra overtime to put out the fire? I do not think so.

Even if the fire department is broke, even if the funding has run out, we do not want to have a debate over how they are going to pay for overtime when the fire is burning. Put the fire out. Bring the people to safety. Put the families in shelter. Then go back to the city council meeting next week and they can debate for as long as they want how they are going to ultimately pay for it.

We paid for World War II, obviously. It was a long time ago. It is completely paid for. We paid for World War I. We are paying for Afghanistan. We are paying for Iraq, which, by the way, not one, single, solitary Republican—and not many Democrats, for that matter, but not one Republican whom I can recall stood and asked or debated for 5 seconds how we were going to pay for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But when the people of Vermont stand in front of their bridges collapsed, their homes collapsed, their schools collapsed, and say: We need help, we have to have now a month-long debate on how we are going to pay for it. We have not done this since the 1800s.

We will eventually pay for it. America has to pay for everything. We will pay for it. We do not have to have that debate now. What we do have to have a debate about is how do we repair levees and what is the best way to mitigate it. What are the new technologies that can be used to make our communities stronger and smarter? How can we streamline the process? How can we eliminate the redtape? How can we get help to people faster? That is what we should be debating.

Instead, I have CANTOR and BOEHNER making us argue about what offsets there are. So I have to go to the State of Maryland and say: Senator, what can you give up this year in your State? I have to go to Michigan: What can you give up in Michigan? I have to go to California: What can you give up in California, so we can pay for people who are underwater in Vermont and North Carolina?

What kind of government is this? I do not want to be a part of that and I am

not going to be. So we have to fund these disasters now. The saddest thing about all this—it is sad and it is also puzzling and it is perplexing and it is aggravating is that we already sort of made this deal 1 month ago, when we negotiated that big agreement we all came to, about how the levels of funding would be for 2012.

Everybody remembers that, before we left for August, and we had this big knock-down, drag-out—in that agreement, our leadership, Republicans and Democrats, already agreed to do something that I think is very smart. I want to show what they agreed to. They agreed—because it is a puzzlement—how do we fund in advance disasters, how do we know how much to set aside. It is a problem because every year is different.

I wish to show what our problem is, so people listening can give me their own suggestions about how to solve it. In 2003, we set aside, in the whole budget of the United States—we can see this a little bit—\$800 million for disasters. But we had \$1.7 billion. So we were short \$984 million. We funded it. That went on our books.

The next year we said: Well, this year we had \$1.7 billion in disasters. So the next year we put \$1.8 in our bill, thinking we would cover it because last year was \$1.7. But, lo and behold, we had an additional \$3 billion worth of disaster funding. We did not know these disasters were going to happen.

So the next year we increased the amount of money in our base budget. Then, lo and behold, in that year, we put in \$2 billion dollars. Katrina hit.

The levees broke. Do you know what the bill came in for? It was \$43 billion. We had budgeted \$2 billion because in the history of the past that is all we needed to cover disasters. It went from \$2 billion to \$43 billion. Who would have had a crystal ball to know that? Did we sit and debate? Some people tried to, until I said there was no way I was going to have to find a \$43 billion offset before we can let the people of the gulf coast know that help was on the way. We spent what was required to help the gulf coast.

You can see the next year here. These numbers are very erratic, unpredictable. So what our leadership did, looking back on these 10 years and listening to the debate and argument, was come up with a pretty good plan. They said, OK, we will throw out the high number, we will throw out the low number—in 2009 we didn't have any emergencies. Can you imagine 1 year that you have no declared emergencies, and the next year you have one in almost every State? That is how erratic this is. It is not as though we are not trying to plan. It is just impossible by the nature of what an emergency or disaster is. You can plan for them, but you cannot always predict how many you are going to have and where they will be. Of course, everybody understands that.

What our leaders did is they threw out the top one and the bottom one and

came up with an average. That average is about \$11 billion—a very reasonable approach. So they put in our agreement that we made 30 days ago—we said, OK, next year, this is what the Federal Government can spend and, in addition to that, you can go up to the average. You can spend an additional \$11 billion, which is a very small amount of money compared to the whole Federal budget.

You would think we would not be having this debate. Why? The need is very evident, the history would dictate that we don't have debate over disasters, and the Republican and Democratic leadership has already provided a way, over and above our 2012 numbers, to pay for these disasters.

I ask this: Why are we having to fight for this? That is a very good question. I think it is because some people on the other side of the aisle think this is a good thing to fight about. They think they have to find a pay-for for everything we do even, as I have described, when you cannot predict. Even if you do plan responsibly, you never know, as in the cases of Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. But our leadership negotiated a way forward.

Yet we have people all over the country looking to the Republican leadership and listening to Representative CANTOR and to Speaker BOEHNER saying: I want to help you, ladies and gentlemen, but we have to find an offset.

I think people might say: Why didn't we hear that when they sent troops into Afghanistan or Iraq? Why didn't we hear that when they are rebuilding Iraq and Afghanistan? The same people are not yelling and screaming—or didn't do it when we went in there. I think we have a good point.

I am saying I am proud of the Senate for last night, with Democrats mostly—and, yes, about 8 Republicans—who voted to move this debate forward. I thank particularly Senator BLUNT from Missouri, who is an outspoken leader on the Appropriations Committee, for the need to act now, act quickly, to fund the DRF, the Corps of Engineers. Of course, Missouri has had terrible tornadoes and flooding. Not only did they have Joplin, but they had the great flood of the Mississippi River, which was the highest in 50 years. It was so high along our capital city when I visited our mayor a couple months ago—that is Baton Rouge, which is our largest city, since 100,000 people left New Orleans to literally live on higher ground, although it has broken their hearts and divided their families. They have moved to Baton Rouge, as we are rebuilding levees and our flood control is stronger in the southeastern part of our State. People spend time walking on levees and riding bikes on the levees. Of course, mechanical vehicles are not allowed. You cannot have cars, trucks, and four-wheelers because that would be destructive to our levees. Our levees are quite huge. They are almost like linear parks. For the first time in the history of anybody who can remember, the mayor had to declare that

everyone stay off the levees because the water was so high and seeping through. We literally thought maybe some of these great levee systems would breach. Happily, they did not. It was a frightening situation for millions and millions.

In some parts of Missouri, and other parts north of us, the levees did breach. Sometimes the levees will blow to protect other areas. It is frightening if your business is behind one of those levees, as North Dakota residents know all too well.

Nonetheless, we should not be debating this. I hope our bill will pass this week and get over to the House for a quick vote. If the House decides to send us a continuing resolution, please, I want the leadership to hear clearly what I am saying—and I will send them a message by letter in the next few minutes—please do not think you can nickel and dime recovery efforts, that you can fund it 6 weeks at a time, or 4 weeks at a time. Disaster recovery doesn't operate that way. Our mayors, Governors, the Republican Governor of New Jersey, the Republican Governor of Virginia, the mayor of Patterson, who was with us today, and mayors up along the east coast who are with their people every day—the mayor of Joplin, MO, who has to be able to know that he can plan a year out or 2 years out—having to rebuild an entire town is overwhelming even if you have the money and the plan. Can you imagine if you sort of have a plan, but you don't know if the Federal Government will provide you money? Do you know the frustrating council meetings and school board meetings that will be had, and they will say, well, the Republican party in Washington cannot figure out if we should get funding, but it is 6 weeks at a time?

I will not allow that to happen. I am going to draw the line in the sand right now. You may get around me on it, but it will take a huge effort to get around this desk on that subject—a huge effort. If I have to shut the Senate down—and I have done it before—I will do it again, because I can tell you, as much as my name is MARY LANDRIEU, you cannot rebuild communities with 6-week plans. It took us 2 years to put together the Road Home Program—2 years after we got the funding. The reason we could not put it together before was—even though Mississippi had their money because President Bush gave it to them right away but made the people of Louisiana wait—because Congress would not decide how much money to give us. No mayor, no Governor, no matter how great they are, no matter how smart they are, no matter how many engineers they have, no matter how many Rotary Clubs are helping, no matter what the chamber of commerce is doing, I am telling you that it cannot be done without a reliable source of funding, so the planners can say something like this: We lost eight schools in this flood. They bring the community together—and these

are how these discussions go—and say we might not have money to build all eight, but we have money to build six. Which six do you want to build, and where, what materials do you want to use, and which kids should go to which schools?

I have been in these meetings. I am not going to allow the mayors and Governors to call their people together and say we lost six schools and we don't know when the money is coming to build them, and we cannot make any plans because the Republican leadership has decided that every 6 weeks they are going to let us know how much money we are going to get.

That is not going to happen.

I want Speaker BOEHNER to think about this, and I want MITCH MCCONNELL to think about this, and I want the Republican leadership to think about it. I will negotiate on the top number. I will talk about maybe FEMA doesn't need quite this much. I will talk about maybe the Corps of Engineers doesn't need that much. But I will not, under any circumstances, agree to a 6-week or 4-week continuing resolution. You may run the Government of the United States that way. We have, unfortunately, gotten used to it. That is a sad commentary, I might say, that we run the greatest government ever created in the eyes and vision and hearts of mankind, but we operate it on a 6-week basis. That might be the game we play with the government, but I am not going to allow that game to be played with people who have lost their homes, lost their businesses, and who look up from a storm and say, my gosh, what happened to me? Then they don't know what is going to happen because we cannot make a decision that lasts more than 6 months or a year. So the minimum will be 6 months. I hope we can find the will to do a whole year, because without that you are going to shut down recovery operations at a time when it is heartbreaking to think of small business owners who have lost their print shop or their dress store or their shoe store, and they see everybody talking about creating jobs. They used to have three of them last week—selling printing material or selling shoes or whatever—and they are trying to get their business back, and we cannot decide—even though we have the money, even though we already budgeted the money, and although we already made an agreement about how we would do this—we are going to still argue.

I will tell you, if this is on the tea party's agenda, I suggest they take it off. If it is somebody else's agenda, please speak up. I have not had one single Republican Senator come down and defend this position, because it is indefensible. I hope when the leadership is negotiating—and they are doing so now—they will hear me in summary very quickly: The FEMA pot is empty. The Corps of Engineers is always running on fumes. Levees are breaking and flooding, and it is occurring in places

that haven't flooded in a hundred years. When we wake up and realize that we have to put more money in emergency funding and be there when our people are hurting, as they are now—and we will eventually pay for this; we don't have to figure that out in the next 30 days. We have to give them a green light and the billions of dollars they need to operate for a year. Everything else is negotiable. But this is not going to be negotiated. We are not going to rebuild pieces of 48 States 4 weeks at a time. That will not happen. Whatever amount of money we give, let it be for as long as we can make it, let it be as robust as it can possibly be, and let's give a green light to our Republican Governors, Republican mayors, Independents, and Democrats out there, who are shellshocked about the work before them.

The people in neighborhoods are still crying and in shock about what they have to do in making decisions. Should we come back? Should we not come back? What should our neighborhood or community do? Maybe we should all move to higher ground. These decisions are being made right now. The last thing they should worry about is Congress debating whether there is money there to turn that hose on.

Let's do our job the way we have done it for 150 years.

Let's continue to do it and let our people know we are there for them, as we try to be there for other people in the world who are caught in situations such as this. We most certainly need to be here for our people in America.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MERKLEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WARNER. 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. WARNER. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about a site of particular historic significance to the Commonwealth of Virginia and an action we in Virginia are requesting the President make. But before I get to that subject, I want to take a moment to echo what I know the Presiding Officer said, and my colleague, the distinguished Senator from Louisiana, and so many other of my colleagues who have come to the floor over the last few days to express concern and talk about the series of natural disasters and calamities our various States have experienced over the last few weeks and months.

We have had, in effect, the trifecta in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the last month, where, about a month ago, we had an earthquake hit—something that was a bit unprecedented in Virginia—which shut down schools in Louisa County. That earthquake also caused damage at the Washington Monument and at the National Cathedral, but in central Virginia—in Louisa

County, in Mineral, and Culpeper, and other places around Virginia—it caused enormous damage.

We had Hurricane Irene, which—again, through central Virginia and down into Hampton Roads—caused enormous damage. Then, most recently, we had Tropical Storm Lee, where I had the opportunity to visit a community not far from where I know some of the distinguished folks who work in the Clerk and Parliamentarian's Offices live—in Alexandria. Not too far away from there is a neighborhood named Huntington, VA. This community I walked through has been flooded out three times in the last decade. So we have a 100-year floodplain. Yet three times in the last decade they have been flooded out.

So all these folks—whether in Hampton Roads in Richmond or the folks in Louisa County and central Virginia with the earthquake or the folks in Huntington—are saying: We just need that assistance that other communities have when they have been met by natural disasters. What purpose do we have for government other than to make sure there is an emergency response, and then after that response that there is an ability to get people back on their feet?

So I thank my colleagues again, particularly the Senator from Louisiana, who has been tireless on this issue of making sure FEMA has the resources it needs to address these disasters, and that we do so in a meaningful way. We recognize, of course, we can't just put these on a credit card forever; that we have to have a rational way to pay it back and figuring out a 10-year rolling cycle to budget for emergencies ought to be part of our discussions going forward. But trying to say that must be done at this moment, with the economic downturn and the recession, while communities are in need—whether they are in Oregon or in Virginia or one of the other 48 States that have had a disaster declaration issued over the last year—is not the way we ought to be doing business.

FORT MONROE

Mr. President, in addition, I rise today to encourage President Obama to use his authority under an act that probably most in this Chamber are not that familiar with—called the 1906 Antiquities Act—to designate Hampton, VA, Fort Monroe, as a national monument, which would make it an official part of the National Park Service. Our hope is that the President will consider designating this in the coming days as this historic fort is turned back over to the State of Virginia, having gone through the BRAC process, with the Federal Government disposing of it.

Let me take a moment on the Senate floor this afternoon to tell you a bit about this special place. This fort was built in the early 1800s, but, actually, the fortifications go back much earlier than that. It is an area called Point Comfort. As early as 1608 Captain John Smith recognized the importance of

building a fort at Point Comfort, as the English colonists called this land.

From its very beginnings, Fort Monroe has been associated with many key figures in American history. Robert E. Lee supervised work on the fortress as a young U.S. Army lieutenant. Edgar Allan Poe, the famous poet—and I am sure our pages, at one point, hopefully, had to memorize “The Raven” in high school—was a soldier at Fort Monroe. Abraham Lincoln, during the midst of the Civil War, paid a critical visit to Fort Monroe. And Harriet Tubman, an incredibly important American—who was only recently, in the last 50 or so years appropriately recognized—nursed wounded soldiers there in 1865.

Another historic American figure had maybe mixed feelings about his visits to Fort Monroe. Jefferson Davis was at Fort Monroe on two very different occasions: First, as the U.S. Secretary of War, and later, as the former President of the Confederacy, he was imprisoned at Fort Monroe for 2 years.

By World War II, Fort Monroe was the headquarters of our military's successful efforts to protect the mid-Atlantic coast. After World War II and to the current day it has been home of the Army Command responsible for training our warfighters.

For all of these various events alone, I would argue, as a Virginian, that would warrant the designation of Fort Monroe as part of the National Park Service. But its true historic significance goes back, actually, to a night in May of 1861.

During the Civil War, Fort Monroe had an important strategic role as one of the very few Union military installations located in the South that was never occupied by Confederate forces. For the folks who have traveled down to Norfolk and Virginia Beach, they know that Fort Monroe is the point that sticks out right before they go through the bridge-tunnel that takes them over to Norfolk and Virginia Beach. It has a commanding view of the whole gateway into what we call Hampton Roads.

On May 23, 1861, three slaves—Frank Baker, Shepard Mallory, and James Townsend—got into a small boat in Hampton, crossed the James River, and presented themselves at the front gate of Fort Monroe seeking safety and sanctuary. For the previous many weeks, Baker, Mallory, and Townsend had been forced by their owners to help construct a Confederate artillery post aimed directly at Fort Monroe. Obviously, that was not something these individuals wanted to be part of.

I want you to think a moment about the choices that were being made by these three men—these three slaves—Frank Baker, Shepard Mallory, and James Townsend. They left behind the community where they had spent most, if not all, of their lives. At least two of the three left behind wives and children. It was entirely possible that once these three men reached Fort Monroe, the Union soldiers would simply turn

them around and send them back to their owners.

One of the things I think even students of American history sometimes forget is that it was the official U.S. Government policy, even in the so-called Confederate States, after the Civil War had begun in April of 1861, to still turn slaves back over to their owners.

Baker, Mallory, and Townsend had to know if they were returned as run-aways, they could expect the most Draconian of punishments. But they figured the choice should be theirs to make, so they made it. They soon found themselves standing before the new commander of Fort Monroe, MG Benjamin Franklin Butler.

Deciding it might be easier to apologize later rather than seek permission beforehand, General Butler made a huge and historically courageous decision. He classified the three slaves as “contraband of war,” a policy that was later adopted across the Union to protect any slaves who managed to reach Union lines. As a result, Virginia's Fort Monroe ultimately became a beacon of hope for thousands of enslaved people seeking freedom. In fact, Fort Monroe became known as the Freedom Fort.

The day after General Butler's edict, eight more slaves showed up at Fort Monroe. The day after that, 47 more appeared. By the war's end, thousands—literally thousands—had appealed for contraband status at Fort Monroe. General Butler's declaration of this decision of “contraband of war” helped change the course of the Civil War and our Nation's history.

This Thursday, September 15, the U.S. Army will officially hand over Fort Monroe to the city of Hampton and the Commonwealth of Virginia as part of the 2005 BRAC process. I proudly join with my colleague Senator WEBB, the bipartisan Virginia House delegation, Virginia's Governor Bob McDonnell, local residents, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation in urging the President to take this opportunity to declare Fort Monroe a national historic treasure. By using the Antiquities Act to grant this designation, it also will allow us to begin the work to create a national park at Fort Monroe.

For more than 100 years, Presidents have used the Antiquities Act to protect some of America's most important and beloved historic places. As a matter of fact, it was use of the Antiquities Act that first designated the Grand Canyon as well as the Statue of Liberty. So there is obviously enormous historical precedent. And there is no dispute over the historical significance of Fort Monroe.

Over the last few years, I have spent a considerable amount of time, both as Governor and then subsequently during the BRAC process and now as a Senator, working with State and local residents and officials to explore the

opportunities to partner with the National Park Service to preserve this incredible piece of American history. I spoke as recently as last Friday with the White House about Fort Monroe. I am hopeful we will have promising news in short order.

It would certainly be timely if the President's decision could be announced this week, as the Army prepares to exit Fort Monroe, as our Nation marks the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, and as many Virginians focus anew on the future of this very special place.

I feel this is an especially appropriate time for the President to recognize the crucial role Fort Monroe has played in our Nation's history, and I again urge him to use his long-established power under the Antiquities Act to keep this process on track.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam 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.

TRADE

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Last week, new trade figures were released. I know the Presiding Officer from North Carolina is very concerned about what has happened with these trade figures and what it means for jobs in her State and in my State.

The trade deficit with China widened from \$26.7 billion in June to \$27 billion in July. That is one country in one month. Granted, it is the country we have the biggest trade deficit with, but it is 1 month. President Bush, Sr., some years ago, said that a \$1 billion trade surplus or trade deficit translated into some 13,000 jobs. Whether that number is precise or quantifiable or measurable is not the point. The point is that when we have persistently large trade deficits month after month, year after year, now decade after decade, we know what it means to the industrial base in our country.

I spent much of August in places such as Belmont County, St. Clairsville, Cleveland, Dayton, Mansfield, and Springfield, OH, where, in my State alone, these cities and communities had proud industrial heritages. They are places where people had real opportunity to join the middle class. After they graduated from high school, they could go and be trained and work in manufacturing and usually buy a home, a car, and send their child to college. My wife is the daughter of a utility worker, since deceased, in

northeast Ohio, and she and her two younger sisters and brother were able to go to, in her case, Kent State, and other universities, in part paid for by her father's work in manufacturing—if you will, his union card—and assistance from government Pell grants and all they were able to do so the kids didn't graduate with huge debt the way they too often do now.

The trade deficit with China through July 2011 totaled \$160 billion, up from \$145 billion over the same period in 2010. We debate the budget deficit, as we should. But too many politicians in this city, too many editorial writers, too many pundits and economists ignore the trade deficit. They are too focused on things such as pay-fors. They ignore how the trade deficit has a dangerous effect on American jobs.

The best way to get our fiscal house in order is to get America working again, and one way to do that is by cracking down on unfair trade practices of some of our so-called trading partners. When the President steps up and enforces trade rules—and while I do not agree with the President sending the Korea, Panama, and Colombia trade agreements to the Congress for votes because I don't think they serve America's interests, I do believe this President, more than his predecessors, has been, relatively—I say “relatively” but blessedly so, and in some cases aggressive at enforcing trade rules. I have seen that in Youngstown in creating jobs. I have seen it in Loraine, where it has created jobs, and in Fenway, where it has created jobs, and it has helped our industry in Butler County in steel, in paper, and in tires.

It is clear that part of this problem is currency manipulation from the Chinese, which undermines American manufacturing and our very own job-creating efforts. In June, the Economic Policy Institute released a new report showing that addressing Chinese currency manipulation could support the creation of 2.25 million jobs. Put that in contrast to what they say—the “free traders at any cost” sort of free market, free-trade fundamentalists who preach: Pass NAFTA. It will mean hundreds of thousands of jobs. Pass CAFTA. Pass PNTR with China. It will mean millions of jobs.

It never does. It means job growth, but the job growth usually takes place—with NAFTA, it was in Mexico; CAFTA, in Central America; and PNTR, in China, which is East Asia. There is job growth, but there is nothing close to net job growth in our country. Even that, the President is saying, with this new agreement with South Korea, that it will sustain or keep or contribute to sustaining or keeping 100,000 jobs or so. So even the promises aren't that great on this new trade agreement, and we know they never live up to their promises. But we do also know if we stood up to currency manipulation, it could create 2.25 million American jobs. My friends on the other side of the aisle don't ever want

to do any kind of direct spending on infrastructure in terms of job creation; that costs tax money. I think it is a good investment; they don't. But standing up on currency we know doesn't cost American taxpayers and it will, in fact, mean American jobs.

A paper mill in Butler County, down near Dayton and Cincinnati, someone who worked at that paper mill told me they are now competing with China for coated paper, which is a higher tech manufacturing of paper—the kind of magazine paper we all touch and use—that the pulp comes from Brazil, it is shipped to China, it is milled in China and shipped back to the United States and they undercut American prices. Yet only 10 percent of the cost of paper production is labor. What does that mean? It means they are gaming the currency system. They are subsidizing water and capital and land and they are paying low wages. How do we compete when they are not playing fair? Forget the low wages even for a minute. How do we compete when they are playing these currency games? By continuing the currency manipulation, we lose far too many jobs. By combating it, we help level the playing field for our manufacturers, we help our workers, we help spur our economic recovery.

That is why I introduced the Currency Reform for Fair Trade Act. It would strengthen countervailing duty laws to consider undervalued currency as an unfair subsidy in determining duty rates.

So when we contest on a trade agreement, all we are saying when we contest is that undervalued currency is considered an unfair subsidy, because it is. It is not hard to convince people of that. It is not hard to illustrate or prove that. So when an industry such as the coated paper company in Hamilton or the oil country tubular steel used in drilling in Lorain or in Youngstown, where there is a new steel mill because of a trade decision the President made—thank you—or aluminum in Sidney—when an industry petitions the International Trade Commission for relief against unfair subsidies, currency manipulation under this new bill and amendment we are going to offer on the floor will be part of that investigation.

This is a designation that would ensure the government has the tools to respond on behalf of American manufacturers and workers by imposing countervailing duties on subsidized exports from China.

We have broad support here. Senator SCHUMER from New York, a Democrat, has been very involved. Senator SNOWE from Maine, a Republican, has been very involved. Senator STABENOW, a Democrat from Michigan, and Senator GRAHAM from South Carolina, a Republican, have been very involved in understanding that these kinds of currency manipulations cost us American jobs and undermine our economy. This designation would ensure the government has the tools to respond on behalf

of American manufacturers and workers by imposing these countervailing duties on subsidized exports from China. It is simple, straightforward, and achievable.

Addressing currency manipulation would decrease our budget deficit up to \$70 billion a year and somewhere between \$500 billion and \$800 billion over 10 years if sustained. Addressing our trade deficit should be part of the debate in reducing our budget deficit. If we are going to create jobs, we have to ensure that our trading partners don't stack the deck. We want trade, and we want more of it, but we want fair trade, not this kind of phony free trade.

Almost every country in the world practices trade according to their national interests. The United States in this body and the President of the United States—typically, Presidents in both parties—have practiced trade according to some economics textbook that is 20 years out of date. If we are serious about standing for American workers and companies that continue to play by the rules, we need to pass this legislation.

With each passing week, more companies and workers are faced with the harsh realities of unfair competition and unwanted cutbacks due to Chinese currency manipulation. In towns and cities across our country—go anywhere in this country, including Texas, where Senator HUTCHISON is from and who is awaiting a chance to speak on the floor, or North Carolina, the Presiding Officer's State, or my State, and we see that companies and workers are faced with the harsh realities of that unfair competition.

Workers have the proud tradition of making products that matter to America. From the tanks made in Lima, OH, supporting our troops abroad, to steel tubes created in Lorain, equipping our energy markets, Ohio manufacturers are vital to our Nation's security and economy. Our national security, our economic security, our family security, all those are dependent on making things in the United States of America.

My State is the third largest manufacturing State in the country. We are seventh in population, but we are third in manufacturing. We have lost far too many jobs in Zanesville and Jackson and Columbus and Akron because of this undermining of currency, because of this gaming of the system by China, its gaming of the system on currency.

It is time to take bold action. It is time to stand up to China. It is time to practice trade according to our communities and our national interests. It is time to do that. It is time to pass this legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

NASA'S VISION

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Madam President, I wish to mark today, September 14 of 2011, as the day that NASA announced our vision for the future. Since the shuttle was retired earlier this year

and we saw the last people go into space on an American flight, many of us have worried that there wasn't going to be another heavy launch vehicle that would take our astronauts to beyond low earth orbit. Today, after much study and a lot of going back and forth with NASA, I was encouraged to see the design approved by both NASA and the OMB, and I think it is going—well, it will be the heaviest, biggest, strongest, most robust vehicle we have seen since we put men on the Moon.

I was very concerned because of the long timeframe. Congress asked that this design be delivered by January of this year. We kept getting delays and delays and delays. Finally, Senator BILL NELSON and I just got frustrated about that timeline, so we had meetings.

As recently as yesterday, I met with the director of OMB, Mr. Jack Lew, who did come to my office to meet with Senator NELSON and myself and General Bolden, who is the NASA Administrator, to get his commitment that we would be on a robust timeline and that it would be as much a priority of NASA to go beyond low earth orbit as the ferry to the space station would be for NASA. We got those assurances from Mr. Lew and the NASA Administrator. Senator NELSON and myself, Senator ROCKEFELLER was represented, Senator BOOZMAN—we had all the relevant people in the loop on this issue because we want to make sure Congress and the administration are on the same goal with a timeline to achieve that goal.

What worried us about the delays were the loss of cost efficiencies and the loss of experienced personnel to design that new heavy launch vehicle.

We want to have the most experienced engineers who will use the proven technology that has been time tested and add to that proven technology the added boosters, the added capabilities that we know we must have to go to Mars, to an asteroid, and to make sure we do it in a safe manner.

I am very encouraged by the commitments that were made and the timetables we are seeing. I am told by the NASA personnel that we are now going to look, in 1 week or 2, to have the contract modifications in place that will tell the workers that they are going to have those jobs, that we are going to have that expedience, that they have a project to work on. I think it is essential we have that kind of experienced personnel to do this.

I am very pleased we now have this way forward. It is the most powerful vehicle we will have seen in many years. I think the announcement today is going to set us on a path. If we can see those contract modifications going out from NASA in the next week—or a little more, but no more than 2 weeks from now—then we will know there is progress and that we are going toward the time when we will have the building of that rocket, that we will have the design, followed by the building, and then, of course, testing, and then the launch.

I think when we saw that last flight come down this summer, so many people had very mixed feelings because space exploration has been a part of America's drive and spirit for all these years we have watched more and more things be accomplished. From President Kennedy's first challenge that we would put men on the Moon, Americans have been excited about that opportunity. They have not just been excited, though, about the exploration and the pushing of the envelope, they have also been excited with the quality of life that has been produced by what came from the research: the advancements we have had in medical treatment, MRIs, the advancements in products we have been able to discover.

I fully expect that with the space station we are going to be able to do the research on cancers that will grow in the microgravity conditions in space that will not grow the same way on Earth, and that maybe we will be able to test antidotes and medicines for those. That is why I was pleased the President did announce we would extend the space station until 2020. We have international partners as well. So we want to make sure we are a good partner, that we are a reliable partner, and that we do some things for mankind that might make a difference in our lives.

National security. We have gained so much in satellite-guided missiles for our national security. And being able to put a missile into a window from 1 mile out is because we have been able to discover in space the use of satellites. Earlier this summer the space shuttle carried the magnetic spectrometer that Dr. Ting, the Nobel laureate from MIT, built and insisted on putting on the space station, it will help us understand the nature of dark energy and its relationship to the origins and function of the universe.

We are looking at how matter was formed. We are looking at the cosmic rays. I went to the Johnson Space Center in Houston and saw from the space station the magnetic spectrometer that was getting the hits from cosmic rays. There were 60 scientists in the room who were tracking these hits, trying to determine what was happening when those cosmic rays hit the magnetic spectrometer because they want to see if we can understand the nature of dark energy. There are things we have not even thought of that we hope to find by using the space station, and then going to an asteroid or going to the Moon.

We have taken a first step today. I think many people in America were waiting for the blueprint for the future. Now I think we have one. As long as we stay on a regular timetable and with the funding levels that have been approved already in the authorization bill passed by Congress and signed by the President—if we can stick with those, this has the potential to bring us energy, health, possibly curing breast

cancer, things that will make a difference in the lives not only of Americans but of our fellow citizens all over the world. That is what the investment can be in NASA if we go forward as we have made this blueprint to do.

We are in a time where we must be more efficient. We must fund the priorities and not fund the lesser priorities.

In today's markup of our committee, our Appropriations subcommittee that does fund NASA, we have found the priorities. We also cut programs. Senator MIKULSKI said in her whole time in the Senate she has never been an appropriator who actually cut programs. But we did today. We cut programs that were lesser priorities in different areas of our jurisdiction. But we funded NASA so we would have this heavy launch vehicle. We would fund the commercial vehicle that is going to take our astronauts to the space station. That is going to be done in the private sector. That was the balance we did in our authorization bill last year. Then we fund the Webb Space Telescope because that is part of the scientific advances we must make if we are going to know what is out there in space that we might be able to utilize or utilize the knowledge for better life on Earth.

I am very pleased we have the Appropriations Committee that will, hopefully, approve the bill tomorrow and that we have made those tough decisions. We came in under the 2011 continuing resolution on our overall bill. We came in under the President's request. But we have fully funded the priorities which have the possibility to reap the benefits from exploration and assure that America remains the No. 1 country in the world in space exploration. Our economy has benefitted, our national security has benefitted, and now we are going to be looking at health care possibilities, energy possibilities, and living in space, and seeing how we can do that in a better way.

I think we have a plan that will excite the American people again about what we can do in space if we put our minds to it, if we prioritize, if we are efficient with the taxpayer dollars, and we do not lose sight of the vision that is the spirit of America.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant editor of the Daily Digest proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. I would ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, I would like to spend a few minutes discussing some things in general.

In making a couple points today, I was referred to by one of our colleagues as a dictator. I am not offended at that; I understand the frustration of

what is going on. But I think there are some significant points that the American people ought to hear about where we are and what we are doing.

Quite frankly, if we look at our financial situation and we look at the history of the world, no country has ever recovered from the situation in which we find ourselves in terms of our debt-to-GDP ratio and our debt-to-export ratio.

In August, before we left, we passed a piece of legislation that goes—a small amount—toward fixing the very real problems that are in front of our country in terms of spending money we don't have on things we don't absolutely need. But we have before us, and coming before us, two different pieces of legislation: One is a shell piece of legislation, and the assumption is the majority leader will utilize it to fund supplementation for disaster relief for the many areas in our country that need that funding. There is not a dispute that we should be doing that. There is a dispute about how much that should be. But the greatest dispute is, when we are running \$1.3 trillion and \$1.4 trillion deficits, and we know we have significant waste, duplication, and fraud in the Federal Government, whether we ought to spend another \$6 billion or \$7 billion by borrowing or we ought to actually reduce spending somewhere else to pay for a much more important and proper need in which the Federal Government has a role. That is the real debate.

I think we have worked a way to have appropriate amendments to try to pay for that, and we should probably go forward. There are, however, two other programs that are precarious in their funding: One is FAA—and we have coming to us the 22nd temporary reauthorization—and the Transportation bill, which is, I believe, its sixth temporary reauthorization.

Now, there are some real questions the American people ought to be asking about why 22 times we have temporarily reauthorized the FAA for a short period of time, and why now we are on our sixth temporary—or fifth; I may be wrong on one of those numbers but close—temporary reauthorization. That is because we are not prioritizing what is important for the country in terms of our legislative agenda. We don't control that, but there are some things that the American people are interested in that we do control.

The highway trust fund has received a supplementation over the last 4 years of \$35 billion from the American taxpayer outside of the taxes they collect for that trust fund. Out of that amount of money billions of dollars have been spent on things other than highways and bridges.

We now have 146,000 deficient bridges in our country, some in every State in the country. We have more now after the floods in the Northeast. We have significant problems and we have a limited amount of money, and what is in front of us is another short-term ex-

tension of 6 months for the transportation funding which continues to spend money on items that are a low priority.

I am not saying we couldn't spend the money on it. But when we are short of money, and we are borrowing money to put money into the trust fund, and our No. 1 priority ought to be safety and quality roads and bridges, to spend significant funds on things that are not a priority now—not when we are head over heels in debt, not when the trust fund is precarious—then we ought to not force States to spend money they don't want to spend. Yet in this bill 10 percent of the surface transportation moneys have to be spent on enhancement.

So that tells Oklahoma, or any other State: If you have an excess number of bridges, it doesn't matter that that is a safety problem for your citizens; we are still going to make you spend this 10 percent money over here that doesn't have anything to do with safety or true transportation, but we are going to require it because we can—except, the problem is, the people in your State pay the taxes in the first place for their highways and their bridges, not for the museums, not for all the hundreds of other things that are spent that are low priority.

So I thought I might give us a little flavor of what some of those things are. If we were at a different time where we had an excess of funds, I am not saying they are necessarily bad. But when we have bridges falling down in this country, and concrete—like the summer before last in Oklahoma—falling out of an interstate highway bridge injuring somebody, falling onto their car as they drove under it, I would think that we would want to repair these 146,000 bridges rather than spend money re-decorating a sign.

So I will not go through all of them—I will put all of them into the RECORD—but let me go through a few of them just to see. If the American people actually believe we should not fix bridges or roads and we ought to spend money, I am fine. If the Senate believes we ought to not fix bridges, we ought not concentrate on safety, we ought not concentrate on the quality of our roads and bridges and they vote it down, I am fine too. But the fact is, we ought not to be spending money when we have the hundreds of thousands of bridges that are dangerous to people in this country.

All we are saying is, if a State wants to continue to spend money on something other than safety and bridges and roads, fine, it can, but don't make those of us who already have a big problem with safety have to spend money on something that doesn't protect our citizens, doesn't enhance their highways by spending money on something that is called an enhancement but doesn't enhance their safety or their ability to commute.

So what are some of them? Lincoln Highway 200-Mile Roadside Museum in

Pennsylvania—it received \$300,000 in enhancement funding to commemorate the historic highway along the 200-mile route. Interpretive signage, colorful, repainted vintage gas pumps, engaging murals, refurbishing a large coffee pot.

Notably, Pennsylvania ranks No. 1 in the country in terms of bridge deficiency levels. Forty-six percent of the bridges in Pennsylvania are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Mr. President, \$300,000 would have fixed two of them. So we chose to not fix two but spend the money elsewhere. At a different time, sure, or if Pennsylvania wants to spend it, let them. But don't force them to spend money on something that does not protect the quality of transportation for their citizens.

How about Chinatown Gateway, a \$250,000 enhancement to supplement the construction of the Twin Dragons Gateway to the Chinatown area? California has over 7,000 bridges that are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. One out of every three bridges in California is in trouble, and we are doing aesthetics instead of fixing bridges.

How about the White Squirrel Sanctuary in Tennessee? Kenton, TN, located in Gibson County, calls itself "the Home of the White Squirrel." They received \$110,000 in transportation enhancement funding to construct a white squirrel sanctuary with walking trails, brick crosswalks, a footbridge, and a parking lot. There are 3,856 bridges that are structurally deficient in the State of Tennessee. They didn't necessarily want to do this. They did not have any choice. They had to spend 10 percent of their surface transportation money on things such as this.

Tuscumbia Landing in Sheffield, AL—\$104,000 to investigate Tuscumbia Landing's archaeological features. The only problem is, 23 percent of Alabama's bridges are structurally deficient. That could have fixed two of them.

How about the National Corvette Museum Simulator Theater in Warren County, KY—\$200,000 to build a grand simulator theater. Mr. President, 31 percent of the bridges they cross in Kentucky are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

The Pennsylvania Trolley Museum—\$400,000 to construct the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum. It is a great idea if we are in the black and have a good cashflow. But when Pennsylvania leads the Nation in deficient bridges and dangerous bridges, why would we spend that money? Why would we force them to spend that money?

I can go on. I will add to the record many other examples, all the way up to 40 separate examples of where we are spending money but we are not fixing bridges.

I ask unanimous consent that those examples be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

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

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. COBURN. We are not pouring asphalt, we are not laying concrete, we are not decreasing congestion, and we are not increasing safety. What we are doing is we are following the rules of Washington when we have greater needs. We are in trouble as a nation because Congress does not set priorities, and when they do set priorities, there is no connection to the reality of our financial situation.

We have some options on how to go forward. One of the options would be to take the FAA bill, split it out, approve it, send it back to the House, and FAA is taken care of. The second option would be to pass the highway extension for 6 months with the elimination of enhancements and send it back to the House. But I will not give a unanimous consent, as is my right as a Senator of the United States, for us to continue to spend billions of dollars on things that are not a priority when the country is struggling to survive. Its very survival depends on us changing the way we do business. If that means the highway transportation bill does not get approved, so be it. But there has to be a point in time in this country when we change direction and we start meeting the obligations that are put before us.

The No. 1 obligation is to start spending money where it does the most good and quit spending money we do not have on things we do not absolutely need. With a 35-percent deficit—and we are going to run another \$1.3 trillion deficit next year, which will cost a significant amount of funds for our kids and our grandkids just to repay what we are going to waste next year—there ought to be a time at which we say enough is enough.

I know there will be several, including my own senior Senator, who will be unhappy with my position, but I believe it is time to draw a line in the sand for the American people, for our future. It is not popular. It is certainly not expedient. But it is absolutely the right thing to do.

If the Senate wants to solve the problem of these two bills, we can split them or we can keep them together, but we need to end the enhancements right now until we get the highway trust fund healthy again, No. 1, and, No. 2, until we get our country healthy again. When we do, I will be happy to defer.

Remember, we are not saying you cannot do it. We are just saying you ought to have the option to not do it.

EXHIBIT 1

Kalaniana'ole Highway, Ka'iwi Scenic Shoreline Trail—Federal Transportation enhancement funds were used to intervene in a local land use dispute in Hawaii. A decades long dispute over the preservation of Hawaiian shoreline versus local developmental interests was assisted by the Department of Transportation, which used \$11 million in enhancement funds to acquire land for conservation purposes, effectively meddling in the local land use. In the mean time, 45 percent of Hawaii's bridges are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

Antique bike collections—The University of California Davis received a transportation enhancement grant of \$440,000 to purchase 60 unique antique bikes for its Bicycle Museum Collection.

Shrine to Tennessee state history costs federal government \$23 million—Nashville, Tennessee received \$23 million in federal enhancement funding to construct its bicentennial ode to Tennessee state history. The project included the building of "a 1,400-foot Wall of History etched with historic events from the state's first two centuries, 31 fountains that each represent one of the state's rivers, and a 200-foot granite state map." The only thing more egregious than federal funds used for a clearly state interest, is that 20 percent of Tennessee Bridges are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

ARTwalk—ARTwalk is tagged as a unique outdoor experience that constructs pathways between shopping areas, galleries, and museums in Rochester, Vermont. The project used \$234,000 in federal enhancement dollars to build the artsy outdoor museum, while 861 of Vermont's bridges remain either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

Old Roman Bath House Renovation—\$160,000 worth of enhancement funding was used in Berkeley, West Virginia for the renovation of the oldest building in town, an Old Roman Bath House. While local residents may be interested in visiting a bath house where George Washington used to frequent, federal taxpayers may find the connection to critical infrastructure more puzzling. Moreover, 36 percent of West Virginia's bridges remain structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

Saddletree Factory Renovation—The Ben Schroeder Saddle Tree Factory, a historical factory in Madison, Indiana, received transportation enhancement funding for historical preservation purposes because the factory used to make Saddletrees, the foundation of a saddle. 21.5 percent of Indiana's bridges are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

Toledo Harbor Lighthouse—The Toledo Harbor Lighthouse in Toledo, Ohio, protected by the "phantom" officer Frank, will receive a \$500,000 enhancement grant to restore windows, doors, bricks, and shutters. This grant will not only help to restore the facade of the historical lighthouse, but also carry on the legendary ghosts of the haunted lighthouse. Unfortunately, "phantom" officer Frank will not be able to protect Ohio drivers from the 6,598 bridges that are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

Critter Crossing—The Monkton, Vermont Conservation Commission received \$150,000 in federal grant money to build a—critter crossing, to save the lives of thousands of migrating salamanders and other amphibians that would otherwise be slaughtered by vehicle traffic on a major roadway. Thousands of blue- and yellow-spotted salamanders, frogs, and other amphibians spend the winter months in the rocky uplands near Monkton, but must return to low-lying wetlands in order to reproduce. To travel between these two areas, the salamanders must cross the heavily-traveled Monkton-Vergennes Road. While some conservationists have celebrated the project, others remain skeptical. "I certainly respect all species. However, I don't see the need to pay \$150,000 for a salamander crossing", read one email reportedly sent to the Burlington [Vermont] Free Press newspaper. "I realize there are a lot of other stupid things my tax dollars go toward, but this one is near the top of the list." Maybe the local communities will prevent the critters from crossing one of the 861 bridges that are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

North Carolina Transportation Museum Spencer, North Carolina—The North Carolina Transportation Museum has received over 11 million to renovate and showcase steam locomotive artifacts. As of 2010, North Carolina has nearly 5000 bridges that are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

Massachusetts bike and pedestrian allotted millions, but remain unspent—Massachusetts has received \$135 million in federal funds for bike and pedestrian projects since 1991, of which it has spent little more than \$51 million, according to *The Boston Globe*. That means nearly two-thirds of the funds provided in the last two decades by Congress to the state for such projects remain unspent. Perhaps Massachusetts would like to use their unspent funds to work on their 2,548 bridges that are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

Nevada spending millions of federal transportation dollars to make Vegas highways beautiful—In 2008, Nevada received its transportation enhancement allotment of \$6,287,466. They decided to spend it in a variety of ways, a few million went to biking facilities and trails, a few million went to welcome centers and interpretive centers. \$498,750 even went for “decorative rocks, native plants, some pavement graphics, a few walls, and some great big granite boulders” to beautify an interchange to Las Vegas’ 215 Beltway.

A couple miles down the highway, N-DOT beautified another interchange with “striping in the rocks and some native plants.” That project has cost \$319,163 so far this year.

The people of Nevada might have been able to think of some better things to spend that money on. One local who uses the interchange frequently was not impressed by the expensive beautification project. “I’m busy watching where I’m going. I’m not looking at landscape improvements and stamped concrete.”

Unfortunately, there is little that local officials can do to re-direct the money to better uses. “We applied for the federal enhancement dollars and those federal enhancement dollars can only be used for landscaping and pedestrian type improvements,” explains the top civil engineer at the Clark County Public Works Traffic Management Division.

The N-DOT deputy director for southern Nevada is just as frustrated as many citizens that federal restrictions prohibit states from directing money where it is really needed. “It’s really getting out of hand to where these pots of money have these constraints associated with them and you can’t spend money where you want to.” These restrictions sometimes leave states no choice but to spend money on frivolous projects or lose it entirely. The deputy director notes, “if N-DOT doesn’t spend that money and employ workers in Nevada, another state is gonna have that money up for grabs.”

Washington, DC receives Transportation Enhancement grants for murals and valet bikes—Washington, DC received nearly \$2 million in transportation enhancement grants in Fiscal Year 2010, ranging from \$50,000 to \$579,000. These grants include items such as the stabilization of historic murals and a grant for bicycle parking and valet services, along with the creation of a “Room to Breathe” poster. The \$2 million allotment would be much better used for bridge repair, as 158 of the 244 bridges in the District are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

Railroad Caboose Relocation and Renovation—The Princeton Railroad Museum received a \$78,280 transportation enhancement grant to help pay for the relocation of a his-

toric train caboose to be displayed and restored.

Texas Highway Rest Stops—The Texas Department of Transportation uses a substantial amount of their required transportation enhancement spending to build highway rest areas. Texas plans to spend \$262 million to build or overhaul roadside stops along its highways, with a majority of the funds coming from enhancement grants. However, some residents question the construction of rest stops in such close proximity to other commercial areas, leading one local resident to surmise about the \$10 million Salado rest area, “I think \$10 million would have made a nice third lane in a lot of spots. . . . It’s pretty spectacular for a rest area, for, I guess, \$2 million worth. . . . \$10 million? That’s a lot of money.” Additionally, the Texas Department of Transportation spent \$16.2 million in enhancement funding on a Battleship Texas restoration project.

California Sculpture Competition—Federal transportation enhancement dollars were used as prize money for an art competition to find a sculpture fitting to place in a parking lot for a Laguna Beach, California Friday Film Series event.

Merchant and Drivers Tavern Museum—The Merchants and Drivers Tavern Museum in Union County, New Jersey received a \$210,790 transportation enhancement grant to create a museum on the second floor of the recently renovated building. The Merchants and Drivers Tavern Museum touts its amenities by letting visitors “experience the hospitality of the 1820s” and “quench his thirst in the taproom, sit for a while in the parlor or, perhaps, try a bed for size at this ‘hands-on’ museum.” Meanwhile, visitors should also be wary of driving over any New Jersey bridges on the way to the museum, as 35 percent of them are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

Museum uses transportation funds for its Heating and Air Conditioning system—The Sayre Historical Society Museum in Bradford County, Pennsylvania received a transportation enhancement grant of \$74,704 for the “Sayre Historical Society RR Museum Heating and AC project.” You read that correctly, American gas taxes are being directed towards heating and air installation.

War of 1812, Bladensburg, Maryland excavation—Enhancement funding was used to excavate several historical buildings in Bladensburg, Maryland to study the “transportation history” of the area. Bladensburg was used for troop movements during the War of 1812, as well as being a transportation hub during early America.

Funding for a Transportation Exhibit—\$300,000 in federal money will pay for a new exhibit on the history of transportation at a local museum in Missouri. The fresh display at the St. Charles County Heritage museum will explain the influence of rivers, railroads, roads, and trails in the region over the years. The grant application highlights how “The County and its residents have had to rely on multiple forms of transportation and as technology changed, the area had to adapt to the changing transportation methods/patterns.”

Not everyone in the community agrees the federal government should fund this type of project. A county executive said, “It’s the kind of thing the federal government can’t afford to do.” Other officials however have a different perspective on the federal funding. The county parks director explained how “the \$300,000 grant is ‘a pretty insignificant amount of money compared to that total pool’ of federal transportation spending.” Maybe a more significant number should be 7,021, the number of Missouri bridges that are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

Iowa town receives new entrance sign—Fairfield, Iowa used \$40,800 in transportation enhancement funds to upgrade its “Welcome to Fairfield” sign. It is likely that Iowans would welcome their transportation funds upgrading their bridges, as Iowa ranks 3rd in bridge deficiency rates in America.

Michigan Receives Transportation funds to plant flowers and rehabilitate an engine house—In 2010, the Michigan awarded \$5 million in federal transportation enhancement grants to various projects including reconstructing cobblestone roads, purchasing and installing bicycle racks, and “streetscaping” a downtown street in Bridgetown, Michigan with “decorative sidewalk treatments, street trees, perennial flowers and other decorative plantings, planters, and ornamental street lighting.” One grant awarded \$336,490 to rehabilitate the historic Quincy and Torch Lake Railroad Engine House while another grant awarded \$1,490,280 to the Detroit Science Center to construct an exhibit depicting “how roads, tunnels and bridges are constructed.”

Transportation Funding used to replace unaesthetic fencing around Oklahoma Capitol Oil Derricks—The Oklahoma Department of Central Services, the controller of Capitol Grounds, received \$216,000 in transportation enhancement funding to replace fencing around active oil wells on Lincoln Boulevard with a more aesthetically pleasing form of fencing. Unfortunately while Capitol Complex may look better, Oklahoma bridge deficiency rates remain 2nd in the United States.

Over \$150,000 in Gasoline Taxes directed towards making brochures—Over the last 10 years, federal transportation enhancement grants have been used to produce brochures for various purposes including monuments paths, scenic trails, and bicycle safety. The State of Kansas even received a federal grant to install and replace their brochure display cases at SRA.

Enhancement funds used to help construct replica of historical schooner—In 2001, Burlington, Vermont received a \$20,000 grant to subsidize the building a full scale replica of the 1862-class sailing canal boat, the Louis McClure.

Crandall Farm Restoration project—Washington County, Rhode Island received a \$120,000 transportation enhancement grant for renovation of Crandall Farm. The project consisted of renovating the 1870 house on the farm into a welcome center and educational tool for the traveling public.

South Carolina uses gas taxes to purchase \$15,000 “Welcome Signs”—Orangeburg County, South Carolina received a \$34,965 transportation enhancement grant to help purchase three signs at a cost of \$44,500, or \$14,833 per sign. Unfortunately, South Carolina bridges are not as welcoming, as 22 percent of them are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

The State of Michigan receives nearly \$100,000 to celebrate mysterious centennial—In 2004, Michigan received a \$99,540 transportation enhancement grant for publications, historical commemorative items, and displays for a “centennial celebration.” The only thing more puzzling than how these activities are related to transportation is that the centennial for Michigan Statehood occurred in 1937.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, today I rise to offer my support for the President’s request for immediate supplemental assistance for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. This funding will enable FEMA to continue to provide critical aid to victims left in the wake of Irene’s deadly

path, and victims of other natural disasters that have struck throughout the country.

My home State of Rhode Island has experienced two major disasters in the last couple of years, so I know firsthand how hard homeowners, businesses, and municipalities have struggled to recover, even with Federal assistance programs.

This is not the time to play politics. If Congress fails to provide this emergency funding between now and September 30, we run the risk of completely running out of disaster funds. Our fellow Americans need this funding to recover from catastrophic disasters. Mother Nature does not distinguish between blue and reds States, and both Democratic and Republican Governors—and in Rhode Island's case an Independent Governor—have asked for immediate disaster aid.

This supplemental funding will help replenish FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund, which pays for Federal disaster response and recovery activities. The fund has been running dangerously low as a result of the devastating tornado in Missouri, tornados in Alabama, major flooding in the Midwest and South, wildfires in Texas, and the historic flooding caused by Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee.

This year's disasters have been particularly destructive and I urge my colleagues to remain committed to all the victims as they struggle to become whole again. We should approve this disaster aid to ensure that communities aren't left in ruins.

The shortfall in funding has already forced the administration to put certain disaster recovery activities on hold. My State, like many others, sustained a federally declared disaster last month as a result of Hurricane and Tropical Storm Irene. In order for FEMA to ensure it had the resources to provide immediate relief for new disasters such as Hurricane Irene, the agency had to freeze long-term recovery and mitigation projects.

This funding conundrum really hits home because in Rhode Island communities are still reeling from the historic flooding that occurred in the spring of 2010. Rhode Island saw more rain during that disaster than any month on record, and the devastation wrought by those storms exceeded anything in living memory.

I was on the ground during the flooding last year and have been intimately involved in the recovery process. I know how important FEMA's long-term recovery and mitigation programs are for revitalizing damaged communities, especially in States like mine that were already hurting from the difficult economic environment.

I urge my colleagues across the aisle to let us pass this critical legislation to provide supplemental funding for FEMA. Not only will it go a long way toward providing peace of mind should another disaster strike, it will also ensure that communities across the coun-

try that are still recovering from past disasters can continue to move forward in their recovery. This will make us a stronger and more resilient nation.

Mr. BAUCUS. Madam President, Nelson Mandela once said, "There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere."

The walk to freedom for the Burmese people has certainly not been easy, and it is far from complete.

The military-controlled government that rules Burma continues to maintain its tight grip over the Burmese people through fear, intimidation, and violence.

According to the State Department, over the last year the Burmese regime has "severely restricted and frequently violated freedoms of assembly, expression, association, movement, and religion."

And in furthering its hold over Burmese society, the regime has committed crimes of murder, abduction, rape, torture, recruitment of child soldiers, and forced labor—all with impunity.

In recent months however, we have seen some encouraging steps.

Last November, the Burmese regime released Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese democracy leader and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, after a long and unjustified incarceration. And the regime has made some modest movement towards dialogue with the opposition.

But it is far too soon to think that the walk to freedom has succeeded. Just 2 months after releasing Aung San Suu Kyi, the regime dissolved the National League for Democracy, which has sought to bring democracy to Burma for more than 20 years.

And the regime keeps more than 2,000 political prisoners in detention.

As Aung San Suu Kyi herself has said, "If my people are not free, how can you say I'm free? We are none of us free."

In order to help the Burmese people on their march to freedom, I urge my colleagues to extend our sanctions against Burmese imports for another year.

Several of our trading partners—including the European Union, Canada, and Australia—have joined us in imposing trade and investment sanctions against Burma. And these sanctions have put significant pressure on the Burmese leadership.

So let us extend the import sanctions on Burma for another year. Let us do our part to help the Burmese people complete their long walk to freedom.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. I would ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

REMEMBERING MALCOLM WALLOP

Mr. ENZI. It is with a great deal of sadness I have to tell you that Senator Malcolm Wallop, the 18th Senator for the State of Wyoming, passed away this afternoon. He had been ill for some time but had had a very active life and made a great deal of difference to this body. We were very fortunate to have Malcolm Wallop represent us in the Senate for 18 years. For all of his three terms he was a powerful and effective presence in the Congress, assuring the people of Wyoming they were heard and that their concerns were being addressed. Although there are many accomplishments I could mention—and tomorrow I will probably mention quite a few more—I want to mention two of them today, as they were very significant efforts.

The first was the establishment of the Republican Steering Committee. He and two other Senators considered themselves to be the conservatives of the Senate and formed a special caucus that today has grown to include almost all the Republicans. It was for a smaller government and constitutional principles and spending constraints, and he stuck to those principles throughout his entire Senate career.

His other accomplishment—and I can think of none that would make him more proud than the mention that he started the Congressional Awards Program. This is a program for young Americans where they can do service for their community and receive an award from Congress. Congress puts no dollars into this, which would be part of the philosophy of Malcolm Wallop. He helped to provide for a number of people through the years to be able to come to Washington and receive the Gold Award. It is set up so when you do 100 hours of community service, you can get a bronze medal. When you do another 100 hours of service, you can get a silver medal. When you do 200 or more hours of service, you get a gold medal.

He helped to promote the community spirit and his community service has made a huge difference to Wyoming and has spread across the Nation. Of course, we are always very proud in Wyoming that more kids from Wyoming have gotten the gold medal than from any other State. It partly has to do with his founding of it and the time and effort he put into it, and that succeeding Senators have. Over the years it has served to inspire countless young Americans to believe in themselves and their ability to change the world beginning in their own backyard and to start some good habits. Thanks to his initiative, the young people of our Nation will continue to dare to do great service in their neighborhoods and communities, and I cannot think of a better way to have Senator Malcolm Wallop be remembered.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNET). The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I join my colleague from Wyoming because