

[Rollcall Vote No. 23 Ex.]

YEAS—86

Akaka	Enzi	Murkowski
Alexander	Feinstein	Murray
Ayotte	Franken	Nelson (NE)
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Nelson (FL)
Baucus	Graham	Paul
Begich	Grassley	Pryor
Bennet	Hagan	Reed
Bingaman	Hatch	Reid
Blumenthal	Heller	Risch
Blunt	Hoeben	Roberts
Boozman	Hutchison	Rockefeller
Boxer	Isakson	Rubio
Brown (MA)	Johanns	Sanders
Brown (OH)	Johnson (SD)	Schumer
Burr	Johnson (WI)	Sessions
Cantwell	Kerry	Shaheen
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shelby
Carper	Kohl	Snowe
Casey	Kyl	Tester
Chambliss	Leahy	Thune
Coats	Levin	Toomey
Cochran	Lieberman	Udall (CO)
Collins	Lugar	Udall (NM)
Conrad	Manchin	Warner
Coons	McConnell	Webb
Corker	Menendez	Whitehouse
Cornyn	Merkley	Wicker
Crapo	Mikulski	Wyden
Durbin	Moran	

NAYS—2

DeMint Lee

NOT VOTING—12

Coburn	Kirk	McCaskill
Harkin	Landrieu	Portman
Inhofe	Lautenberg	Stabenow
Inouye	McCain	Vitter

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). Under the previous order, a motion to reconsider is considered made and laid on the table. The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate shall resume legislative session.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be a period of morning business up to 60 minutes, equally divided and controlled by Senators PRYOR and ALEXANDER.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator PRYOR and I and designated Senators be allowed to speak in a colloquy.

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

MAKING THE SENATE WORK

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, some of the Senators on the Republican side have other appointments to make, so I am going to defer my remarks until the end of the colloquy.

What I will do is first state why we are here; second, go to Senator ISAKSON, then we will go to Senator PRYOR, and then back to Senator COLLINS, if we may.

Madam President, our leaders—the Democratic leader, the majority leader and the Republican leader—sometimes get criticized. They have hard jobs, and we recognize that. We also recognize

that they can't do their jobs unless we do our jobs well. So tonight what some of us thought we would do, on the Democratic side and the Republican side, is apply a management principle that is called "catching people doing things right."

We believe the majority leader and the minority leader, Senator INOUE, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and Senator COCHRAN, the ranking member, are doing things exactly right when they say it is their intention to try to move all 12 of our appropriations bills through the Appropriations Committee and get them to the floor so we can deal with them before the next fiscal year starts. We are here not just to compliment them but to pledge to them our support in helping them achieve that goal.

There are many important reasons we should do that, but basically it is our constitutional responsibility to appropriate money. It is a time when we need to save every penny we can. This is our best opportunity for oversight, and it is also good management, and it allows the Senate to do what the Senate ought to do, which is consider legislation, have a hearing, ask questions, cut out what ought to be cut out, add what ought to be added, vote on it, bring it to the floor, amend it, debate on it, and pass it or defeat it. That is what we should be doing. Only twice since 2000 has this Senate actually considered every single one of the 12 appropriations bills. Only twice, in 2001 and 2005. So it has been 7 years since we considered every single one of the appropriation bills, which is our most basic responsibility: appropriate and oversight.

That is why we are here tonight. Our leaders have said this is what their intention is. We are here to say: You are right. Congratulations. We compliment you, and we are here to help you succeed. Because it is very difficult for our leaders to succeed if they don't have any followers making it possible for them to achieve their goals.

I would defer to Senator ISAKSON and then to Senator PRYOR.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. I thank Senator ALEXANDER for giving me a moment on the floor.

It is ironic that when I received the call last week asking if I would participate in this colloquy, I was traveling my State doing townhall meetings. I was near Ooltewah, TN, on Thursday night, north of Dalton, GA, and Murray County. We had a townhall meeting, and this fellow in the back of the room raised his hand when it came time for questions.

He said: Mr. ISAKSON, I have got a question for you. I said: What is that? He said: Last night, my wife and I amended our budget that we established in December for this year because some things have not gone so well, and we had to recast how we are spending our money so we wouldn't go

any further in debt than we already are. Why can't you all do the same thing? "You all," talking about us.

A few days earlier in Dublin, GA, a great, prosperous town in south Georgia, a similar question was asked by a Chamber of Commerce director who couldn't understand why the Federal Government and the Congress of the United States could not wrap their arms around fiscal responsibility, have a budget, and have appropriations acts that come to the floor, are debated, are amended, and the spending of the United States of America's government is spent like the households of the United States of America have to spend their money.

So I commend Senator ALEXANDER and Senator PRYOR for bringing this to the floor, and I want to commend our leaders for making affirmative statements about the desire to bring the 12 appropriations bills to the floor of the Senate, debate them, let us amend them, and let us bring them together.

If you think about it, in the last 3 years we have had a situation where we either had continuing resolutions or omnibus appropriations. During a difficult period of time where we have had deficits of \$1.3 trillion to \$1.5 trillion, we haven't taken the time to debate how we are spending our money, where we are spending our money, and doing it in the context of what we call on the floor regular order. In fact, it is not hard to understand why only 11 percent of the American people view the Congress as favorable, because they can't understand our inability to do what they have to do themselves. The IRS doesn't take excuses on April 15 if you are not ready. You have got to be ready. If you are a business and you file as an LLC or a sub S corporation, on the 15th of January, the 15th of April, the 15th of June, and the 15th of September, you file a quarterly tax return; and if you don't, you are held accountable.

We are now going into our fourth year, and it looks as though for the first time in the last 3 years we are going to have debate on the floor of how we spend the American people's money. I commend Senator ALEXANDER and Senator PRYOR, and I thank our leadership for making the statement of the desire to do so. I have already seen Senator INOUE and I have already seen Senator COCHRAN working diligently in the basic appropriations subcommittees to see to it that those bills come to the floor. I think it is time we do our business just as the American people do their business, and I commend Senator ALEXANDER and Senator PRYOR for calling for this colloquy tonight.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. PRYOR. Madam President, since we have other Senators on the floor, what I would like to do is withhold my comments until a few of our other colleagues have a chance to speak, if that would be permissible to Senator ALEXANDER?

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I appreciate the courtesy of the Senator from Arkansas. The Senator from Maine is here. She has another appointment, and I await hearing what she has to say.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine is recognized.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, first let me thank the Senator from Arkansas and the Senator from Tennessee for their usual courtesies but also for organizing this colloquy on the Senate floor this evening. I am very pleased to join my colleagues as we talk about the goal of taking up the fiscal year 2013 appropriations bills in what we in the Senate call the regular order.

What does that mean? As the Presiding Officer is well aware, that means we would bring up each of the individual bills, they would be open to full and fair debate, they would be amended, they would be voted on, and we would avoid having some colossal bill at the end of the year that combines all the appropriations bills. Those bills are often thousands of pages in length. A lot of times some of the provisions have not had the opportunity to be thoroughly vetted. They really are not very transparent. They contribute to the public's concern about the way we do business here in Washington.

I too join in commending the majority leader, the Republican leader, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and the vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee for their commitment to try to work together in a bipartisan fashion so each and every one of the appropriations bills can be brought before the full Senate so that we can work our will on each of these bills. I suggest that it is important to the Senate as an institution that we achieve this goal. It is also important for the American people to see that we can carry out our constitutional responsibility. Most of all, it is important for restoring trust in government that we work together in an open and bipartisan manner to establish priorities, to make the tough spending decisions that will be required, and to complete on time the work the Constitution requires of us.

I believe it is important to remember that these bills make important investments in research, economic development, infrastructure, our national defense, education, and health care, and that these bills not only create jobs now when they are needed most but also establish the foundations for future growth.

Just as important to our economic future is the need to rein in Federal spending. Our work must continue toward the goal of getting our national debt under control.

The best way for us to achieve these goals is for each and every one of the appropriations bills to come before the full Senate and for us to work our will on those bills. That is the way the Senate should operate. It is the way we must operate in order to restore the

faith of the American people in this institution.

Let me conclude my remarks by thanking Senator ALEXANDER and Senator PRYOR for initiating this colloquy tonight. This is the way we can come together, and America will be better for it.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I see the Senator from Virginia, Mr. WARNER, has arrived. He, with Senator PRYOR, has been very active in the last several months in working across party lines to try to make the Senate function more effectively. I would leave it to Senator PRYOR as to what comes next.

Mr. PRYOR. If it is agreeable with the Senator from Tennessee, I will ask the Senator from Virginia to say a few words. We understand he has a pressing engagement. I don't think there is anything more pressing than when it is your wife's birthday, so he would like to say a few words, if that is agreeable to the Senator from Tennessee.

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

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Arkansas and my good friend from Tennessee for initiating this effort. Again, as a relatively new Senator—in fact, I jumped the line. I apologize. As the Presiding Officer would support, it is only in the interest of family values; if I were not getting to my wife's birthday in about 30 minutes, I would be able to give more extended remarks.

As a Senator who has only had the opportunity to serve in this body for 3 years, I hear my more senior colleagues talk about the old days or the days when the Senate took up in an orderly fashion the business of the people and debated it in vigorous fashion but came to conclusion on issues that confronted the country. We have done some of that in the years when I came in with the Presiding Officer. There were issues of major importance that we have debated. But too often in recent times, we have not had the favor of those kinds of debates.

While we can disagree about many of the grave issues of the day, as a former businessperson, I know there is nothing more important than to give predictability to the enterprise we call the Federal Government. The way we do that is by passing spending bills—the appropriations bills—where hard choices are made about which programs to fund, which programs not to fund.

Like my friend the Senator from Tennessee and both Senators from Arkansas and the Presiding Officer, I have enormous concerns about our debt and deficit. We are going to have to make hard choices. But if we are going to make those choices, we need a full and vigorous debate, a debate where amendments are offered, where procedural tactics are not used to slow that debate, and where the will of the Senate is enacted.

I understand that the majority leader and the Republican leader have reached

some accommodation to try to start a new way of business, and the first step of that business should be having us, in a fair and orderly process, debate appropriations bills, make those hard choices, and move on.

I again thank my colleagues for their courtesy but particularly thank the Senator from Tennessee and the senior Senator from Arkansas for bringing us together on the floor to lend our voices. This might even be like a volunteer fire department where Members of the Senate can rush down on an issue of importance. I heard the call that there were Senators down here talking on this important issue, and I am glad to add my voice to it.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I congratulate the Senator from Virginia, who has worked in many different ways to try to get a result here. People say: I see your goal is to try to be more bipartisan. My goal is not to be more bipartisan, my goal is to get a result. I learned in the public schools of Maryville, TN, how to count, and if you need 60 votes to succeed and we have only 47 over here and only 53 over there, we have to find some things we agree on if we are ever going to get a result. We can start with these appropriations bills, which are our basic work.

Not only is the senior Senator from Arkansas here today, having been a part of these discussions to try to help the Senate be a more effective institution, so is the other Senator from Arkansas. I look forward to hearing his remarks. I thank him for his leadership.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, I am also here tonight to compliment my Senate colleagues, Senators INOUE and COCHRAN, and the members of the Appropriations Committee as well as Majority Leader REID and Republican Leader MCCONNELL as they commit to do their best to pass all 13 appropriations bills. I also thank the senior Senator from Tennessee and my senior Senator from Arkansas for making this possible.

I do think it is very important. Each one of us in this Chamber owes it to the American people to work together to help our country today and build a path for success in the future. Our Founding Fathers laid the foundation that allows the Senate to function effectively and efficiently, but it requires working together. The American people are tired of the finger-pointing that has stalled much of the work they sent us here to do, but today I am hopeful that we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel which starts with trying to enact all 13 appropriations bills through a regular process this year.

I again applaud Majority Leader REID, Republican Leader MCCONNELL, Senators INOUE and COCHRAN, and also the members of the Appropriations Committee for agreeing to do their very best to move the appropriations bills forward.

Determining how we spend our hard-earned taxpayer dollars is the basic responsibility for Congress. We know tough choices will have to be made on the appropriations bills, but moving forward is the right decision. This is an important step to reducing government spending and helping to balance our budget while investing in programs upon which Americans have come to rely. Moving forward on these bills returns the Senate to its proper function and provides a framework of spending so the American people can see and understand where their hard-earned money is going, as the Senator from Georgia alluded to earlier.

In recent days Members of Congress have worked together to find solutions to the troubles Americans are facing. This level of cooperation was evident in headlines. One newspaper reported that "Washington is talking again." This should not be the exception. This needs to be the rule.

I am hopeful that the agreement on moving forward with the appropriations bills through our regular process sets a new trend that will become a standard. I can see from the people who have spoken before me tonight and those who are waiting to talk that there is widespread bipartisan support for these efforts to continue.

Our leaders' efforts show the proper way for the Senate to function, and I encourage all of my colleagues to come together, not only to help move forward on these bills, but also, as we work through regular order of the Senate, that will help us get our economy and our country back on track.

I again thank our senior Senator from Tennessee and my senior Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, before we go to the senior Senator from Arkansas, I wish to thank Senator BOOZMAN for his comments and his attitude. I am not a bit surprised that, since he arrived here, he has been a very constructive force in the Senate, interested in results. He was a member of the University of Arkansas football team back in the early 1970s, and he knows what a team is. He knows that if the quarter back calls a play and everybody runs in a different direction, nobody scores.

It is good to have him here. He is an excellent Member of the Senate. I thank him for his participation tonight and yield to the Senator from Arkansas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

Mr. BOOZMAN. The only thing I would say is that Senator PRYOR reminds me that I was a Razorback two stadiums ago.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. PRYOR. Madam President, I likewise wish to thank Senator BOOZMAN. He keeps calling me the senior Senator. We are partners. He does great work for the State of Arkansas, and I appreciate his leadership. Al-

though he has been here a short time, his presence has definitely been felt in the Senate already, and I look forward to working with him as long as we are both here. I really appreciate him being here tonight because the hour is late in Washington. It is after 6:30 now, and I appreciate him carving out some time.

Article I, section 9 of the U.S. Constitution simply states that "no money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in consequence of appropriations made by law." Like a lot of things in the Constitution, it is a fairly simple statement, but it is loaded with importance. We can all talk about this clause as a power given to Congress in the Constitution, and I think that is true, but I also classify it as a responsibility.

As a congress, it is our responsibility to write annual appropriations laws to fund the government's commitments to its citizens. It is our responsibility to do that. The principle of an appropriation is a basic rule of governing, and I think a lot of people would agree that we have lost sight of many of the basics around here. I believe the basics are important, and I would like to get back to them, which includes the Senate—and hopefully the House—passing the annual appropriations bills through what we call the regular order.

This is where I wish to thank the two leaders, Senator MCCONNELL and Senator REID, because they have a commitment. They have committed to each other—with the chairman and the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee—that we will try to get back to regular order and do things the way we should be doing them around here and should have been doing them around here all along.

Regular order is something we talk about in this Chamber, but it is something many Members of the Senate, unfortunately, have never experienced. Last year the Senate Appropriations Committee dutifully passed all 12 individual appropriations bills. Yet, when they came to the floor, gridlock struck and the Senate was not able to pass these one by one as we should have. In fact, the last time we passed them one by one was in the year 2006, and even in that year the Congress did not get them done on time.

What the leaders are talking about now is getting them moving through the appropriations subcommittee and the full committee and bringing them to the floor. As we say in regular order, let the Senate debate, amend, and vote on these as we go. Hopefully we will get all of these done on time and in the normal order, as we should. The last time Congress completed all of the appropriations bills one by one and on time was in fiscal year 1995. So we have not done a very good job, and this is one of the things that I think really frustrate the American people. It is beyond time that we get serious about this responsibility.

Here again I wish to thank Senators REID and MCCONNELL for their leader-

ship. I think we see our leaders acting like leaders and trying to get things moving for the fiscal year 2013 appropriations bills, but I must say we all recognize this is easier said than done. We all know that. I want them to know they have many, many of their colleagues who support them in this goal of getting all of the appropriations bills done as we should.

We have two very respected and accomplished Senate leaders here on the floor, but we also have two very accomplished and respected Senators who run the Appropriations Committee. We could all talk a long time tonight about the chairman and ranking member, and I am confident that if as a Chamber we stand behind them and stand behind the two leaders, we can break this cycle of inaction here in the Senate.

The good news for this year is that we have already enacted into law our top-line spending number—in technical terms, people call that a 302 A allocation—so we know how much money we can spend on discretionary programs under the law. We passed that law last year. Even though we didn't pass a budget resolution, we did pass the Budget Control Act, and that total for spending is \$1.047 trillion, and that is \$686 billion for security building and \$361 billion for nonsecurity. This was supported by 74 Members in this Chamber, 269 Members down the hall in the House, and it was signed into law by the President. It is now the law of the land, so we now have our top-line spending numbers in law, and hopefully that will help us jump-start the fiscal 2013 spending appropriations process regardless of what happens to the budget resolution, which, by the way, totally supports getting a budget resolution passed. Nonetheless, we have this already in law for this year.

I would like to end by saying that I believe we can pass all 12 appropriations bills this year, and I think we can do it in a way that gives us ample opportunity for input, debate, and a chance to amend. Whether or not we will pass all 12 spending bills on time this year will depend on whether Members of Congress will have the will to get it done. I think the American people want us to get it done. They want to see us work together.

Madam President, if I could ask a question of the Senator from Tennessee through the Chair, I would like to get his reflections, because Senator ALEXANDER has been around this place for a long time, going back to Senator Howard Baker, who was one of the legends in the Senate, and Senator ALEXANDER was able to work with him and for him and see the Senate as it ran differently back in those days.

Madam President, I would like to ask through the Chair why Senator ALEXANDER thinks it is so important that we get our appropriation bills back on track.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Arkansas for his leadership. I will answer his question to the best of my ability.

I suppose some people may be watching and say what we are talking about is a lot of "inside baseball." Well, it would be like telling a bunch of people that talking about singing at the Grand Ole Opry is "inside baseball." This is what we do.

I went out to see Johnny Cash at the House of Cash when I was Governor of Tennessee many years ago, and I didn't know quite what to say to him, and so I said: Johnny, how many nights do you appear on the road?

With that big-old deep voice of his, he said: Oh, about 200.

I said: My goodness. Why do you do that?

He looked at me and said: That is what I do.

Well, this is what we do or at least what we are supposed to do. I mean, we are elected by the people from Arkansas, Tennessee, North Carolina, and all over this country expecting us to get results. They sent us up here to put the country first, put our States next, and try to lead us in the right direction. We have our partisan differences, but in the end one of the things we are supposed to do is to appropriate dollars. It says in the Constitution, section 9, article I, that "no money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in consequence of appropriations made by law." That is us. So this is what we do.

In addition to that, we are supposed to oversee the spending of that money. This is not the whole budget, this is only about 38 percent of it, but it is over \$1 trillion. And at a time when we are borrowing 40 cents of every dollar we spend, maybe the people of this country have a right to expect that we take up each one of these 12 appropriations bills, that we have our hearings on them, and that we oversee the spending. If we want to add to nuclear modernization, we vote on that, and if we want to cut Solyndra, we vote on that, but we do our job of appropriations, and we do our job of oversight.

Now, Senator PRYOR, the senior Senator from Arkansas, asked me what my reflection was upon this Senate. I have seen it for a long time. I came here in January of 1967 as a very young man with a newly elected Republican Senator from Tennessee, Howard Baker, and I watched him for a long time. There are many lessons in having watched the Senate for a long time, but one of the lessons is that the leaders cannot lead without any followers. This is a body that operates by unanimous consent. If one of us wants to grease the tracks, the train runs off the tracks. That is the way it works. So the leaders are not going to be able to complete what their stated intention is, which is to take these 12 appropriations bills, bring them through the committees by late April, early May—the House is doing the same thing, we understand—and then bring them to

the floor so that we have a chance to consider them, to expose them to the light of day, amend them, vote on them, and pass them or reject them. That is what we do, as Johnny Cash said about his 200 nights on the road, and we should be doing it.

The idea that we have not taken these 12 appropriations bills and brought them to the floor but 2 times since the year 2000 is a bad commentary on this body. It means it doesn't function the way it should function. I do think it functioned better in the 1970s and 1980s. When Senator Byrd and Senator Baker were the Democratic and Republican leaders, they would get unanimous consent agreements to bring bills to the floor. The minority would allow that, and the majority would allow a lot of amendments until people got tired of voting. But they could not have done that just by themselves. Senator Byrd and Senator Baker were very good leaders, but they could not have gotten that done if the Senators themselves didn't make it possible for the leaders to succeed.

So I am delighted to see this discussion. I see the Senator from North Carolina is here, and I would be interested in her comments. My feeling is that there are a large number of Republicans—and I believe a large number of Democrats—who prefer to see the Senate work together to get results. I mean, we worked pretty hard to get here, and the people of Tennessee, Arkansas, and North Carolina expect us to get results, so here is a chance for us to do that. I believe our leaders are saying: OK, let's get this done. And we are saying: Senator REID, Senator MCCONNELL, Senator INOUE, Senator COCHRAN, we are going to help. We know it will not always be peaches and cream. There will be problems, but, as Senator WARNER talked about a volunteer fire department, maybe when the bell rings and we all show up, we will make the Senate more effective and we will be more effective.

Let me stop my remarks for a moment and yield to the Senator from North Carolina, who has been a regular participant in the discussions we have had about how we can make the Senate be a more effective institution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PRYOR). The Senator from North Carolina.

Mrs. HAGAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join this colloquy and to hear the Senator from Tennessee and the senior Senator from Arkansas work together on this issue. I think it is something of prime importance. Just as Senator ISAKSON went across Georgia this past week, I was in many cities and communities in North Carolina, and people are concerned, as he said, with such a low approval rating of the Congress. They are asking us: Why can't you work together? And, as the Senator from Tennessee said, when we have 47 Members in one party and 53 Members in the other party and today we need 60 votes in order to get some-

thing done, we are going to have to work together in this Chamber. That also means the Senate and the House are going to have to come together and have conferences that actually work so we can get legislation passed—in the case we are talking about right now, getting the 12 appropriations bills passed.

When I was in the North Carolina Senate, I was one of the cochairs of the Budget Committee. We know how to do this. We know how to get things done. Obviously this is a much bigger piece of the pie up here, but it is important to the people throughout our country that we work together to get these bills passed. So I am very pleased to hear this debate and colloquy and the commitment we have standing here and talking about and pledging to work together.

I am pleased that Senator INOUE, the chairman of this committee, and the ranking member, Senator COCHRAN, are putting this together and bringing this forward. I applaud both the Senator from Tennessee and the Senator from Arkansas for holding this colloquy and bringing this out so the American people can hear what we are talking about and the commitment to move forward.

I thank the Chair. We are here to make this place work, to make our country work better every day. We are going to have our differences of opinion. The way the Senate is structured, we should bring the bill to the floor and offer amendments. Let's have a vote. Let's have our differences of opinion. When we don't do that, we are not doing our job.

I see the Senator from South Carolina has arrived. I wish to say this to him: For the last 45 minutes, we have had a stream of Democratic and Republican Senators who have come to the floor and who have congratulated the majority leader, the Republican leader, and the chairman and the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, for saying we should take all 12 appropriations bills this year, bring them through committee properly, have all of our hearings, do our oversight, bring them to the floor, and then let's pass them.

More than that, we have said we know our leaders can't be leaders if they don't have any followers, and it is part of our job to create an environment in which they can succeed. So we have come to the floor to say that, to pledge we are going to do that. It is not just those who come tonight. We represent a preponderance of Senators on our side of the aisle and, I am told, a preponderance of the Democrats as well.

I would say to the Senator from South Carolina that the Senator from Virginia, Mr. WARNER, was here a little earlier and he said the exercise tonight reminded him of a volunteer fire department. I believe I first heard those words from the Senator from South Carolina. The Senator from South

Carolina has seen the House of Representatives and he has seen the Senate and he has seen the condition of our country. I wish to yield to him in this colloquy for his thoughts on what we are doing here tonight.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Madam President, my first thought is that the American people are not very impressed with what we are doing up here. We have a congressional approval rating of about 10 to 15 percent. I think it would help all of us if we could go back home and say: This coming week we are going to be talking about the Department of Education budget; we are going to be talking about Veterans Affairs; we are going to be talking about Energy and Water.

We want to be able to tell our mayors and people—county council, city council, our constituents—we are going to be debating how much money we will allocate for different parts of the government, even knowing we are broke. I think that would resonate, I say to the Senator from Tennessee.

This whole idea of a volunteer fire department, when we think about it—particularly in the South, and I am sure it is true everywhere—volunteer fire departments have citizens who have a lot of things to do but feel as though if they work together to protect each others' homes from devastation by fire, that would be a good thing. They are all volunteers. They don't get any money. They lower everybody's insurance premiums by having a volunteer fire department. I think a lot of Members of the Senate feel very frustrated, as does the average person on the street. We want to do better. So we are volunteering our services here to the body so that if we will do things that make sense to the American people, count us in to kind of push the ball up the hill.

The good news, I say to my colleague, is our leaderships have committed to this. Without "followship," it doesn't matter what they say. This is going to take discipline in this body. I expect those on the other side of the aisle to take votes they won't like, and I expect those on this side of the aisle to take votes we won't like. But we have to have some discipline about it. We want the bills to get done in an orderly fashion, and we want the Senate to be a Senate.

This comes about because Senator WARNER spent a lot of time getting us all together. This volunteer fire department idea we have, the Senator from Tennessee and Senator WARNER have made this happen. We had several dinners among the people here tonight to try to find a way to get the Senate back to doing business. I am convinced that if we could bring one appropriations bill to the floor, have an honest debate about how much we should spend on that part of the government, have amendments relevant and not rel-

evant but in an orderly fashion, that would be momentum to get the Senate back to being the Senate. That would help us all and it would help the country.

I want to tell Senator REID and Senator MCCONNELL: Don't let this moment pass. We have your back and we want to conduct the Senate in a way that is more traditional than is going on today.

I came here to do things. I think everybody who has spoken here tonight is telling the public and telling each other: Enough is enough. This is a lousy way—to appropriate a couple three trillion dollars at the end of the year in a big bill nobody reads. If you think that is a broken system, we agree. We don't like the idea of passing a bill in the last week of the fiscal year—3,000, 4,000 pages, whatever it is—and nobody knows what is in it, but that is the only way we can run the government if we didn't go back to the normal course of business. So for those who want better government, this will give us better government. If you want to do something constructive, this gives us an opportunity. For those who want to set priorities, this allows you to do it.

To the leaders of the Senate: If you will follow through with this, it will pay enormous dividends for the body. And to Senators ALEXANDER, PRYOR, and others who have been in the volunteer fire department, I think this is a good moment for the Senate and I am proud to be associated with it, and if it happens, it will be because of what they have done.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, before we go back to the Senator from Arkansas, I have a question I wish to ask the Senator from South Carolina. First, I am not sure he was here when I referred to the Grand Ole Opry. I haven't been doing that because it is in Nashville. But it has occurred to me over the last several months that there is a lot about what we do that is like the Grand Ole Opry. I know a lot of performers of the Opry, members of the Opry. They sing and pick in every little bar in the South for 20 years until finally, by skill and by accident, they get an invitation to join the Grand Ole Opry. What would they think if they joined the Grand Ole Opry and then they weren't allowed to sing?

That is kind of the way we are in the Senate. We are lucky to be here. We are political accidents in a sense. But we worked hard to be here—almost all of us on both sides. So the idea of coming here, working hard to be here, being elected by the people who sent us, and then not being allowed to amend or vote or debate is unacceptable. That is what we want to do with these 12 bills.

The Senator from South Carolina reminded me of a specific example of that—the deep ports in the United States. If we are going to export American-made goods and create more jobs in our country, we are going to have to

have deep ports. We have a real problem in the way we finance that in the Federal Government, and we would be a stronger country if we could discuss that in the Appropriations Committee. If we don't fix it there, we should bring it to the floor and have amendments and have a debate and let people see what is going on.

Would the Senator agree that would be a perfect example of what we should be doing?

Mr. GRAHAM. I think the Senator from Tennessee picked the best example I can think of simply because the Charleston harbor deepening is probably the No. 1 issue for the State of South Carolina.

The Panama Canal is going to be widened and the cargo ships that are going to be on the oceans of the world in the next few years are three times the size of the cargo ships that exist today. Shipping as we know it is going to change. What does that mean? It means harbors such as Savannah and Charleston—just name a harbor on the east coast—are going to have to be deeper to accept these ships.

What does it mean for shipping? Ships that would normally deposit their goods in California can now access the east coast. So east coast ports, based on common sense and merit, have to be deepened. If we brought the Energy and Water appropriations bill through the committee and to the floor, it would make us all think about that. Because when I hear the President say we want to double exports in the next 5 years, count me in. It would be thousands of jobs—millions of jobs—created in America. How do we get those products to the customers overseas if our ports are not modernized to adjust to the change in shipping? Then it is a statement that will not bear fruit. Go to Shanghai, go to Hong Kong and other ports, go to Mideast ports, and we are 20 years behind.

This is a good example of how, if we took the Energy and Water appropriations bill, among ourselves we could create a national vision to deepen ports to adjust to shipping changes. If we keep continuing to appropriate in the last week of the session in a bill that nobody reads, not only will our fellow citizens think poorly of us, we won't have a vision. So this is a good example of why if we took every appropriations bill, put it through committee and brought it to the floor, we could come up with ways to make smart decisions.

I guess what we are talking about is that spending \$2 trillion or \$3 trillion in a week where only four of five people know what is in the bill is not smart. We all did come here to have our say, and I have a thousand ideas about ports.

So, my friend in Arkansas, if the port of Charleston is deepened and other east coast ports are deepened and the cargo containers are three times the volume we have today, what does that mean for the Mississippi River? It means it has to be widened and deepened. Because the cargo we unload on

the east coast has to get to the interior of the country. I want to have a vision for interior ports, because one thing could affect the other. And the only way the Senate can make smart decisions is to break the government into 12 parts, as we have been doing for a long time, and get back to doing business in a more traditional fashion.

This is a classic example: If we brought the Energy and Water appropriations bill to the floor, people other than me would have a say about what to do, given the change in shipping. And if we don't do it in the normal course of business—if we keep doing this in the last week of the session—we are going to be left behind as a Nation.

This is a great example of why we should do appropriations bills in the normal course of business. If we can pull this off in 2012, it will not be a lost year; it will be where we can do some good for the public.

So I thank you very much. I yield the floor.

Mr. PRYOR. Madam President, I have one thing to say in closing while my two colleagues are still on the floor: Today, Senator SHAHEEN read Washington's Farewell Address which we have been doing in the Senate since 1888. One of the reasons we do that is because President Washington calls to us through history to do our best.

We talk about this issue in South Carolina—deepening the port of Charleston. Certainly President Washington knew about the port of Charleston. It was a huge asset for this fledgling Nation of ours. He had no idea about a Panama Canal. He had no idea about goods coming over from China. He certainly had no idea about goods coming in from the west coast because at that point he was hoping we would get to Appalachia. He had no idea what was going to happen here. But he calls to us from history to do our job and accept the challenges that come our way.

The appropriations bills shouldn't be a challenge. That is nuts-and-bolts good government.

This week in Arkansas we had five townhall meetings and they were great. I got lots of good questions; a few pointed questions. My colleagues know how it goes because they have participated in those as well. It was great. It is democracy in action. When people can show up in a community and ask their Senator questions, that means the system is working. It is working back home, but we need to get it to work up here. That is what I heard over and over this week in Arkansas, is the expectations for this Congress are very low for this year. We talk about a 10-percent approval rating. I am sometimes surprised it is that high.

Mr. GRAHAM. Madam President, if the Senator will yield, here is the good news: It wouldn't take much to exceed expectations. But I want to say to the west coast Senators that their ports need to be modernized too. They need transportation hubs around their ports.

The whole infrastructure regarding export opportunities in this country has deteriorated because of a lack of vision.

Wal-Mart is a pretty good model of how business works. They get thousands of millions of products a day out to stores all over the country. They do it in a business fashion: FedEx—Federal Express—UPS. The Federal Government is stuck in the 1950s and we need to change that. I think the appropriations process is the right vehicle to do it.

Mr. PRYOR. That does go back to the appropriations process, because obviously those things require money, they take investment in our future. But the truth is if we are stymied in our appropriations process, there are a lot of good things that we can't get done. But when they go through, we can take care of the challenges that present themselves around the country. We have a lot of need in this country. I am certainly a promoter of investing in infrastructure, and the ports are very important to our Nation.

With that, I yield to the Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I wish to thank the Senator from South Carolina for his leadership in helping to make the Senate work and for his good example and for his giving us a specific example—the deep ports—as to why it is important that we set out to do what we are elected to do, which is to say, the Port of Charleston and the Port of Savannah have to be deepwater ports if we want to keep our jobs. That needs to be said in the Senate. It needs to be said in the subcommittee and in the full committee, and it needs to be said on the floor.

It is encouraging to me when Senators such as the Senator from North Carolina and Arkansas and Virginia from that side of the aisle, and the Senator from South Carolina and the Senator from Maine and the junior Senator from Arkansas and the Senator from Georgia on this side of the aisle—I think we would all say firmly that while we are only several Senators, the words we speak are the same feelings that a large number of Senators on both sides of the aisle feel.

We want to get results. We want to do our jobs. We want to create an environment in which our leaders can succeed. We know that if we want to, we can do that. And we should do it because it is our constitutional responsibility, because oversight is our responsibility, because it is lazy management if we allow it to go to the end of the year and end up with a great big pile of bills in an omnibus or a continuing resolution, which is worse.

We need to go over spending item by item. I am on six subcommittees. All three of us are on the Appropriations Committee. We will probably have 30 hearings in the next 2 or 3 months. We will have a good opportunity to go through \$1 trillion of discretionary spending and try to spend it wisely and to save money wherever we can.

One last thing: When these spending bills come to the floor and we debate them and approve them, we can show the American people that discretionary spending is not the biggest problem we have with spending in this country. Discretionary spending is 38 percent of the budget, and according to the Congressional Budget Office it is scheduled to go up over the next 10 years at the rate of inflation. The rest of the budget, which is largely our entitlement programs, is scheduled to grow up to four times the rate of inflation. If it does that, we will be a bankrupt country after about 10 or 12 years. So there is every reason in the world for us to bring these bills to the floor.

My concluding sentence is this: We congratulate the Democratic and Republican leaders and the chairman and ranking member of the Appropriations Committee. We believe our job is to bring all 12 bills through committee and to the floor and pass them before the fiscal year starts. We, on both sides of the aisle—those of us who have spoken and many others who feel the same way—pledge our support to help our leaders achieve that result.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BEGICH). The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I thank Senator ALEXANDER from Tennessee for his leadership on this issue. He is the one who wanted to come here and praise the two leaders for their leadership. Again, they are demonstrating leadership by reaching this agreement and trying to change recent practice around here. They want to set a new standard for getting it done as we are supposed to get it done.

So I thank my friend and colleague from Tennessee for all of his hard work, and this is just the tip of the iceberg. He is working on many ways to try to make this institution run better and to make the American people proud of the Senate. So I thank the Senator for that.

TRIBUTE TO THOMAS CULBERTSON

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise to recognize Thomas Culbertson of Fremont, OH, for many years of outstanding leadership and service to The Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center. A former college librarian and stockbroker, Mr. Culbertson began his service to the center in 1988 as a manuscripts curator and rose to the position of executive director in 2004.

Mr. Culbertson was instrumental in developing two workshop series for educators. The first series, "History Links: A Partnership to Teach American History," helped 300 area schoolteachers implement State standards for social studies that focused on American history. The second series included three workshops for more than 200 community college faculty that focused on America's Gilded Age. Mr. Culbertson also led the effort to gain