to be tapped for the good of the Nation. I keep saying we have money that is buried in the ground up there. If we harness those resources and more of the resources in the Gulf of Mexico and the Rocky Mountain West, we would be dramatically increasing our energy security, we would create tens of thousands of new jobs, and generate billions and billions of dollars year after year that could be applied to both deficit reduction and the development of new energy technologies.

I would encourage the Senate to support any amendment that strikes the SPR provision in this bill and encourage us, instead, to focus on the development of a more viable long-term energy policy.

With that, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

THE SUPERCOMMITTEE

Mr. SESSIONS. During the summer, Democrats and Republicans in Congress, as Americans well remember, had a big fight over trying to reduce spending as we approached the Nation's debt limit.

As we know, the product of that fight was a leadership-brokered deal that promised long-term savings in discretionary spending of around $900 billion over 10 years, not just in 1 year. It also created the Supercommittee, which has been meeting in secret to find another $1.2 trillion in possible savings. We hope they do and they should, frankly, find more in savings. Whatever they come up with must be voted on in the Senate without any amendment and cannot be altered in any way. This is concerning to me. Virtually every deal we have seen this year has been filled with promises of savings, but when we analyze them, the savings are not nearly as real as promised. So we do not need another plan with tax hikes that never go away and promises of spending cuts that do not materialize or are not continued.

Indeed, the debt limit deal, which produced the Budget Control Act this summer, claims to contain a spending cap, but that is not accurate. It is a phony cap. The cuts that matter most are, in many respects, those that of course take place right away. But, after all of the bickering and drama, we ended up with a deal that cut discretionary spending by only a paltry $7 billion from the fiscal year 2011 discretionary budget. To put this number in perspective, the total outlays for 2011 are $145 billion greater than 2010, and our deficit is nearly $1.3 trillion—$1,300 billion deficit. We are talking about promising a $7 billion reduction in spending. Nevertheless, $7 billion in discretionary cuts, at least, is real and a small step, in the right direction; right?

We are supposed to spend $1,043 billion this year. That is $7 billion less from the $1,050 billion in discretionary spending from last year. Unfortunately, this is one more empty promise, because the legislation was rushed through—this Budget Control Act—in the eleventh hour at the fifty-ninth minute. Nobody, at that time, knew there was a gimmick in it.

Here is how it worked: The Budget Control Act created a cap adjustment for disaster relief funding. It took a 10-year average for emergency spending and estimated that to be $11.3 billion for 2012. But, this $11.3 billion in the Budget Control Act is a new fund, and it is spent by regular appropriations, not by 60 votes—as in the past for emergency spending—and it is above the $1,043 billion figure. So the truth is, the bill is not and never was $1,043 billion, as promised, a limit on spending to that amount, but $1,054 billion. Therefore, spending for discretionary accounts this year will be larger than last year.

The writers of the Budget Control Act went even further. They changed the Senate rule in this bill that was passed at the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour to eliminate the 60-vote rule even for emergency spending, creating another loophole. So a 60-vote point of order—which has been used here over the years to challenge a designation as emergency spending—has been stripped as part of a bill denominated as a Budget Control Act, so the new fund can be spent—this $11.3 billion—at any time as a normal appropriation, as if it were within the budget and without a 60-vote requirement. This eliminates the pressure to stay within the budget to offset annual disaster spending as a number of us have been attempting to do in recent years.

For instance, if you have $2 billion in disaster spending as part of a specific appropriation, instead of eliminating $2 billion in waste somewhere else in order to keep your total spending within the budget, you have free access to the $11 billion fund and do not have to worry about offsetting a penny. You also do not need a vote for disaster funding approval. As a result, this little offset issue has grown as a tribute to the effectiveness of Senator TOM COBURN, who has been fighting to offset so-called emergency spending designations. The 60-vote requirement to pass the emergency bill gave him some leverage and ability to challenge the spending and challenge the appropriators in order to find offsets for the new spending. Instead of calling this the Budget Control Act, we should call it the Coburn control act. This is not a step forward for us.

The real spending cap now is $1,054 billion, $4 billion more than we spent last year. You only need to go through an emergency designation process if you want to spend even more than that, but you do not need 60 votes even for that. The irony here is that there was widespread belief, in this Chamber, that we needed to tighten the emergency spending designation, because it was being abused.

To give one unbelievable example, the Senate counted $210 million in the routine funding for the census as emergency spending. The census is in the Constitution and is required to be conducted every 10 years. How in the world can we say this is unexpected emergency spending? It is as routine as anything can possibly be. It was done because otherwise spending would be needed to have been cut by $200 million somewhere else. The Budget Control Act has succeeded in actually weakening the standard for emergency spending and creates one more loophole for the spender.

Again, the effect of the $11 billion fund is that it effectively nullifies the cap we were promised. The appropriating committee will have no incentive to achieve savings when they can spend every penny of the $1,043 billion base budget all while knowing there is still another $11 billion to be spent when they exhaust the first allotment. The evidence of this is before our very eyes. To date, in one form or another, seven appropriations bills have come before the Senate floor. Four of them have been voted on and passed. The Energy and Water bill is before us this week. We should have been considering each of these bills individually and doing our due diligence, but we haven't. They have been moved through in groups. But, I am glad this legislation, the Energy and Water bill, will be considered on its own, and not bundled with others as a mini-bus or omnibus as the Washington parlance goes. The bad news is that the seven bills we have seen on the floor have already increased spending by $9 billion. We are well on our way to using every cent of the $11 billion fund, with no effort to achieving savings elsewhere to stay under budget.

The Energy and Water bill on the floor now increases spending by $1 billion. That may seem small in Washington terms, but it is the reason we are going broke. A billion here, a billion there, pretty soon it is a great deal of money. If we can't, honestly, even reach the paltry goal of $7 billion in savings, how on Earth can we tackle our $15 trillion debt?

Or consider food stamps. Federal welfare spending is now about $700 billion a year. It is more than $900 billion a year when you count state obligations or contributions to the same programs. Food stamps are the fastest growing major item in the welfare budget. They have quadrupled in 10 years. The Food Stamp Program is one of 18 federal nutritional support programs in the budget—1 of 18. The number of people receiving food stamps has climbed from about 1 in 50, when the program went national, to almost 1 in 7 today.

Some of the more than 45 million people receiving food stamps exceed the program's eligibility requirements. They have higher income or higher assets than you are supposed to have to qualify. But, they received the benefits because they get them as a reciprocal benefit for other Federal benefits they get. If they qualify for one program, they are then categorically entitled to the Food Stamp Program even though they do not meet the basic requirements. And reports of fraud and abuse are widespread.

We were promised recommendations by the chairwoman of the Agriculture Committee, Senator STABENOW, for how the supercommittee could achieve savings in the agriculture budget of which food stamps is the largest component of the entire agriculture budget, by far, dwarfing other expenditures, such as aid to farmers. They were supposed to arrive, the Senator promised, by November 1, but as of now, we are still waiting.

The sad truth is our Democratic-led Senate has not met its responsibility to help this Nation confront its most serious threat, and that is the debt we have. It is the greatest economic danger of our time, as we have repeatedly been warned. If we ultimately fail to control Federal spending, which has nearly doubled in 10 years, we will experience a debt crisis that leads to loss of jobs, loss of growth, and loss of economic opportunity. Such a crisis will hurt those with less income the most. It is our duty to stop the occurrence of this very preventible tragedy.

Instead of the irresponsible spending favored by the political class, it is time for Washington to be more accountable, to focus on the middle class. That means creating jobs through the private sector, producing more American energy, keeping our wealth at home, making the government lean and productive, a servant of the American people, confronting our dangerously rising debt, which threatens our economy and jobs, adopting a globally competitive tax code, upholding the rule of law and trade, eliminating unwise, damaging regulation, and finally, delivering the good people of this country the honest and responsible budget they deserve.

We have a long way to go. I am disappointed we cannot even comply with the intent of the Budget Control Act passed this summer.

I thank the Chair.

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. 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. BROWN of Ohio. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

CHAINED CPI

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, the supercommittee we all talk about—and it meets mostly in secret—is putting out plans and ideas to deal with the deficit—some, I am sure, good; some a little less good. I am concerned about one thing the supercommittee has been talking about—the stories that have come out that I know about, and that is something called the chained Consumer Price Index.

I know that many conservative politicians in this body and down the hall in the House of Representatives have advocated that we change the Consumer Price Index to something called the chained Consumer Price Index.

The way the Consumer Price Index is calculated is especially important for senior citizens because their Social Security cost-of-living adjustment—called the COLA—is predicated on how the cost of living is calculated.

Right now, the cost-of-living adjustment is based on the Consumer Price Index-W, which means it is determined by wages, the cost of living for people in the workplace. It is not determined by the cost of living for retirees even though it affects what retirees get in their cost-of-living adjustment.

That sounds like a lot of words, but here is what that means. It means that when you figure the average increase in the cost of living for the American people—and you are only looking at those who are employed, so they are more likely to be in their twenties, their thirties, their forties, their fifties, maybe in their early sixties or a little older. So if you are only looking at that, the cost of health care is a less significant cost for them in their daily expenses and their monthly expenses and their annual expenses than for someone who is retired.

So I am going to introduce legislation soon that will change the Consumer Price Index-W—wages—to the Consumer Price Index-E, for elderly. The reason is because if you are 70 years old, your cost of living is much more fueled by the cost of health care than if you are 30 years old.

I know Senator MIKULSKI has been a real leader in this, and she is one of the immediate prime cosponsors of our legislation. She has had a terrific record here in the Senate, the senior Senator from Maryland, in fighting for fair play, a fair, strong Social Security and Medicare system, against these plans from conservatives around here to take Social Security and turn it over to Wall Street, to take Medicare and turn it over to the insurance companies.

But our legislation would make it fairer so that seniors would actually have a cost-of-living adjustment based on their cost of living. What is wrong with that? Instead, conservatives around here want to go the other direction, which would reduce the cost-of-living adjustment by this thing called a chained CPI.

The way this chained CPI works in a nutshell is this: If your cost of living is $100 a week, and the chained—instead of eating beef, you could save money by changing to chicken. So they are saying, under this chained CPI, that you should change to chicken and save X number of dollars so your costs would be less.

What this would mean—and I want to read you some statistics—if they get their way, if anti-Social Security conservatives around here get their way, it will mean that senior citizens will get significantly less than they would under the way it works now, let alone the way that we want to change it to, that Senator MIKULSKI and I want to change it to, this CPI-E. It would mean that seniors, by the age of 85, would be getting about $1,000 less in their Social Security. That is just not something we can do.

Here are the exact numbers. Under the chained CPI, a typical 65-year-old would get $136 less today than they would get under the CPI as calculated today. A typical 75-year-old—this is calculated each year, so it is a little bit like the reverse of compounding interest—a typical 75-year-old would get $560 less a year. A typical 80-year-old would get $984 less per year. A typical 95-year-old would get $1,392 less a year.

So what conservative politicians around here want to do—I know you have been on the right side of this, Mr. President, from Minnesota your whole career and before you came to the Senate too—what the conservatives want to do is cut the cost-of-living adjustment even more.

The last 2 years, there was no COLA, there was no cost-of-living adjustment for seniors. What conservative politicians—the ones on the supercommittee who want to do the chained CPI—what they are arguing is that you should have gotten a cut; that instead of no COLA, you should have gotten even less; that this way we do the COLA now is too much money for seniors.

Social Security is not part of the budget deficit. It is not the problem. It does not need fixing. Of course, we always need to make sure Social Security is viable, and it will be for decades in the future. We can make some minor adjustments. But in the name of cutting the budget, cutting Social Security cost-of-living adjustments really affects poor seniors and middle-income seniors. We know that in my State of Ohio and the Presiding Officer's State of Minnesota, Social Security—more than half of the people in my State get more than half of their income from Social Security. So we have no business cutting Social Security.

My legislation would actually be a fairer reflection of the cost of living and is preferable to what some people in this body and some people in the House of Representatives and in the supercommittee want to do—the so-called chained CPI. It is a terrible idea, the chained CPI. It is not fair to our seniors. It is not fair to our country. It is something that should be rejected out of hand.

Then, as we figure this out and move forward, we should think about, do we want to do the CPI-E based on the elderly cost of living, not the CPI-W, based on a 35-year-old's cost of living and how that is reflected.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of New Mexico). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING LLOYD G. JACKSON

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise to speak about an honorable, dedicated public servant and a good friend from West Virginia whom we lost last month on October 29.

Lloyd G. Jackson was a true West Virginian, born in our southern coalfields in a small town in Lincoln County on May 30, 1918. Throughout his 93 years, Lloyd Jackson always answered the call of service—whether it was for our great Nation or for the beautiful people of West Virginia.

Lloyd is the type of person who was well thought of by everyone who met him. From my own personal experience with Lloyd, I can say that I had the utmost respect for his humanitarian approach to every problem, most importantly for his professionalism.

Lloyd's love for country and deep commitment to public service started when he was a young man and enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1941, during World War II. Before he left the military, Lloyd rose to the rank of master sergeant.

After returning from war, Lloyd's commitment to his beloved family and public service continued. He pursued and expanded his family's oil and gas business, and through his business he created good-paying jobs and touched the lives of countless West Virginians.

In 1946, he was elected to serve in the West Virginia State Senate, representing his home region of Bonne, Lincoln, and Logan Counties. That same year a man well known to this body, Senator Robert C. Byrd, was elected to the West Virginia House of Delegates, and joined Lloyd Jackson in the West Virginia Senate in 1950. The two became lifelong friends. For nearly 25 years, Lloyd Jackson represented the people of the southern part of our State with the utmost distinction. Lloyd was known for his leadership qualities as a State senator, and he took an active role in national legislative organizations, such as the National Council of State Legislatures and the Council of State Government.

His peers recognized his leadership abilities and made him president of the West Virginia Senate. As Senate president, Lloyd demonstrated true characteristics of a dedicated public servant—leadership, passion, commitment, and persistence.

Lloyd G. Jackson will forever be remembered for his many years of unwavering service to the Mountain State and its people. However, Lloyd will also be remembered for his passion and dedication to his community and for touching the lives of so many. He was a faithful member of the Central United Methodist Church in Hamlin. Lloyd was a loving husband of nearly 63 years to Pauline and a caring father of two children, Suzanne Rabin of Eugene, OR, and Lloyd II of Hamlin, WV, and a proud grandfather of Lloyd III of Hamlin and Ryan of Palo Alto, CA.

Gayle and I are keeping his wife Pauline and the entire Jackson family in our hearts and prayers. While we know that Lloyd Jackson is gone, his legacy of public service and compassion for the people of West Virginia will live in our hearts forever.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AMENDMENTS NOS. 973 THROUGH 976

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to talk about the four amendments I filed on this bill. I will say right upfront, all four are supported by my Missouri colleague, Senator MCCASKILL, so they are bipartisan amendments. Two of them would deal with a property ownership issue created by an infringement by Federal regulators, by FERC. They both deal with a private power generating dam that was built in 1931. It created a lake called Lake of the Ozarks, and over the years private property owners have constructed literally thousands of homes that on this map beside me are impacted. The houses are the red dots. The other areas in there are thousands of buildings of one kind or another on a lake that is one of the most used lakes in the country. Some people go to those houses on the weekend and a lot of people live there all the time. This is their home.

Since the 1950s, the Lake of the Ozarks has been the most visited lake by boaters in the Midwest. It is a lake that is not owned by the Federal Government. Tourism at this lake totals about $200 million annually. Because of this tourist industry there is lots of private investment.

In 2004, Ameren Electric, the current owner of the lake—it was built, again, in the 1930s by Union Electric, which later became Ameren Electric—applied to FERC to renew their license to generate power at Bagnell Dam, which is the dam that was built to impound the water that created the Lake of the Ozarks. This application also made sure that virtually all of the homes and structures would no longer be subject to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, but FERC rejected this request. The result has been a back and forth between Ameren and FERC and the property owners for the past 7 years.

This finger-pointing by everybody involved—except the property owners, who simply think they own the property—has been nothing short of outrageous and it has left property values, businesses, tourism, tax revenues, and jobs in question. FERC has taken its role too far. FERC is acting as though they are the Corps of Engineers and somehow the taxpayers of America own this property instead of the taxpayers who actually are the individual taxpayers who own the property.

On every acre of land covered by water, taxes have been paid. Property taxes have been paid on that land since the first dream that this lake would be created—so 80 years of taxpayer money. This is not a Corps of Engineers work where the Corps of Engineers can say we own the lake, we own the shoreland, we are going to decide what you are going to do. FERC has taken its role too far and it is engaging in a pattern of enforcing shoreline management rules.

My first amendment would simply modify the Federal Power Act by changing the definition of what could be considered a ''project purpose.'' Currently, FERC recognizes public recreational use of land but not private ownership. We would not say they could no longer recognize public recreational use of land, but we would say that they have to recognize private ownership. If FERC, at a lake such as this, can decide access to the land, why can't FERC or some other Federal agency drive by a farmer's farm and say: That is a nice pond out there. I will bet it has some fish in it. Why don't we ensure that everybody who wants to have access to that farmer's pond has access to that farmer's pond?

Maybe I should not suggest that. Maybe some Federal agency would hear that and say: It is water, it is pleasant, people ought to be able to enjoy it; everybody ought to be able to enjoy it just like the people who own the property and build the property and do their work.

My amendment would stop FERC from putting the commission's policy preferences above those of ratepayers and private landowners in licensing this dam.

My second amendment would simply redraw the boundaries of the Lake of the Ozarks to reflect the 662-foot contour as necessitated by changing water levels over the past 80 years. It would limit FERC's ability to issue an order to remove structures in what they now consider a project boundary until that boundary has been more finally settled. It would limit FERC's ability to reject applications as long as power generation is still preserved.

The purpose of FERC is to see that a power generating dam generates power. It is not to control everything that is

behind that dam. That is not the job of FERC. In fact, let me leave those two amendments with a few stories of Missouri homeowners who shared their stories with me about how FERC and FERC's actions affected their lives.

This is a 30-year-old house that these homeowners have paid property taxes on for 30 years. In fact, you can see this large pine tree in front of this house. It was a seedling when they started paying property taxes, and that is a big tree. They paid property taxes the whole time. It is their first home. It is their only home. They have been informed that they are within the Bagnell Dam boundary, meaning they risk losing their house. In fact, it is one of 17 homes in this subdivision facing the same problem.

In another home, Fred and Barbara Lowtharp purchased this home 15 years ago. It was built 35 years ago. These are not new homes that somebody has just put on this property in the last couple of years and FERC has come in and said you made a mistake. This is a 35-year-old home that the current owners have lived in for 5 years. Barbara shared this with me on Facebook. She said:

We have been paying taxes and upkeep on our homes and new homes have been built around us within the last 2 years with permits and titles. These homes are not cabins. The majority of us live here year round.

This is according to the owner:

We have our money invested in these properties in good faith when we bought them, going through the right procedures and thinking you are a property owner for over 16 years, then being told your deed isn't worth the paper it is written on is something that you cannot understand how this can happen in the U.S.A.

This is the Facebook note continued: ''Really feel bullied by the FERC agency and Ameren.''

We owe it to the citizens involved to see that the Federal Government doesn't come in and just simply take their property. It is not fair. Imagine, you get a new job somewhere, this is your home, you cannot sell your home and buy a new home because FERC suddenly decided, after 16 years of paying taxes, that your land is not owned by you even though the county tax collectors thought it had been owned by you the whole time.

Let me discuss quickly the other two amendments that deal with flood control. The Missouri and Mississippi Rivers have both been impacted dramatically by flooding this year. In Holt County alone, there was an astonishing 165,000 acres under water, most of it for 3 and 4 months. In Birds Point in the boot heel of Missouri, another 130,000 additional acres of farmland is under water. In total, we had over 400,000 acres, 600 square miles—something about the size of the entire State of Rhode Island—under water during parts of this year. Vital transportation corridors have been closed, highways washed out, businesses shut down and people have been dealing with this now for months.

My first amendment, amendment No. 976, cuts the bureaucratic redtape if all you are doing is putting back something that was there before the flood. If you are rebuilding a levee, if you are putting back things that were there before the flood, to rebuild levees or locks or dams that were damaged by the flood, you should be able to do it. You should not have to go through all kinds of studies to decide if the levee that you are putting back as it was and where it was can be there again. This is the only chance we have to get these structures back in place before the 2012 flooding season starts.

Of course, in 2012 it would not have to be a flood of this size to create great problems if the levee is already gone. That is what that amendment would do. It gives the Corps the tools they need to restore flood protection to the 2011 levels, hopefully before the 2012 runoff season begins.

I want to talk about amendment No. 975, which restricts funding of the Missouri River Fish and Wildlife Recovery Program to $22 million. This still leaves a lot of money for that program, but it takes the other money that has been available for that program all year and makes it available to meet the critical flood control crisis.

We have already spent more than $616 million on that program. This is essentially a program that is one of the big projects where the government buys land from willing sellers who want to let it become more of a wetland or a wildlife reserve, something such as that. I am not saying that willing sellers should not be able to do that, but I am saying for right now $22 million—not something more like $72 million—is enough.

In fact, we have had citizens in some of these counties call the Corps to be told truthfully: No, we don't have sufficient funds to restore the flood protection you are eligible for, but we could buy your farm. Imagine if you are on the other end of that call and you have a family farm and you are calling to find out what you can do about the levee or what you can do to get flood protection back, and they say: We cannot do anything about the levee, but we could buy your farm. If you want to go back to the kitchen table and decide if you want to sell out, the taxpayers of America have plenty of money to buy your farm, but, no, we don't have money to restore the levee that was protecting your farm just a few days ago. That is not acceptable.

That is why Senator MCCASKILL and I are cosponsoring all four of these amendments. We recognize that these issues are critically important in our State. In fact, the last two amendments are critically important in the seven States that start in Montana and end in St. Louis, MO, that are impacted by flooding in all seven of those States this year.

I hope we are able to consider these amendments, and I hope my colleagues will join me in trying to do what is right for the people we were sent here to work for.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

(The remarks of Mr. HATCH and Mr. BARRASSO pertaining to the introduction of S. 1880 are located in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I 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. HOEVEN. 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. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of amendment No. 1045 to H.R. 2354, which is the Energy and Water appropriations legislation. This amendment rebalances funding for the fossil energy research and development account in the U.S. Department of Energy from within the existing budget. I want to point out that this action results in no additional spending. It is simply an adjustment within the existing budget.

You may have heard recently about the tremendous progress we are making in the State of North Dakota when it comes to oil and gas development. We are also developing many of our other energy resources as well. Over the past decade, through a comprehensive energy plan called Empower North Dakota that we have put together, we have advanced all of our energy resources in tandem, and we have done it with good environmental stewardship. That includes coal, wind, biofuels and, of course, oil and gas.

In a little more than a decade, North Dakota has grown from the ninth to the fourth largest oil and gas-producing State in the country, having surpassed oil-producing States such as Oklahoma and Louisiana. If our current estimates are on target, we will soon pass California and become the third largest oil-producing State in the Nation. That growth is the product of a progrowth legal, tax, and regulatory environment that we have built with the right kind of pro-business policies. At the same time we have, as I said, developed a comprehensive approach and a comprehensive energy policy called Empower North Dakota. In addition, we have put in place cutting-edge research, which has also been a very important part of our energy strategy for the State. It was new technologies and

methods such as directional drilling that brought the innovative research over the past decade to tap the abundant petroleum reserves of the Bakken formation and other shale formations in North Dakota's oil patch. Directional drilling has not only enabled the recovery of oil in hard-to-reach vertical layers of shale, but it has also enabled multiple well bores to be drilled from a single pad. The result is more oil but also a much smaller environmental footprint. That is good for the energy industry, that is good for the environment, and that is good for American workers, with tremendous job creation, and, of course, for our consumers.

My amendment would redirect research dollars within the budget of the fossil energy research and development provision in this appropriations bill, and that would include $5 million that would be provided for in the natural gas technologies research and development, and also $10 million would be provided for unconventional oil or fossil energy technology development. Both of these research and development areas are very critically important, not only for more energy development but again for doing it in an environmentally sound way.

Because this $15 million is offset with funds from within the fossil energy research and development budget, it results in no additional expenditure to the account. Obviously with our deficit and our debt, that is very important. What the amendment will do is empower research into the next generation of petroleum and natural gas technologies to produce more energy, again, with better environmental stewardship.

This amendment will fund research in a range of important areas, including using carbon dioxide to enhance oil recovery in mature oilfields and reducing the environmental impact of natural gas and oil development. Notably, this research will continue to drive and develop new technologies for gas purification to achieve near zero atmospheric emissions, an economic as well as an environmental goal.

In short, this is the kind of research that will help to increase our supplies of domestic energy, reduce our reliance on foreign energy and foreign sources, and hold down the cost of foreign energy for American consumers and American businesses—all with better environmental stewardship.

This amendment will help us do all of these things and much more, and I ask for my colleagues' support.

Also, while I have the floor, I wish to express my support for two other amendments to H.R. 2354. These include amendment No. 975 and also amendment No. 976. I am pleased to have cosponsored both of these amendments with Senator ROY BLUNT of Missouri.

As you are well aware, there has been extensive flooding along the Missouri River over the course of this past year, all the way from Montana and North Dakota and the upper basin, down through the State of Missouri and the other lower basin States. As a result, we have been working hard with our citizens to recover from that flooding.

One of the things we have pressed the Corps of Engineers to do as aggressively as they can is to provide more flood protection so we not only help our citizens recover from the flooding this year, but so we can do all that we can to prevent flooding next year. At the same time we are pressing them to take all of the preventive measures they can to reduce lake levels, reduce reservoir levels so we have adequate room and protection to prevent flooding next year, we are also working within their budget to make sure they have the resources to address these needs.

Amendment No. 975 essentially takes $50 million that is within the Corps of Engineers' budget that is now used for the Missouri River recovery program—meaning things such as building sandbars and some of the riparian areas along the river. Currently there is a total of $72 million in that Corps of Engineers account. What we are doing is saying that $50 million of that should be made available so they can utilize it to enhance flood protection. This is a critical need right now. They are working diligently to repair dams, dikes, and levees.

We are pressing for them to do more in terms of preparing as far as water levels throughout the upper and lower basin, and at the same time we are providing assistance in their budget by giving them the flexibility to use dollars where they need them to enhance flood protection. This is $50 million within their budget that can now be used to enhance flood protection, and I strongly urge my colleagues to support amendment No. 975 to H.R. 2354, again, giving the Corps of Engineers needed flexibility to provide flood protection that is so important to the people along the Missouri River in the upper basin and lower basin.

Amendment No. 976 essentially provides that same flexibility and assistance. Essentially it eliminates the redtape. It prevents the Corps from having to get new permits, new licenses, or new approvals as they work to repair and restore levees, locks, and dams. So as they work along the Missouri River—the entire length of the Missouri River—to restore those flood protection measures—whether it is a levee, a lock, dike, or dam, whatever it might be—we are waiving those requirements to get new permits and new licenses and new approvals so they can get that work done now, this year, and be prepared for next year.

Again, the flooding has been devastating and extensive along the Missouri River. In my home State, it is not just the Missouri River but along the Souris River, as well as other areas. The Red River and Cheyenne had a terrible time with flooding. We need to take the kind of steps that will help our people recover but will also help us prepare for the future so we don't face these types of floods next year or any other year in the future.

Again, I encourage support from my colleagues on these very important amendments.

I thank the Chair for this time.

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

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

WASHINGTON'S SPENDING ADDICTION

Mr. DEMINT. Madam President, I was just listening to the news in my office, and I heard the report that the United States has gone over $15 trillion in debt. Of course, that is just our short-term debt. It doesn't really include our unfunded liabilities, which some estimate to be $100 trillion. But, nonetheless, $15 trillion is the size of our total economy—a condition that would mean certain bankruptcy for almost any business.

All of us in these Chambers have stood in awe, I guess, looking across the Atlantic at Greece and Italy and some of our European trading partners, and it seems amazing to us that despite their terrible fiscal condition, the politicians in Greece cannot even cut spending. They talk about cutting it, but the government employees are out in the street demonstrating, and one just has to think, can't they see what is happening? Why do they want to keep spending? It is like there is an addiction.

But here we are in the land of the free, the city on the hill for the world as far as the country that sets the example for free markets and free enterprise—a country that has fought wars to keep the rest of the world free—and here we are in a situation where we have to borrow well over $100 billion every month just to keep the lights on in this place, just to keep our country going.

All year long, we have been having these public showdowns about how we need to cut spending. We have threatened government shutdowns over the continuing resolutions and over increasing the debt limit. One would think that by this point we would be cutting spending to some degree. We have established this supercommittee, supposedly to deal with our huge deficits. Yet we are passing spending bills this week—today—that increase spending versus last year. Last year, we spent 5 percent more than the year before.

In reality, in some ways, our country is worse off than Europe because we have Federal debt, we have State debt, we have municipal debt, we have counties declaring bankruptcy, we have

States approaching bankruptcy, and yet we continue to spend more now than we did last year. After all of the fuss and fighting and brinkmanship and supercommittees, we can't seem to cut anything here. In fact, we are increasing spending.

The goal of the supercommittee is not to cut spending; it is not to cut our debt at all. The goal of the supercommittee is to reduce the amount we are going to borrow over 10 years—maybe reduce it from $10 trillion to $8 trillion or $9 trillion.

We are not even on the same page with reality right now. We have increased spending so dramatically over the last few years—we have added $4 trillion to our debt since President Obama came into office, we passed a $1 trillion stimulus, and we passed ObamaCare, adding trillions of dollars in spending.

Instead of talking about cutting, the debate now seems to be, how can we take more from the American people in taxes to feed our addiction? We have focused our guns on those very people who create our jobs and create most of the opportunity in our country, people who are already paying the largest portion of national taxes of any country in the world because we have shifted so much of the tax burden onto the top income earners. We are blaming them for the wealth gap when, in fact, the real blame for the wealth gap comes from the government taking so much out of the private sector, regulating with such a heavy hand, and having the second highest corporate tax rate in the world.

The problem with the middle class is not those who are making too much money; it is a Federal Government that doesn't understand that the more we spend and borrow, the fewer jobs there are going to be in our country today. Yet that is the big argument here. Instead of cutting spending, we are actually talking about taking more from hard-working American taxpayers and bringing it in here and giving it to the people who have created that $15 trillion in debt. How could anyone make sense of that?

It is really pretty amazing, after all the promises we have made to the American people, that we are watching our debt go up like this—passing $15 trillion—and we still can't talk about any substantive cuts.

Let me give one example of something that makes so much sense. Over the last two decades, we have seen welfare spending increase nearly 300 percent. There are 77 means-tested welfare programs, and over the last couple of decades, since welfare reform, the spending has increased nearly 300 percent. That is more than the combined increase of Social Security and Medicare. It is more than the increases in education or in defense. Are we helping people? Not at all. We have more people in poverty than we ever have had, and we are discouraging self-sufficiency while encouraging dependency on government.

In the last 4 years alone, we have nearly doubled what we are paying for food stamps, from $40 billion to $80 billion in this year's budget. If all we did was return welfare spending to 2007 levels, we could save almost $2.5 trillion over the next 10 years. That is twice the goal of the supercommittee in cuts. But are we even thinking about it? Is it even on the table? Absolutely not, because the one thing I have seen with this place is we are very good at getting bipartisan agreement on increasing spending in areas of need, but we seldom see bipartisan agreement on any cuts. Would we look at responsible caps on welfare spending? Not even a chance. It is not even on the table with the supercommittee discussions.

With Medicaid alone, if we return spending to 2007 levels, we could save more than the goal of the supercommittee of $1.2 trillion, but we are not willing to discuss cuts.

I think it is a sad day for America that we are plowing past $15 trillion, pretending to be responsible to the American people, while last week and this week and on into the rest of the year, we are going to be passing spending bills that spend more than we spent last year. At the same time, we are supposedly in a recession, Americans are tightening their belts, many are out of work, and what we are talking about here is, let's continue to spend and take more from hard-working, taxpaying Americans so we can keep our spending addiction going here in Washington.

It is utterly irresponsible, what we are doing. All the President can do is point at those whom he calls millionaires, who are generally the people who are creating the jobs, running the small businesses, and having the most to do with creating the investment that makes our economy grow, and try to blame them for the problems we create here in Washington.

It is time we keep our promises to the American people. I know it is hard for some in these Chambers to cut spending because dependency on government often means a dependable vote for many politicians. It is time we look at the future and the debt that we are loading onto ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren. This country will not survive the types of policies we are producing here in Washington today.

This supercommittee should look at real cuts in spending. If our Democratic colleagues are not willing to go along with responsible spending caps on programs such as welfare, then we need to walk away from the table and take our case to the American people and tell them what is really the truth, which is that the elections in 2012 may be our last chance to turn this around. We cannot keep spending at this level and keep taking more and more from the private sector, from the job producers in our country, bringing it here to Washington, and spending it on wasteful programs that are fraught with fraud and duplication and not even ever consider cutting any of them.

Last week, Dr. COBURN had a couple of amendments to an appropriations bill that had some very small cuts to what had been deemed wasteful, ineffective programs. On one of his amendments, he only got 13 votes. So this is clearly a bipartisan problem.

We need to cut spending. Washington has a spending problem, it does not have a low-tax problem. It is time we focus our attention on reducing the size and scope of the Federal Government and having it live within constitutional boundaries. We need to eliminate programs that are wasteful, return others to the States, and trim our budget to the point where we can pay for what we are spending so that we will not keep adding trillions and trillions of dollars of debt on to our country and our citizens and our next generation.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. AKAKA. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I may speak as in morning business for 5 minutes.

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

(The remarks of Mr. AKAKA are printed in today's RECORD under ''Morning Business.'')

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we started out this week hoping we could complete a minibus—that means to do what we did a couple weeks ago and complete three appropriations bills at the same time. We had three good subjects. We had the underlying bill, Energy and Water. We moved from that and added to that Financial Services and Foreign Operations. We were unable to get a consent agreement that we could treat the package of bills the same way we treat other appropriations bills; that is, you cannot legislate on an appropriations bill and there have to be germane amendments offered. I was disappointed that we didn't get that agreement. I accept that.

The best news out of this is that, with the underlying bill, we have two of the finest Senators the Senate has ever had, Senators FEINSTEIN and ALEXANDER. They are knowledgeable,

easy to work with, and they understand that legislation is the art of compromise. They have done a wonderful job in the last 24 hours, working down the amendments. We have a number of amendments on the Republican side—a finite list—and we should have a Democratic list very quickly. We need to work it down a little more.

I appreciate very much the good work of Senator ALEXANDER and Senator FEINSTEIN. The normal process would be to pull the bill. We are not going to do that. We are going to leave the bill on the calendar so we can move to it in a minute's notice, really. We will keep it around, and we hope to be able to move to that soon. We are going to have some down time, and anytime we do that, we should be able to finish this bill in a day or day and a half once we get the amendments worked out.

This will give us the opportunity to move to the Defense authorization bill. I indicated to Senators LEVIN and MCCAIN well over a month ago that I would move to this bill. Not everything is worked out in it, but that is nothing unusual. It is a huge bill. Senators LEVIN, MCCAIN, LINDSEY GRAHAM, and others have worked hard to try to work out one of the problem areas we have had, and significant progress has been made. It really doesn't matter.

I have spoken to one Democratic Senator, and he still isn't very happy about some information that is in that bill. I told him he could offer an amendment quickly and try to assert his position.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S. 1867

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following morning business tomorrow, Thursday, November 17, 2011, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 230, S. 1867, which is the Defense authorization bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is important to announce to the Senate because of this that there will be no rollcall votes tonight.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana is recognized.

COMMEMORATING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED STATES-AUSTRALIA ALLIANCE

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 324, submitted earlier today.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 324) commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the United States-Australia alliance.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate, and that any statements related thereto be printed in the RECORD.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 324) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 324

Whereas the United States Government enhanced its relationship with the Governments of Australia and New Zealand with the signing of the Australia-New Zealand-United States (ANZUS) Treaty on September 1, 1951, and subsequently engaged in annual, bilateral Australian-United States Ministerial (AUSMIN) consultations between the Australian Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence and the United States Secretaries of State and Defense, including a meeting in San Francisco in September 2011 that commemorated the 60th anniversary of the United States-Australia alliance;

Whereas the alliance remains fundamental to the security of Australia and the United States and to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region, and is one dimension of a broad and deep relationship between the two countries that encompasses robust bilateral strategic, intelligence, trade, and investment relations based on shared interests and values, a common history and cultural traditions, and mutual respect;

Whereas numerous visits by Presidents of the United States, including this week by President Barack Obama, and by the Australian Prime Minister to the United States, including in 2011 when Prime Minister Julia Gillard addressed a Joint Session of Congress, have underscored the strength and closeness of the relationship;

Whereas members of the United States and Australian armed forces have fought side-by-side in every major conflict since the First World War, with the commitment to mutual defense and security between the United States and Australia being longstanding and unshakeable, as was demonstrated by the joint decision to invoke the ANZUS Treaty in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks;

Whereas the Governments of the United States and Australia continue to share a common approach to the most pressing issues in global defense and security, including in Afghanistan, where about 1,550 Australian Defence Force personnel are deployed, and in response to natural disasters and humanitarian crises, such as in Japan following the earthquake and subsequent tsunami in March 2011;

Whereas Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently stated, ''We are expanding our alliance with Australia from a Pacific partnership to an Indo-Pacific one, and indeed a global partnership. . . . Australia's counsel and commitment have been indispensable.'';

Whereas Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta recently remarked that ''the United States has no closer ally than Australia. . . . [We] affirm this alliance, affirm that it remains strong, and that we are determined to deepen our security cooperation even further to counter the threats and challenges that we face in the future.'';

Whereas the Governments of the United States and Australia agreed to set up a Force Posture Working Group at the November 2010 AUSMIN to examine options to align respective force postures consistent with the national security requirements of both countries and to help positively shape the regional security environment;

Whereas the United States and Australia committed in a Joint Statement on Cyberspace during the 2011 AUSMIN meeting to consult together and determine appropriate options to address any threats;

Whereas the Government of Australia is a major purchaser of United States military resources, approximately 50 percent of Australia's war-fighting assets are sourced from the United States, and the Government of Australia has plans to spend a substantial sum over the next 10–15 years to update or replace up to about 85 percent of its military equipment;

Whereas, on September 29, 2010, the Senate provided its advice and consent to ratification of the Treaty Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Australia Concerning Defense Trade Cooperation, signed at Sydney, Australia, September 5, 2007, which will facilitate defense trade between the two nations and enhance interoperability between military forces;

Whereas the Governments of the United States and Australia support open, transparent, and inclusive regional architectures to preserve and enhance peace, security, and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region;

Whereas the Governments of the United States and Australia cooperate closely in regional and global forums, as evidenced by Australia's support for the United States as the host this month of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in 2011 and the United States' support for Australia to host the G–20 in 2014;

Whereas the United States and Australia elevated their trade relationship through the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement that entered into force on January 1, 2005, and exports of United States goods to Australia have risen by 53 percent since that time, totaling $21,900,000,000 in 2010;

Whereas the United States is Australia's largest destination for foreign investment, helping create jobs for United States workers, with Australian companies employing more than 88,000 people directly in the United States;

Whereas the Governments and people of the United States and Australia work closely to advance and support human rights, the rule of law, and basic freedoms worldwide;

Whereas the Governments and people of the United States and Australia work jointly and separately to support democracy, economic reform, and good governance in the Pacific Islands, Southeast Asia, South and Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, among other areas of the world; and

Whereas the Governments of the United States and Australia are working through their respective aid agencies (USAID and AusAID) and also exploring opportunities for collaboration across a wide variety of areas: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) celebrates the 60th Anniversary of the United States-Australia alliance and takes this opportunity to reiterate the enduring significance of this historic friendship that