



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 158

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6, 2012

No. 84

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, help our lawmakers to remember today the great unseen cloud of witnesses who compass them about. May the memories of those who, in every age and generation, sacrificed for freedom inspire our Senators to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with You. Lord, give the Members of this body the integrity to walk worthily of those in whose unseen presence they live. As they labor on Capitol Hill, infuse them with courage in danger, steadfastness in trials, and perseverance in difficulties.

Remembering those who have gone before, help us all to dare more boldly, to venture on wider seas where storms will show Your mastery, where, losing sight of land, we will find Your stars.

We pray in Your faithful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 6, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

AGRICULTURE REFORM, FOOD, AND JOBS ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

Mr. REID. Madam President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 415, S. 3240.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion. The bill clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 415, S. 3240, a bill to reauthorize agriculture programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Madam President, we are now on the motion to proceed to the farm bill.

I now ask unanimous consent that today at 4 p.m. the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 610; that there be 90 minutes for debate, which will be equally divided in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on the nomination; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following my remarks and those of my esteemed colleague, the first hour will be equally divided, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half. We hope to reach an agreement to begin consideration of the farm bill today.

Madam President, in a time when too many of the products we buy are made overseas, America can be satisfied that most of the food we eat is grown right here at home. The American agricultural industry boasted a \$42 billion trade surplus last year—greater than any other sector in our economy. Our farmers are the most productive in the world, exporting \$136 billion worth of their yield last year.

It is amazing how States produce agricultural products. The State of New York isn't considered by most people to be an agricultural State, but it is. The State of Michigan is not considered by most people to be an agricultural State, but it is. Even some of the States in the western part of the United States produce products that are exported. For example, in Nevada, alfalfa is exported. It is very high in protein. It is made into pellets, and it is a needed commodity overseas. So all over America the farm bill is important.

Our farmers are the most productive in the world, exporting \$136 billion worth of their yield last year. At a time of economic uncertainty, America's agricultural industry supports 16 million much needed jobs. So Congress must give farmers the certainty they need to keep this industry thriving.

I commend Senators STABENOW and ROBERTS, the managers of this bill, for crafting a strong bipartisan bill. This

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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measure will create jobs and cut subsidies. It includes important reforms that make farm and food stamp programs more accountable and more defensible.

With more farmers seeking global markets for their product more than ever before, this bill supports rural farm jobs as well as urban manufacturing jobs. It will help new farmers—especially those who served their country in the Armed Forces—to build successful businesses. This legislation helps local farmers sell their products where they grow them—connecting farms, schools, and communities. And it saves \$23 billion, which we will use to reduce this deficit we have.

I know there are a number of Democratic and Republican Senators who wish to offer amendments to this legislation. I have confidence in the leadership of Senators STABENOW and ROBERTS and look forward to working quickly and cooperatively to pass the bill that creates jobs, cuts subsidies, and reduces the deficit, while protecting American farmers.

CAPITOL POLICE CHIEF PHILLIP MORSE

Madam President, every day the dedicated officers of the U.S. Capitol Police keep members of Congress, our staffs, and millions of visitors from around the world who visit the Capitol grounds each year safe. For the last 6 years, this department has been led and run by Chief of Police Phillip Morse. He spent more than half of his life on the Capitol Police Force, and I think it is time for a little down time. Today Chief Morse retires after 28 years serving and protecting the U.S. Capitol. I thank him for his service and congratulate him on a job well done.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

68TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY AND HONOR FLIGHT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, today, on the 68th anniversary of D-day, I am honored to recognize a distinguished group of World War II veterans from my State of Kentucky who have come to the Nation's Capital to visit the World War II Memorial on the Mall that they helped to inspire.

Thanks to the noble work of the Honor Flight Program and the leaders of the Bluegrass Chapter, including Brian Duffy, these brave patriots, along with their brothers-in-arms from the Korean war, will see the national memorials built in their honor today. Over the years, the Honor Flight Bluegrass Chapter has brought some 1,100 veterans—most from Kentucky—to Washington, DC, for this purpose. This program provides transportation, lodging, and food for the veterans. Without Honor Flight, most of these veterans would never be able to visit the Capital or see the World War II Memorial.

I have been privileged to visit with groups of Honor Flight veterans before, and I am pleased to report that I will

be meeting with today's group at their memorial as well. My father served in World War II, and it is an honor to shake hands with his contemporaries, hear their stories, and thank them for their service.

America is forever indebted to the heroic members of the U.S. military who defended this great Nation and fought for freedom and against tyranny in World War II. They have truly earned the title of "the greatest generation."

I also thank the Honor Flight Program and Brian Duffy for their continuing commitment to bring Kentucky's World War II and Korean veterans to see their memorials. Brian and the Bluegrass Chapter do what they do because they have great admiration and respect for our military veterans. I know my colleagues join me in saying that this Senate shares that admiration and respect, be it for members of "the greatest generation" or for the current generation of brave volunteers who have served in Afghanistan and/or Iraq or are serving today elsewhere across the world.

I wish to recognize each and every World War II and Korean war veteran from Kentucky who is visiting the memorial in our Nation's Capital today, and I ask unanimous consent that their names be printed in the RECORD.

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

LIST OF WORLD WAR II AND KOREAN WAR VETERANS BROUGHT BY HONOR FLIGHT TO VISIT THE NATIONAL MEMORIALS ON JUNE 6, 2012—THE 68TH ANNIVERSARY OF D DAY

Sam Adams; Louisville, KY
Clifford Barker; Morehead, KY
David Braun; Jamestown, KY
Harry Hughes Bush; Richmond, KY
Edgar Lewis Casada; Highland, IN
Herman Combs; Bronston, KY
Franklin Delano Coovert; Lexington, KY
Thomas Alton Curtsinger; Owensboro, KY
Guy Moorman Deane Jr.; Owensboro, KY
Earl E. Fort; Owensboro, KY
Wilburn Gerald Fort; Owensboro, KY
Sheldon Woodrow Franks; Corydon, IN
Alfred Stephen Freyling; Evansville, IN
Ira Wilson Guffey; Owensboro, KY
John Patrick Lawler; Louisville, KY
Robert A. Lawton; Central City, KY
Chester D. Miller; Owensboro, KY
Alberton Peace; Magnolia, KY
Kenneth Leonard Pearl; New Albany, IN
Wilmer Leroy Peck; Franklin, KY
Walter John Points; Falmouth, KY
Kenneth Lee Reynolds; Owensboro, KY
George Thomas Snyder; Owensboro, KY
William Daniel Stephens; Newburgh, IN
Murrel Ray Trapp; Seymour, IN
John Harold Tucker; Evansville, IN
John Hugh Vaughn; Glasgow, KY
James Clarence Vaught; Evansville, IN
Merton Lee Weisert; Louisville, KY

(The remarks of Mr. MCCONNELL pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 482 are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. MCCONNELL. I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore.

Under the previous order, the following hour will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

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

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

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask to speak as in morning business.

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

SEQUESTRATION TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I come to the floor today to talk about the significant uncertainty surrounding sequestration and its threat to our economy. The Congressional Budget Office forecasted that the pending fiscal cliff facing this country; that is, the scheduled tax increases and across-the-board spending cuts that will result from the expiration of current tax policy and the enactment of sequestration, could lead to recession. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office said repeatedly that if the tax increases and sequestration occur at the end of this year, there will be a 1.3-percent economic contraction during the first quarter of 2013. I believe that would argue for extending the existing tax rates. I think the uncertainty associated with the tax rates perhaps expiring at the end of the year and businesses not knowing what is going to happen is creating a real problem and a real cloud out there in the economy.

I believe it is important that there be economic certainty for people in this country, particularly for investors and small businesses. So it seems to me, at least, that getting those tax rates extended would be a very important part of the solution.

Having said that, I also believe we need tax reform for this country. We need comprehensive tax reform that will fuel economic growth. I think there is enormous potential for economic growth and job creation if, in fact, we could get to overhauling our Tax Code in this country, making it more simple, more fair, more clear, and obviously lowering the rates and broadening the tax base. But until that happens, we need certainty, which means we need to get the existing tax rates extended. I hope we can do that sooner rather than later because I think the longer we wait, the greater we put at risk our economy and what could happen if we don't act.

So that is one component of the fiscal cliff. Obviously, there are other components.

Under the Budget Control Act, the spending authority of most Federal departments and agencies is going to be reduced on January 2, 2013, as a result of the sequestration. Now, the triggered reduction in spending is \$1.2 trillion. After accounting for 18 percent in debt service savings, the required reductions amount to \$984 billion to be distributed evenly over 9 years—in other words, \$109.3 billion per year. So if we look at it year by year, that is \$54.7 billion in reductions that will be necessary in both the defense and non-defense categories of the budget starting on January 2, 2013. It is expected that those cuts will range between 7 and 9 percent, but we believe the administration needs a plan for implementing sequestration, after a number of conflicting statements about how and if it will be carried out.

As one example of the conflicting statements coming out of the Obama administration, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta sent a letter to Senator McCAIN last November saying that the sequestration would not impact war funding. In April the OMB Controller testified before the House Budget Committee that the issue of whether war funding would be reduced by the sequester was still being evaluated. Just last week another official from the Office of Management and Budget said that war funding would, in fact, be impacted by the sequester.

It has been almost a full year since the Budget Control Act was passed, and Congress needs a precise understanding from this administration as to the full effects of sequestration on all programs and accounts across the Federal Government, including national security funding. That is why I have introduced a bill, along with Budget Committee ranking member JEFF SESSIONS, that would require the administration to bring some much needed transparency to the scheduled across-the-board spending cuts. Our legislation, S. 3228, the Sequestration Transparency Act, would require the administration to submit to Congress a detailed preview of the sequestration required by the Budget Control Act. Specifically, this bill would require the President to submit a report to Congress by July 9—next month—of 2012 that includes an estimate of the sequestration percentages and amounts necessary to achieve the required reduction for each spending category on an account level. The administration's report would also be required to include any other data and explanations that enhance the public's understanding of a sequester and actions to be taken under it.

This report will assist Congress in its yearend legislative business, including fiscal year 2013 appropriations and addressing the deep and unbalanced defense budget cuts that are expected under sequestration, which are in addition—in addition—to the \$487 billion in reductions that were carried out last August.

Of course, we would not be in this situation had the Senate passed a serious

budget over the last 3 years that addressed tax and entitlement reform. The Senate's failure to produce a budget year after year has left us with the Budget Control Act. Now the Budget Control Act is the law of the land.

While I am certainly disappointed that the President and the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction failed to reach an agreement to bring down our deficits in the long term, the cuts to national defense that are scheduled to go into effect are particularly troubling. The President's own Defense Secretary warned that the sequester would "hollow out the force and inflict serious damage to our national defense." That is from the President's own Defense Secretary. Yet, after repeated requests from both the House and the Senate, the administration has refused to provide even the most basic details about the cuts required by the sequester.

There is a great deal of uncertainty regarding sequestration and the tax increases that would occur the first of next year. At a time when our economy continues to grow at a very sluggish pace and unemployment remains above 8 percent, the last thing we need coming out of Washington is more uncertainty. Job creators are concerned about the pending fiscal cliff, and if Congress does not act before the election to deal with these issues, the economy will suffer from this uncertainty in the coming months.

The legislation I have introduced, along with Senator SESSIONS, requires the administration to share with Congress and with the American people their plan for exactly how the sequestration will be carried out. This is straightforward legislation. It is about transparency, and it is something where I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will work to ensure that these numbers—this sequestration plan—are shared with the Congress and with the American people.

We have, as everybody knows, a big pileup occurring at the end of the year with sequestration. The pileup includes tax rate increases which will occur on marginal income tax rates, capital gains rates, dividend rates, the death taxes, the debt limit increase. All of these things happen at a time that will create incredible amounts of uncertainty in our economy. The best we can do for the American people, for our job creators, for investors, and for our small businesses is to provide as much certainty as is possible going into the end of this year. It seems to me, at least, that starts with ensuring that we have a plan coming out of the administration that specifically clarifies how this sequestration would be implemented so that Congress can react accordingly, hopefully before the end of the year and hopefully sometime in the next few months, perhaps as a part of our appropriations process this year.

With regard to the tax increases, I would make the same argument that former President Bill Clinton has been

making, which is that we need to extend these tax rates. We create too much economic uncertainty out there by having this cloud on the horizon, which I think is a real warning sign to us, and it is a reminder that we get on a regular basis—frankly, for the most part, on a daily basis—when we talk to small businesses in our home States about the importance of addressing the tax, the regulatory, the spending, and debt issues before the end of the year when this big pileup would occur.

So I would argue for and plead with my colleagues to work together on the sequestration issue to ensure that it doesn't have the devastating impacts on our national security budget and that, combined with the tax increases, it doesn't have the devastating impact on our economy that is being predicted by the Congressional Budget Office. They have pointed out that if these things all happen at the end of the year, it could cost us 1.3 percent of economic growth, which, according to the President's own economic advisers, means about 1.3 million jobs for American workers. We already have chronic high unemployment now—40 consecutive months of unemployment above 8 percent. We have a sluggish, anemic economy. We shouldn't pile on top of that all this uncertainty with regard to taxes, with regard to regulations, with regard to what is going to happen regarding sequestration at the end of the year.

Again, this bill simply does not address in substance how we would change that, but it merely requests and requires the administration to provide to the Congress and the American people a clear plan about how they intend to implement sequestration in hopes that we might be able to make some necessary changes to ensure that the defense budget isn't gutted and that these adverse impacts on the economy are not felt by the American people and by our small businesses. I hope my colleagues will support this legislation and that we can get a vote on it very soon; that we can get the administration acting in a way that will inform not only us as Members of Congress but also the American public.

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. BARRASSO. 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.

A SECOND OPINION

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, yesterday, Vice President BIDEN and other Obama administration officials hosted presidents and leaders from colleges and universities at the White House. Officials promoted this event as an opportunity, they said, to highlight the transparency of college costs. They

said these schools were committed to providing key financial information to all of their incoming students starting next year.

Well, once again, transparency took a back seat to politics. In fact, the White House failed—failed—to level with college students about important financial information, including how the President's health care law is going to make it harder for many students in terms of their ability to get health insurance through their universities.

Earlier this week, the real story came out, and I will tell you it is discouraging. I continue to come to the floor week after week with a doctor's second opinion about the health care law because I think the health care law is bad for patients, it is bad for providers—the nurses and the doctors who take care of those patients—it is terrible for our taxpayers. I do not think I realized at the time I started doing these second opinions that it was going to be terrible for students going to college.

Take a look at these unintended consequences that have come out of this health care law. But I will tell you, on Monday, national news reports showed that the coverage requirements in the President's health care law—the mandated requirements in the health care law of a certain level of government-approved coverage—well, it is causing colleges all across the country to drop insurance coverage for their students. I would like to explain exactly how this works.

As Members of this body who voted for this on the other side of the aisle will recall, the health care law eliminates annual and lifetime benefits for insurance plans. Many colleges offer their students an opportunity for limited benefit policies to give students access to affordable health insurance coverage that actually is something that a college student might need, might benefit from, may be helped with.

These are the same benefit plans that have been popular with many unions across the country. The plans were so popular that the administration issued over 1,700 waivers which impacted over 4 million Americans. These Washington waivers ensured that people who got their insurance through certain corporations and unions would not lose the coverage they had in the lead-up to the full implementation of the health care law.

Well, over half of these waivers were granted to individuals who received their insurance through their unions so these individuals would not lose their coverage during the time when the unions were saying: This health care law is too expensive for us. We don't want to live under these mandates. We can't afford it.

Well, the colleges are finding the same situation. But unlike the unions, the colleges are not eligible to apply for these special administration waivers from the health care law. So stu-

dents across the country are suffering the consequences.

This year, because of the President's health care law, these students are not going to be able to purchase or afford coverage through their schools. Schools are faced with two options: One is raise premiums dramatically, drastically, or just don't offer the health insurance programs students like, parents like, and the universities like to provide. The President of the United States and the Democrats who voted for this health care law essentially have said: Too bad.

So let's give an example from New York State. The State University of New York in Plattsburgh offered students coverage in the past for \$440 per year. Next year policies will cost anywhere between \$1,300 and \$1,600 per student per year. That is an increase of four times, 400 percent. Why? Because the students are going to end up paying for a lot of insurance they do not need, they do not want, and they possibly cannot afford. But yet the President mandates they get this high level of insurance coverage even though it is something the people at the university think their students do not need. The universities do not have a choice. The President makes those decisions, not the president of the university but the President of the United States.

The University of Puget Sound in Washington was able to offer its students insurance last year for \$165—insurance they believed was helpful to the students. Next year, to comply with the President's health care law—the mandated high levels of coverage—they estimate a policy will now cost between \$1,500 and \$2,000.

Since the Obama administration's mandates were so expensive, what is the University of Puget Sound going to do? Well, they announced they will not be offering any insurance coverage to any students next year—a decision made by the university.

It is clear the President's health care law leaves many students with two bad choices: They can either be forced to pay vastly increased premiums or basically lose access to coverage altogether. This new development flies completely in the face of the President's promise. The President said: If you like what you have, you can keep it. But let's specifically go to the President's exact promise:

No matter how we reform health care—

The President of the United States said—

we will keep this promise: If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor. Period.

He went on to say:

If you like your health care plan, you will be able to keep your health care plan. Period.

He then said:

No one will take it away. No matter what.

He said:

My view is that health care reform should be guided by a simple principle: fix what's broken and build on what works.

Here we are, over 2 years later, and we continue to witness the Obama administration breaking this very specific promise. Now we can add college students to the long list of people who found out the reality does not match President Obama's rhetoric. At a time when students across the Nation face increasing tuition costs and a bleak job market, now they have to deal with losing their health insurance.

Each day it becomes more obvious that the Obama economy, which includes the President's health care law, has made life worse for millions of Americans. It cannot continue. If the Supreme Court does not completely repeal this health care law, Congress needs to do it. Republicans are committed to repealing this law and replacing it with step-by-step reforms. We will continue to help Americans of all ages work to get the care they want from a doctor they choose at a lower cost.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

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

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

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

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

STUDENT LOANS

Mr. DURBIN. I just left a meeting a few feet away from here with the leaders of some of the American colleges and universities. They came to brief us on a challenge we face across America that we had better be aware of. It is the growing student loan debt.

Just in October 1 year ago, student loan debt in America surpassed credit card debt. It is now \$1 trillion. More and more students are going more deeply into debt, which many of them can never repay. Student loan debt is different than other debt. It is different because one cannot discharge it in bankruptcy, which means it is a debt they will carry for a lifetime.

Imagine someone who is 19, 20 years old, that they have been told as long as they have been on this Earth education is the key to the future, and they are sitting across the table from a financial counselor who says they have been accepted at this college. All they need to do is sign up right here for a loan.

What is the natural instinct? Of course, it is to sign on the dotted line: I am doing what I was told to do; I am going to the best school I can get into; I am going to borrow the money and make it happen and my life will be successful and I will pay the money back.

The formula is right, but there are problems. If they drop out of school,

they end up with no diploma, just debt. If they go to a bad school, they end up with a worthless diploma and debt. If they end up, unfortunately, in some aspects of life, occupations and professions, it may take decades to pay off a debt. The average student loan debt is about \$25,000 once someone has completed 4 years of education.

We have asked students across Illinois and across the Nation to tell us their stories and the student loan debts go as high as \$100,000 and more for 4 years of education. Many of these students are finding themselves in an impossible predicament, where they literally cannot get on with their lives, cannot find a job and, unfortunately, are still stuck with the debt.

They are lucky, incidentally, if they are dealing with a Federal student loan guaranteed debt, so-called Stafford loans, because that is 3.4 percent interest. There are ways they can have that debt forgiven and consolidated. It is a flexible type of debt guaranteed by the Federal Government.

But if they step over that line of Federal Government debt and get into a private student loan, hang on tight. The interest rates go from 3.4 percent to the heavens, 18-percent credit card rate debts. Interest rates are not uncommon when it comes to these private loans. Students find themselves being swallowed by debt they cannot repay that is unfortunately compounded and just goes from bad to worse, to even worse.

Students I have run into thought they were doing the right thing. They went to some of these worthless for-profit schools. They can hardly avoid them. If one gets on the Internet and punches in the search engine for "college" or "universities," hang on tight. They are about to be inundated with ads from for-profit schools that tell just how easy it is to get a college diploma. All you have to do is sign up. They used to run an ad here on one of the television stations in Washington. It showed a pretty young girl and she was lounging on her bed with her laptop computer and she said: I am going to college in my pajamas. That kind of come-on—to suggest you can get a worthy college diploma through a for-profit school—unfortunately lures many of these kids into a mountain of debt and worthless diplomas from this for-profit industry—the most heavily subsidized private business in America.

Ninety percent of the money that for-profit schools have in revenue comes right from the Federal Government. Heck, they ought to have their employees join a Federal employees union for that matter because 90 percent of their revenue comes right out of the Federal Treasury. Students end up with the debt and a worthless diploma.

Last week, the quarterly report on household debt of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York found that student loan debt hit \$904 billion in the first quarter of 2012, up from \$241 billion just

10 years ago. That is a 275-percent increase since the same period in 2003. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau—which many people on the other side of the aisle would like to put out of business—the only leading consumer protection bureau in the Federal Government, estimates that outstanding student loan debt may be even higher, up to \$1 trillion.

Students continue to pile on the debt, even as America—most Americans—cut back on other forms of credit, such as mortgage and credit cards. According to a senior economist at the New York Federal Reserve Bank:

It remains the only form of consumer debt to substantially increase since the peak of household debt in 2008.

The hole just gets deeper for students and the families borrowing money for higher education. Students are graduating with massive amounts of debt and having a very difficult time paying it back. Delinquency rates for student loans are higher than rates for mortgages or automobile loans.

Every week, I hear from students drowning in debt, and I don't mean just recent graduates. Some of the borrowers are in their thirties and forties, even older, and still paying off student loans or paying off private student loans they cosigned for their children or grandchildren. Student loan debt has serious consequences for families and for our economy. In a recent survey of college graduates by Rutgers University, 40 percent of the participants said they delayed making a major purchase, such as a home or car, because of student debt. More than one-quarter of those surveyed put off continuing their education or had moved in with relatives to save money to pay their student loans.

Private student loans don't come with the same consumer protections and payment plans Federal loans offer. Senator TOM HARKIN of Iowa, chairman of our Senate education committee, introduced a bill with me to help families understand the difference between the Federal student loan and private student loans. We call it the Know Before You Owe Private Student Loan Act. It would require private student loan lenders to confirm the potential borrower's enrollment status and cost of attendance. The bill would also require institutions to counsel students about the difference between Federal and private student loans. Many students just don't know the difference.

The come-on is, listen, we have only one sheet of paper you have to fill out and you will get a private loan or do you want to go through five sheets of paper over here for the Federal Government? This is easier. Easier, yes, but a debt that is going to be much more serious for you in years to come.

Last week, the attorneys general from 22 States wrote to Members of the House and Senate asking that Congress fix the so-called 90 10 loophole. The 90 10 rule, as it is currently written, requires for-profit colleges to receive at

least 10 percent of their revenue from something other than the Federal Government—10 percent. But current law considers Federal sources only those funds from the Department of Education's title IV Federal financial aid programs, which includes Pell grants and federally guaranteed student loans. Other Federal subsidies for students, such as GI bill funds and the Department of Defense tuition assistance, aren't counted.

The attorneys general across America once again are ahead of Congress. They recognize that including GI bill and DOD funds will eliminate the powerful incentive the for-profit colleges have to recruit veterans and Active military in order to comply with the 90 10 rule.

Holly Petraeus is the wife of General Petraeus. Her husband is a true American hero. She has stood by his side through all his military assignments, dearly loves the military and their families. She works for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Her specialty is to find those rip-off institutions that are going after veterans to try to soak up their GI bill benefits for a worthless education.

How did we reach this point? Why are we, at this moment in time, where we are—facing this student loan debt bomb. Years ago, with widespread reports of waste, fraud, and abuse in the for-profit college sector, Congress created the 85 15 rule to weed out fraudulent fly-by-night schools that relied almost entirely on taxpayer dollars. The 85 15 rule said a school could take in no more than 85 percent of its revenue from the Federal Government. The other 15 had to come from other sources. It worked, and many of the worst schools, fortunately, closed.

In 1998, the rule was loosened to 90 10—90 percent Federal subsidy. Now we see we need to return to the original intent of the law and crack down on these for-profit schools that are taking advantage of veterans, servicemembers, and students across the board.

In January, Senator HARKIN and I introduced the Protect Our Students and Taxpayers Act—the POST Act—that will make several changes to the 90 10 rule. To better protect the students and our taxpayer dollars, the POST Act would reinstate the original 85 15 ratio, and the bill would change the definition of what is considered Federal revenue.

This may sound like bureaucratic gobbledegook, but let's get to the bottom line. If an institution needs to rely on the Federal Treasury for 90 percent of their revenue to exist as a school, there is a serious question about whether they are a real school. If the students make no contribution—or only 10 percent toward their education—then, frankly, what they are doing is just milking the Federal Treasury to keep the lights on at their school. I might add, these for-profit schools are highly profitable. Some of the biggest investment counselors and

managers in America invest in these schools because they are money machines. They bring their money directly from the Federal Government, with no guarantee that students will end up with an education.

The numbers I return to time and again tell the story. Ten percent of students finishing high school—10 percent—end up in for-profit schools—10 percent. Yet these for-profit schools eat up to 25 percent of all Federal aid to education. They are sucking in the Pell grants and the Stafford loans and then—hang on—they have a student loan default rate almost twice the level of other colleges and universities. What does that tell us? They have come up with an economic model which reaches deep in the Treasury to bring in money to keep the lights on and to pay their CEOs very generous salaries. They are also, of course, loaning money to students, and those students are defaulting, unable to repay their student loans at twice the rate of other colleges and universities.

You might say to yourself: Well, Senator, if that is the case, why don't you do something about it? The problem is the for-profit school industry in America is one of the most politically wired industries in this country. They have friends in high places, and it is very difficult to get reform legislation through the House or the Senate when they are so politically connected. Yet Senator HARKIN and I believe it is worth the effort, and we are going to ask our colleagues to join us in that effort.

What is worse is that students are aggressively recruited to attend these colleges, lured into taking out massive amounts of debt and may not even graduate. Think about that. A study published earlier this year by the Education Sector shows that the borrowers who drop out are more than four times more likely than those who graduate to default on their college loans because they are more likely to be unemployed and earn less when they do get a job. The dropout rates rose across all kinds of colleges, but the biggest increases were found in the for-profit 4-year institutions, where a staggering 54 percent of those who had borrowed to pursue a bachelor's degree dropped out of school—more than half. The study showed 16.8 percent of dropouts defaulted on their loans compared with 3.7 percent of those who graduated.

What difference does it make to these for-profit universities? They got their money.

Alexander Brooks recently contacted my office about his student debt. Alexander is from Normal, IL, and graduated in 2006 with a degree in computer networking from ITT, a for-profit institution. Alex never got a job in his field. He drives a schoolbus to pay his rent, even though he has this so-called degree in computer networking. He said he would like to get married to his long-time girlfriend, but he doesn't want to have her share in the burden of his student loan debt.

When asked about the quality of education he received from ITT—what we will hear being advertised on the television every time we turn it on—here is what he said:

ITT fell short of preparing me for what happens after graduation. Although the school provided me with a degree, the program did not provide any of the necessary certifications needed to get a job in the computer field.

Alex would like to go back to school, but he can't borrow any more money. When he graduated 6 years ago from ITT, a for-profit school, his total loan balance was \$40,000. That was when he graduated. Six years later, his balance is \$50,000. Six years of payments, falling further and further behind. His private student loans have interest rates up to 9.25 percent, almost double the Federal student loan rate.

Alex isn't alone. Many of his fellow students from ITT have the same trouble repaying their loan. ITT's 3-year cohort default rate is over 29 percent. That means that within 3 years of entering repayment status, almost one-third of students have already defaulted. In 2009, ITT received 85.8 percent of all its revenue—this for-profit school—from the Federal student aid programs. It was the third largest recipient of GI bill funds, receiving \$99 million in the school year 2010 2011. If GI bill funds and other Federal aid were counted, ITT would likely be at or close to receiving 100 percent of its revenue from the Federal Government—totally federally subsidized.

Federal student aid money is just about all that keeps this institution alive, running, generating profits, and paying handsome salaries to those who own it. What do the taxpayers get in return for this investment? More Americans with student loan debt they will never be able to pay off. That is not a good deal for taxpayers or students.

High student loan debt is not limited to for-profit college students. Students at private nonprofit institutions graduate with an average of about \$26,000 in debt. Students who graduate from public institutions graduated with an average debt of \$15,600.

What I say back home in Illinois I hope some will listen to carefully. Education is critical for a student or person to succeed. I encourage people to pursue it but go to the low-cost alternative if they haven't made up their mind or don't have a clear goal in front of them that is reasonable. Go to their community college. Start there. Learn to what it means to go to college. They can do it at an affordable cost in their neighborhood, in their town, and then progress from the community college level to the right place for them. The students who sign up for these worthless for-profit schools or sign up for a heavy load of debt may find themselves in a terrible situation, and it is impossible for them to pursue a higher education.

We have to do something to control the cost of postsecondary education,

ease the burden of student debt, and crack down on the aggressive recruiting practices used by these for-profit colleges by closing the 90 10 loophole. Congress should start by coming to an agreement on the student loan interest rate hike that will prevent the interest rates on subsidized Federal student loans from doubling.

Let me close with this because I see my colleague from Rhode Island is here. On July 1, the interest rate on Federal loans—Stafford loans—will double from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. For a student borrowing \$20,000 over the course of a 4-year education, it means at 6.8 percent as opposed to 3.4 they will be paying back \$24,000 instead of \$20,000. Why do we want to dig this hole any deeper for students across America?

We have put together an alternative on the floor to keep the interest rate low. Unfortunately, the other side has objected. I hope we can work out a reasonable bipartisan way to keep interest rates on student loans at a lower level. We owe it to these families and to these students.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, let me first thank the distinguished Senator from Illinois for his determined efforts, as well as my senior colleague in this body, Senator JACK REED, for his determined efforts in trying to get to a resolution that will prevent the student loan interest rates from doubling.

THE HIGHWAY BILL

I am here to speak about another problem—something very important to ordinary Americans that is also being jammed up as a result of obstruction and intransigence—and that is the highway bill.

We had a March 31 deadline, the House and the Senate, to get a highway bill done. The Senate did its job; we got a highway bill done by March 31. The House did not do its job; they failed to get a highway bill done.

Let me point out that we have been doing highway bills in Congress back since the Eisenhower administration, and this is not rocket science. So it is telling that the body at the other end of this building could not get a highway and bridge bill done by the March 31 deadline. So what did they do? They extended it and took us to conference on the Senate bill.

Now, let's say a word about the Senate bill. The Senate bill is very hard to criticize. People sometimes criticize bills around here because they get jammed through; there isn't enough time; there aren't enough amendments; it is not bipartisan. None of those criticisms apply to the Senate bill.

The Senate highway bill came out of my Environment and Public Works Committee—thanks to the leadership of Chairman BOXER and Ranking Member INHOFE with the unanimous support of every Republican and every Democrat. It came to the floor. We had a

wide-open process here on the floor. I think nearly 40 amendments were accepted either in floor votes or by agreement. Everybody had their chance, everybody had their day, and the net result was that the bill cleared out of the Senate with 75 Senators on record supporting it. That is a pretty impressive majority around here.

So we have a 75-to-22 Senate bill that has the support of the chamber of commerce, the Association of Manufacturers, and it has the support of labor unions and the environmental community. There is really nothing to criticize about it either substantively or in terms of the process by which it was adopted, and yet our colleagues on the House side won't accept the bipartisan Senate bill. They have it bottled up in this conference. And the reason that I am on the floor today is that we are being told now that the House is going to ask for another extension past the end of June to continue to dawdle and stall the bipartisan highway bill. What is the effect of that? What is the effect of dawdling and stalling the bipartisan Senate highway bill? The effect is loss of jobs.

The Presiding Officer is from New York, I am from Rhode Island, and the distinguished Senator from Utah is here on the floor. All of us have a common situation in our State, which is winter. In winter, it is really hard to build and repair highways and bridges.

There is a summer construction season, and as we dawdle and delay and as the House jams up the bipartisan Senate highway bill, that summer season gets whittled away. We are now to the point where my director of transportation in Rhode Island, Mike Lewis, says that he had 97 jobs on his roster to be done in this summer construction season, and if we can't get this done earlier than when we anticipate doing it now, at the end of this month, at the end of June, 40 of those projects will drop off the roster and all of the jobs associated with them will be lost.

Rhode Island is a small State. Those numbers are going to echo eastward and northward across the country in job losses this summer because of the delay of a bipartisan Senate highway bill by the House. These are real jobs.

It is not just me making this observation and it is not just the Rhode Island director of transportation. Standard & Poor's Global Credit Portal RatingsDirect service has put out a publication: "Increasingly Unpredictable Federal Funding Could Stall U.S. Transportation Infrastructure Projects." They say the following:

With the March 31st expiration looming, Congress passed on March 29th yet another extension to fund U.S. highway programs. This latest continuing resolution, the ninth, provides funding through June 30, 2012. As construction season begins in the northern half of the country, this continuing uncertainty in funding could force states to delay projects rather than risk funding changes or political gridlock come July.

That is exactly what we are seeing. They said:

In addition, the political gridlock in Washington, D.C., and the doubt surrounding federal funding are making it difficult for issuers throughout the infrastructure sector to define long-term plans for funding necessary capital projects.

If we get this turned around, then what happens? Well, according to Standard & Poor's, "Once a long-term authorization is approved, we believe it will provide an impetus for transportation agencies to reconsider high-priority projects that had been shelved because of lack of funding." So we can put people to work in this country. We can put people to work in this country on roads and bridges and highways—something every American understands. We can do it under a bipartisan Senate bill that has the support of everybody, from the business community, to the labor community, to the environmental community, to, perhaps obviously, the highway construction community. But the House of Representatives, which couldn't pass a highway bill, is jamming us in this endless conference. I don't know if it is their intention to knock out these jobs in this preelection period. I don't know if they just can't get their house in order over there to do the basic legwork of passing a highway bill. But as we approach the end of this month, as we approach this second deadline—which it looks like they are going to miss again—I will urge my colleagues, let's hold their feet to the fire. There is no excuse for not passing the bipartisan Senate highway bill that is widely supported and that will create or defend nearly 3 million jobs in this country—2.9 million, to use the exact number that has been identified with this bill.

So I think it is very important that we stick to our guns on this one. In Rhode Island, we have projects such as Highway 95, where it comes through the city of Providence, it comes through as a bridge. It is a raised highway. If you go underneath that bridge to, say, drive into the back entrance of the Providence Place Mall or to look where the highway goes over the Amtrak rails that connect the Northeast Corridor, what do you see? You see wooden planks that have been laid between the I-beams so that the highway falling in doesn't land on cars underneath, doesn't land on Amtrak trains or train tracks underneath. This is a project that needs to be rebuilt. It needs to be rebuilt now. It is connected to where State Routes 6 and 10 come in and connect to 95. If you go under State Route 6 and State Route 10—as Senator REED and I did recently with the mayor of Providence and with the transportation director—you see that those highways are propped up by wooden supports. You see that pieces of the metal infrastructure have crumbled and fallen off onto the ground. This is highway work that needs to be done. These are not bridges to nowhere.

Every American driving across our bumpy roads knows we have work to

do, and I call on my colleagues in the House to quit dawdling, to let this conference go. If they don't have an answer, if they can't pass a highway bill, if they can't do the basic legwork of governance to do something as simple as a highway bill, then get out of the way. At least get out of the way and let the bipartisan, widely supported Senate highway bill go.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Utah.

EXTENDING TAX RELIEF

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, the bad news keeps coming. Europe is in dire straits, with the debt-riddled economies of Greece and now Spain threatening the future of the continent's economic union. There is real concern that this debt-fueled contagion in Europe will undermine our economy as well, and our economy cannot take too many more hits.

The unemployment rate went back up to 8.2 percent last month. Only 69,000 net new payroll jobs were created. That is barely keeping up with population growth and is hardly the type of robust job growth that will be the foundation of a lasting and meaningful economic recovery. Now, we should have seen this coming. The minutes of the Federal Reserve's most recent monetary policymaking meeting make numerous mention of uncertainties surrounding fiscal policy and that those uncertainties are a risk to the economic outlook.

Fed policymakers noted that "they generally saw the U.S. fiscal situation also as a risk to the economic outlook; if agreement is not reached on a plan for the federal budget, a sharp fiscal tightening could occur at the start of 2013." They concluded that "uncertainty about the trajectory of future fiscal policy could lead businesses to defer hiring and investing" and "uncertainty about the fiscal environment could hold back both household spending on durable goods and business capital expenditures."

Yesterday the Congressional Budget Office reminded us yet again what the consequences will be to our economy if we fail to get our debt under control. According to one of their analyses, absent serious reform of entitlement spending programs, "Federal debt would grow rapidly from its already high level, exceeding 90 percent of GDP in 2022. After that . . . [d]ebt as a share of GDP would exceed its historical peak of 109 percent by 2026, and it would approach 200 percent in 2037." And that is an optimistic view. The impact of this multiplying debt will be a gross national product that is reduced by 4.5 percent in 2027 and 13.5 percent in 2037.

In other words, unless President Obama and his allies in the Senate get to work, Americans face a future of fewer jobs, flat or shrinking incomes, and loss of opportunity. And the sad truth is, as this chart shows, the President's allies have not gotten to work.

We have had a hearing on tax extenders but none on the AMT patch—the alternative minimum tax patch—and none on tax reform. We did have a hearing on the 2013 tax cuts. But we have had no markups on any of those, and we have had no floor consideration of any of those. Yet these are all extremely important matters.

It was no surprise, therefore, when former President Clinton stated yesterday that we are still in a recession. Economists might say that is not technically accurate, but it is certainly how most Americans feel. What did come as a surprise, however, was President Clinton's remarks on taxmageddon, the fiscal cliff the Nation faces at the end of this year. At least yesterday, it sounded as though his view was that we should do a complete 180 and race away from this cliff, extending in full the tax relief enacted by President Bush and extended by President Obama in 2010. Several weeks ago, 41 Senate Republicans made a similar request of the Senate's majority leader, Senator REID. This fiscal cliff is unquestionably contributing to our fiscal crisis and slowing the economy by creating enormous uncertainty for taxpayers and businesses.

Absent action to extend this tax relief, Americans will be hit with a \$310 billion tax increase next year alone; 26 million middle-income families will owe \$92 billion in alternative minimum tax when filing their returns 1 year from now; a family of four earning \$50,000 will get hit with a \$2,183 tax hike; a small business owner will face a top marginal tax rate hike of 17 percent. That is catastrophic. The number of farmers who will face the death tax will rise by 2,220 percent. The number of small business owners who will face the death tax will rise by 900 percent. There should be no higher priority for the President and the Congress than addressing these tax increases.

Yesterday, President Clinton seemed to agree, arguing that we should act now, not after the elections, to avoid the fiscal cliff. At a minimum, he concluded that a temporary extension of current tax relief is in order. To quote former President Clinton:

They will probably have to put everything off until early next year. That's probably the best thing to do right now.

I understand that the minority leader of the Senate and the Speaker of the House have now called for a 1-year extension, during which time we should do tax reform. That makes sense. And I am committed, as the ranking member on the Senate Finance Committee, to do tax reform and hopefully bring both sides together, for once in a long time, to do what is in the best interest of this country.

President Clinton further argued:

What I think we need to do is to find some way to avoid the fiscal cliff, to avoid doing anything that would contract the economy now, and then deal with what's necessary in the long-term debt-reduction plan as soon as they can, which presumably will be after the election.

Now, channeling Gilda Radner, and presumably following a dressing down by President Obama's campaign team, President Clinton tells us, "Never mind."

But President Clinton knew what he was saying. One thing I can say, knowing him as well as I do, President Clinton is a very smart man. He was making an elementary point, one that the President, President Obama, seemed to agree with when he was not running for election on a platform that single-mindedly obsesses over raising taxes on families with incomes over \$250,000.

President Clinton, not wanting to further undermine our economy, recommended a short-term extension of all the tax relief. That is precisely what President Obama agreed to at the end of 2010. Given our tepid economic growth and job creation and the threat from Europe, common sense would dictate a similar course today—certainly, if the alternative is a \$310 billion tax increase.

But today President Obama is running for reelection, and tax relief for the so-called rich would undermine his message of wealth redistribution. Failure to extend this tax relief, though, is not an option.

Just this morning another Obama supporter, a former Director for the National Economic Council, Larry Summers, said:

The real risk to this economy is on the side of slowdown . . . and that means we've got to make sure that we don't take gasoline out of the tank at the end of this year. That's gotta be the top priority.

The former Director of President Obama's Office of Management and Budget concluded that what he estimates to be a \$500 billion tax increase would be so large that "the economy could be thrown back into a recession."

According to the magazine, *The Economist*, the Congressional Budget Office has found that the combined effects of the sequester and the expiring tax relief would add up to 3.6 percent of GDP in fiscal year 2013. In a \$15 trillion economy, that would be a hit to GDP of \$540 billion, which would surely tip us toward recession and even more job losses.

The question the people of Utah and citizens around the country are asking themselves is, What is the holdup? If extending this tax relief is essential to providing families and businesses with the certainty and security necessary for economic growth, why are Senate Democrats refusing to take it up? Why is the President not pushing for immediate action to avoid this fiscal cliff?

Let me suggest an answer. The President wants to drag this out until after this election. Even if that means months of additional pain for America's families and a real hit to our economy, it will serve his long-term goal, a goal that he dares not announce until after the election. President Obama does not want the precedent of extending this tax relief for everyone because, ultimately, his liberal base does not want it extended for anyone.

The President and his advisers know our debt is unsustainable. Their base will not allow for any serious changes to spending policy, and tax increases on the wealthy alone are not adequate to get our fiscal house in order. The only solution, one that Hyde Park and Pennsylvania Avenue are loathe to discuss openly, are tax increases on everybody.

This is Matt Bai, writing last year in the *New York Times*:

If Democrats are serious about reversing the policy of the Bush years, then they will probably have to be willing to make a case for eliminating all the tax cuts, not just those for the wealthiest Americans. And they may have to come up with some kind of more comprehensive plan for modernizing the entire tax code, in order to persuade voters that even if some taxes go up, they might still come out ahead.

Ezra Klein, the liberal blogger at the *Washington Post*, put it this way:

We cannot fund anything close to the government's commitments if we don't raise taxes, or if we let only the Bush tax cuts for income over \$250,000 expire.

Though he is now persona non grata in President Obama's camp, just a few weeks ago President Clinton was echoing this recommendation of tax increases for all.

This is President Clinton:

This is just me now, I'm not speaking for the White House—I think you could tax me at 100 percent and you wouldn't balance the budget. We are all going to have to contribute to this, and if middle class people's wages were going up again, and we had some growth to the economy, I don't think they would object to going back to tax rates [from] when I was president.

With due respect to our former President, I do think he was speaking for the White House, and I do think most Americans would object to a tax hike. That is why President Obama has decided to lay low rather than lead. The American people are not going to accept this. We live in a republic, and it is fundamentally illegitimate, on an issue of this magnitude, for a person running for President of the United States to put these decisions off until a lameduck session of Congress when he can no longer be held to account by the American people.

It is not only an economic imperative that we extend this tax relief, it is demanded by our constitutional commitment to representative democracy. To borrow from Justice Scalia:

The American people love democracy and the American people are not fools.

If the President and his campaign team think they can punt this issue into the fall, they are sorely mistaken. The American people will voice their displeasure with this failure to lead in November. President Clinton got it right the first time yesterday. The fiscal cliff must be addressed now. We cannot wait until later in the year. Our economy is struggling. American families are treading water. We have tried it their way for almost 4 years.

We have tried a \$850 billion stimulus. We have tried ObamaCare, which was

also supposed to be a jobs program. We have tried Dodd-Frank. It is time to try something else.

There is no greater jobs program that Congress and the President could pursue than a permanent extension of the tax relief signed by Presidents Bush and Obama. It would provide enormous confidence to America's businesses and families at a time when confidence is sorely needed. This issue is not going away. I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass tax relief for all Americans sometime this summer.

We all realize we are in election mode. Maybe I realize that more than most. The fact is, we cannot punt this anymore. We cannot kick it down the road. We are going to have to find a means and a way whereby we extend this tax relief and then spend the next year working on tax reform and hopefully a bipartisan tax reform bill that everybody here can support.

So far this year just about everything the majority leader has brought up for and on behalf of Democrats is to protect the sitting 23 Democrats who are up for reelection this year. I don't blame the leader for wanting to protect his fellow Democrats. That is, after all, maybe part of the job of the leader. On the other hand, there are things that are even more important, such as the future welfare of our country, such as jobs that are not being created. They are not being created because we have no creators in the White House. It takes a President to lead on these issues.

I suggest to President Obama he would have a much better chance of reelection if he would lead on some of these issues and if he would go along with putting off these tax increases and committing Democrats and Republicans to coming up with a bipartisan reform of this awful, despicable, unworkable Tax Code. It might be one of the few ways we can bring people together. It might be one of the few ways we can turn this country around in the short term.

I think the minority leader and the Speaker of the House have something here. We ought to do this and make it the main focal point of our existence as Members of the Senate and Members of the House of Representatives. If we do this, we might even find that we can get along again. We might even find that we can work together. And we might even find the President can lead for a change, which would be a pleasant change from what I have seen over the last number of years.

I happen to like the President. I do not agree with him. Yes, I would like to replace him. But I like him personally. I believe if the President would lead here and would make this a focal point he would have a better chance in this election. Not that I want him to be successful, but at least he would have a better chance.

Deep down the American people believe nothing is being done by the White House, by this body, and

throughout the country. I yearn for the day when Democrats and Republicans can get along with each other again, when we really put the country first rather than reelection first, when we really look at each other and say: You know, I like him or her. I think I can work with them. It would be wonderful if we would do that.

This is a pretty fair suggestion: Keep the tax cuts alive until we reform the tax system—this bloated, unworkable, stupid Tax Code. I actually believe it could be a way of making us all work together and making us all do so in the best interests of our country. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

I hope my colleagues on both sides will go along with doing something that makes sense—like this. I believe in these suggestions we have the makings of something that would not only help our country but help all of us to get along with each other and work in the best interests of our country.

But I will make a final point; that is, it takes Presidential leadership to make major changes like this, and we do not have that right now.

Mr. President, in remarks a few minutes ago, I stated the following:

If extending this tax relief is essential to providing families and businesses with the certainty and security necessary for economic growth, why are Senate Democrats refusing to take it up? And why is the President not pushing for immediate action to avoid this fiscal cliff?

Let me suggest an answer.

The President wants to drag this out until after the elections. Even if that means months of additional pain for America's families and a real hit to our economy, it will serve his long-term goal—a goal that he dare not announce until after the election.

President Obama does not want the precedent of extending this tax relief for everyone, because ultimately his liberal base does not want it extended for anyone.

The President and his advisers know that our debt is unsustainable. Their base will not allow for any serious changes to spending policy, and tax increases on the wealthy alone are not adequate to get our fiscal house in order.

As support for my theory that the President could be dragging out this tax hike fight, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article from the blog, "Talking Points Memo," dated November 22, 2011. That blog's authors certainly are allies of President Obama and rarely does "Talking Points Memo" contain anything sympathetic to Republican policy positions. When it is critical of President Obama, the blog's criticisms tend to spring from the far left of the political spectrum. I ask my colleagues to ask themselves the question above: "Why is the President not pushing for immediate action to avoid this fiscal cliff?" and then read the article.

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

OBAMA ISSUES VETO THREAT ON BUSH TAX CUTS

(By Brian Beutler)

President Obama has threatened to veto any legislation that attempts to eliminate

the automatic penalties for Super Committee failure. But on January 1, 2013—the same day the automatic, across the board spending cuts are scheduled to take effect—all of the Bush tax cuts are set to expire. And the White House plans to use the threat of full expiration the exact same way they're using the threat of sequestration—to force Republicans to accept a higher tax burden on wealthy Americans.

"He won't sign a full extension," said one Senior Administration Official at a White House background briefing for reporters on the Super Committee.

"I think if you look at everything that happens in January 2013, it is a compelling argument that there's a need to make real policy," said another Senior Administration Official. "And I think the fact the sequester will hit in January 2013 and the expiration of the tax cuts hits in 2013, the right thing to do is tax reform that has both positive impact on the economy and is fair in terms of distribution of the tax burden, and then balanced savings that share the burden amongst all the different parts of the budget from the very rich to people on Medicare and Medicaid."

If you despise government indiscriminately, the Super Committee's inaction doesn't really matter on its own—it just means more spending cuts. "Super Committee could not agree how to cut \$1.2 Trillion," tweeted anti-tax crusader Grover Norquist. "So now we 'sequester' (french for 'cut') \$1.2 Trillion. This is failing, how?"

True enough. But unless the White House changes its tune, members of Congress won't just have a choice between lower spending and higher taxes. If Republicans dig in their heels and refuse to raise taxes on the wealthy, then taxes will go up automatically. Democrats proved in the Super Committee negotiations that they have the nerve to hold out on spending cuts until Republicans toss Norquist and his fellow conservative activists under the bus. Unless that changes, it's a powerful incentive for Republicans to change their strategy—and their orthodoxy.

Mr. HATCH. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Would the Senator withhold the request.

Mr. HATCH. I withhold. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Madam President, I yield to the Senator from Ohio.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Ohio.

WORLD WAR II PRAYER ACT OF 2012

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy for 15 minutes with my colleague from Connecticut, Senator LIEBERMAN, about the new legislation we just introduced, S. 3078, the World War II Prayer Act of 2012.

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

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam Portman, this bill will lead to the placement of a plaque or inscription at the National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC, with a prayer that Franklin Delano Roosevelt shared with the Nation by radio address 68 years ago today. The occasion was D-day, June 6, 1944.

On D-day American troops, joined by allied forces, carried out an amphibious and airborne landing on five

beaches on the heavily fortified coast of France's Normandy region. Some have termed those Normandy landings as the beginning of the end of the war in Europe. I believe that is true because courageous Americans were willing to risk their lives on the coast of France that day. Thousands made the ultimate sacrifice that day.

With the invasion underway, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt asked our Nation to come together in prayer for the men who were engaged in this dangerous but very important battle. His powerful and ecumenical prayer, drawing on our Nation's rich Judeo-Christian heritage and values, brought strength and inspiration to many during what was a challenging time for our country.

Today I have the honor, along with Senator LIEBERMAN, to introduce this legislation to commemorate that prayer and that day. His words, of course, brought comfort to the many families and friends of the brave men who were killed in action. Those words of Franklin Roosevelt are etched in our history and in our minds, and we hope soon in stone. Our bill ensures that the prayer becomes a permanent reminder of the sacrifice of those who fought in World War II and in the power of prayer through difficult times.

We worked closely with the National Park Service to ensure that the plaque or inscription does not disrupt the World War II Memorial or bypass the Commemorative Works Act process, which governs monuments in Washington. The placement and design of the plaque would be assigned to a commemorative works approval and review process, which makes it consistent with legislation that was passed by previous Congresses.

It is adding some historical context to this beautiful memorial—adding a layer of commemoration, not taking anything away from the memorial that is already in place.

My friend in the House of Representatives, Congressman BILL JOHNSON of Ohio, introduced a House companion bill to this legislation, which has passed the House earlier this year with an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 386 to 26.

Today, on the 68th anniversary of this historic battle known as D-day, we hope to inspire the Senate to follow suit and tell the story of this powerful prayer that moved the Nation in honor of heroes by placing a marker with the prayer at the World War II Memorial.

Madam President, I would like to now turn things over to Senator LIEBERMAN, my cosponsor of this legislation, and a leader in the Senate and in our country for his thoughts. After that we will join to recite parts of this incredibly powerful extraordinary Presidential prayer from World War II.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Madam President, I thank my friend from Ohio for taking the lead on what I call a noble project, and I am confident that all of our colleagues will join us in this to include

FDR's national prayer at the World War II Memorial.

It is very important to remember that D-day, which was 68 years ago today, turned out to be a pivotal moment in the war in Europe. FDR chose not to give a speech announcing the landing at Normandy but to offer a national prayer. I think in doing so, he went to a very proud, not only tradition in America but one of our great assets where we have had the ability to bring faith and God in a very inclusive and nondiscriminatory way into our public life to the great benefit of our Nation.

As he delivered these words of prayer in a historic radio broadcast, which of course is the way it was done in those days, the success of the bold and dangerous D-day plan was far from assured. But with the eloquent faithfulness of his words and with his steady Presidential leadership, I believe the brave American men and women in uniform who landed at Normandy were strengthened by the conviction of our national values, the virtue and righteousness of their cause, and, of course, with confidence that they would benefit from the guiding grace of God.

I remember words by President Reagan on another Normandy anniversary when he said:

The men of Normandy had faith that what they were doing was right, faith that they fought for all humanity, faith that a just God would grant them mercy on this beachhead, or on the next.

Indeed, I think adding FDR'S prayer to the grandness of the World War II Memorial will even elevate it, and it will rightly remind all who visit of the essential role that faith in God played at that pivotal moment of world history. It will also remind us that faith in God has played a pivotal role in American history every day since the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, when our Founders declared that they were forming our new government to secure the rights of life, liberty, and happiness that each of us receive as an endowment from our creator.

All of this is expressed in the wonderful idea that Senator PORTMAN has had and would be accomplished by this project.

I yield back to my friend from Ohio for the beginning of President Roosevelt's prayer.

Mr. PORTMAN. I thank my colleague from Connecticut. As he said so well, the power of prayer in this case, as was true in our Nation's great history, is a comfort and inspiration to the country.

As I noted earlier, we would like to recite the prayer. I would ask those in the gallery and on the floor today to join us in this prayer. I will start by reading the first half, including some words that President Roosevelt said prior to the prayer, and then Senator LIEBERMAN will read the second half.

Franklin Roosevelt started off by saying:

My fellow Americans: Last night when I spoke with you about the fall of Rome, I

knew at that moment that troops of the United States and our allies were crossing the Channel in another and greater operation. It has come to pass with success thus far.

And so in this poignant hour, I ask you to join me in prayer.

Almighty God: Our sons, pride of our Nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor, a struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity.

Lead them straight and true; give strength to their arms, stoutness to their hearts, steadfastness in their faith.

They will need Thy blessings. Their road will be long and hard. For the enemy is strong. He may hurl back our forces. Success may not come with rushing speed, but we shall return again and again; and we know that by Thy grace, and by the righteousness of our cause, our sons will triumph.

They will be sore tried, by night and by day, without rest—until the victory is won. The darkness will be rent by noise and flame. Men's souls will be shaken with the violences of war.

For these men are lately drawn from the ways of peace. They fight not for the lust of conquest. They fight to end conquest. They fight to liberate. They fight to let justice arise, and tolerance and goodwill among all Thy people. They yearn but for the end of battle, for their return to the haven of home.

Some will never return. Embrace these, Father, and receive them, Thy heroic servants, into Thy kingdom.

I would now like to turn to Senator LIEBERMAN to read the second half of the prayer.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I continue with Roosevelt's prayer.

And for us at home—fathers, mothers, children, wives, sisters, and brothers of brave men overseas—whose thoughts and prayers are ever with them—help us, Almighty God, to rededicate ourselves in renewed faith in Thee in this hour of great sacrifice.

Many people have urged that I call the Nation into a single day of special prayer. But because the road is long and the desire is great, I ask that our people devote themselves in a continuance of prayer. As we rise to each new day, and again when each day is spent, let words of prayer be on our lips, invoking Thy help to our efforts.

Give us strength, too—strength in our daily tasks, to redouble the contributions we make in the physical and the material support of our armed forces.

And let our hearts be stout, to wait out the long travail, to bear sorrows that may come, to impart our courage unto our sons wheresoever they may be.

And, O Lord, give us faith. Give us faith in Thee. Faith in our sons; Faith in each other; Faith in our united crusade. Let not the keenness of our spirit ever be dulled. Let not the impacts of temporary events, of temporal matters of but fleeting moment let not these deter us in our unconquerable purpose.

With Thy blessing, we shall prevail over the unholy forces of our enemy. Help us to conquer the apostles of greed and racial arrogances. Lead us to the saving of our country, and with our sister Nations into a world unity that will spell a sure peace a peace invulnerable to the schemings of unworthy men. And a peace that will let all of men live in freedom, reaping the just rewards of their honest toil.

Thy will be done, Almighty God.

Amen.

Madam President, as we know, many lives were lost on D-day and what followed, but it led to the defeat of—if I

may use President Roosevelt's words—"the unholy forces of our enemy," and of a remarkable period of peace and prosperity in America and certainly in Europe.

If I might add briefly, although the circumstances and challenges we face at this moment in our Nation's history are much less greater than America faced on June 6, 1944, nonetheless, there is a certain absence of hopefulness and confidence today. I would respectfully suggest that one of the great sources of hopefulness and confidence that we all could benefit from today is exactly the faith in God in a very inclusive way such as President Roosevelt spoke on that fateful day of June 6, 1944.

Again, with thanks to my friend from Ohio for this idea and for his generosity of spirit in inviting me to join both in sponsoring this proposal and in reading this prayer today, I yield the floor back to the Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I thank my friend. I tell the Senator that I am proud to stand by his side in this small effort to commemorate what happened 68 years ago today, which was the President calling the Nation in prayer and invoking the Almighty to help protect our sons and daughters in battle.

I just came back from Afghanistan yesterday morning, and I would agree with my friend from Connecticut that so much of what we are facing today would also be relevant to these words. I think, particularly, these words in the prayer:

For these men are lately drawn from the ways of peace. They fight not for the lust of conquest. They fight to end conquest. They fight to liberate. They fight for tolerance and goodwill among all Thy people. They yearn but for the end of battle, for their return to the haven of home.

That certainly describes our great young men and women in uniform who are in Afghanistan protecting us and encouraging tolerance, goodwill, and justice not just for us but for that country and, indeed, for the world.

I thank my colleague again for his being willing to join me in this effort. I hope my other colleagues will join us in encouraging that this important, extraordinary prayer and this example of the power of faith in our Nation's history be added to the World War II Memorial.

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

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, today we have before us the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012. It is more commonly known as

the farm bill. It is critically important for America's farmers and ranchers. But it might also be known as the conservation bill, as the food bill, and, even better, the kitchen table bill because this bill affects every one of us.

The Agriculture Committee is different from most other committees in Congress. Our committee room does not have a raised dais. Instead, we sit around a table just like families across the country do and just like farmers and ranchers do after a long day of work in the fields. To write this farm bill, we sat down around our table and we talked to each other and we listened to each other and we worked in a bipartisan way to craft a bill that creates jobs while cutting subsidies and reducing the deficit.

The result of that effort is what is before us in the Senate. It is a bill that affects every family across the country. The farm bill makes it possible for many families to come together around their own kitchen tables to enjoy the bounty of the world's safest, most abundant, and most affordable food supply.

We are also aware, especially in this very tough economy, that many of our neighbors, many of our friends, many of our family members are struggling to put food on their own tables. The farm bill is critically important to those families as well. As we begin our debate in the Senate on the farm bill, let us remember the families all across the country who are counting on us to get this right.

I want my colleagues to also remember that the farm bill is a jobs bill—16 million jobs. Sixteen million jobs in this country rely on the continued strength of American agriculture. They are the people doing the work it takes to put the food on our kitchen tables, not just those on the farm but those who manufacture, sell farm equipment, the people who ship the crops from one place to another, the people who have the farmers markets and local food hubs, the people who work in food processing and crop protection and crop fertility, not to mention the researchers and the scientists who worked hard every day to fight pests and diseases that threaten our food supply.

Throughout this recession, as those 16 million people can attest, agriculture has been one of the truly bright spots in our economy. That is why we made such an important effort, such an important bipartisan effort in this farm bill to support beginning farmers as well. We are giving them additional support for training, mentoring, and outreach to ensure the success of our next generation of farmers.

In addition, we are giving opportunities for U.S. veterans who are interested in pursuing a career in agriculture, and we are creating a military veterans agricultural liaison within the Department of Agriculture to educate veterans about farming and connecting them with beginning farmer training programs. I would also remind

my colleagues that for those who have served and are serving us in Iraq and Afghanistan, the majority of them—over half of them—are coming from small towns and rural communities and they are coming home. One of the ways to provide opportunities for jobs is to support them coming back to their community by having the opportunity to go into agriculture.

One of the brightest spots in agriculture has been in exports. This chart shows the incredible growth of agricultural exports over the last number of years. In fact, total agricultural exports in 2011 alone reached \$136 billion. It is a 270-percent increase just in the last 10 years, an explosion, as we reach out. American agriculture is looked to and depended upon to feed the families of the world.

Our trade surplus is \$42.5 billion. Let me repeat that. We have a significant trade surplus in agriculture. We cannot say that in much of any other place in our economy. But in agriculture we are growing it here at home. The jobs are here at home, and we are exporting it overseas, which is what I would like to see in every one of our industries. It is one of the few areas where we have that kind of success.

We know that for every \$1 billion in agricultural exports, we are creating 8,400 American jobs—8,400 American jobs for every \$1 billion in exports. The investments we make in market development, in access for our agricultural products overseas, will continue to create jobs here at home.

As we were writing the farm bill, we also did something that families all across the country are doing during these very hard times. We went through everything we are spending, everything we are spending money on, and we looked at how we could do more for less. We literally went through every page of farm policy and agriculture spending through USDA. This bill represents major reforms that will allow us to focus fewer resources on the things that create jobs and make the biggest difference. In other words, we are refocusing. We are cutting the things that are not important and refocusing on the things that are and the things that create jobs.

The Agriculture Reform Food and Jobs Act is about cutting subsidies and creating jobs in America. The reforms in this bill start on page 1 with the repeal of direct payments, counter-cyclical payments, and the Average Crop Revenue Election, which has been called the ACRE Program.

We are creating a new approach, a new program that only helps farmers when there is a loss and only for crops they have actually planted, and we are strengthening payment limits. We are ending more than 100 programs and authorizations that are no longer needed, and we are doing all of this in order to be able to cut the deficit by \$23 billion.

The most fundamental reform in the Agriculture Reform Food and Jobs Act is the shift away from direct payments

and toward risk management for farmers. Throughout this process, we have been focused on principles, not programs, and the No. 1 principle is risk management. So we are repealing direct payments. We know farmers face unique risks unlike those in other businesses.

Let me stress that again. I do not know of any business that has the same kind of risks in market volatility, in weather volatility than our farmers and ranchers do. It is very fortunate we still have people who want to stay in that business, given all the risks, weather and market conditions, which are out of producers' control. They can have devastating effects. We know that. But the current system focused around direct and countercyclical payments does not focus on actual risk and it is no longer defensible or sustainable.

In this current fiscal and political environment, these programs actually jeopardize our ability to have a real safety net for farmers and the jobs that depend on them. That is why we are eliminating those programs and instead strengthening crop insurance as the centerpiece of risk management in the farm bill.

This is the No. 1 issue we heard from every farmer who has testified before the committee, whether it was in Michigan or in Kansas or across the country. Every region of the country we have heard the same thing loudly and clearly.

The basic foundation of support for producers is crop insurance. We are expanding crop insurance in the bill to include specialty crops and others as well. Because while we know crop insurance is the foundation, it does not work the same. It is not available for every commodity. That is a commitment we have made to expand crop insurance, including specialty crops, which are essentially the kinds of crops we are likely to find in the produce aisle of our supermarket or at the local farmers market: nuts, vegetables, fruits, and other products.

This is an extremely diverse group of crops, and the bill recognizes the unique crop insurance needs of specialty crop growers. We are also taking strides to help young and beginning farmers get started and succeed in farming. We have made revisions to crop insurance to better help those new farmers by reducing their crop insurance premiums and providing additional support when disasters strike.

Supplement crop insurance. This bill creates a simple market-oriented and risk-based program we are calling ARC, Agricultural Risk Coverage. ARC represents a significant and historic reform in agriculture policy. For years, Congress has struggled to balance the needs of different commodities, different programs. This is solved with the new ARC Program, which uses the market as a guide and treats every commodity the same.

The current system essentially amounts to an income transfer from

the Federal Treasury to only certain people, certain farmers, because payments are made every year without regard to whether the farmer had a successful year or whether the individual is farming. I say "certain people" because many farmers do not qualify for the help today as well.

Direct and countercyclical payments are made using what is called base acres. That is the current system to determine the payments. Base acres were set using what was planted on the farms back in 1980s. So these base acres have little relevance to what is actually happening on many farms today. This change is also very important for new farmers. We have told beginning farmers this is a very important way to support them.

Our ARC, on the other hand, the program we have developed in this bill, uses only the acres a farmer actually plants. It is able to adapt to free market forces and the decisions made being made on the farm without interference from those business decisions a farmer makes. We want the marketplace making the decisions, not the government.

ARC is market oriented. Farmers only get help when the market moves in the opposite direction from historic price trends farmers use to plan their business and make planning decisions. The payment amount is based on actual historic numbers from the marketplace, not from the Halls of Congress.

Finally, too many current program payments are being made to people who do not actually farm or already have large incomes. The farm bill fixes this. Under current law, we say farm payments can only go to people who are actively engaged in farming. This requirement contained a loophole, however, known as the management loophole that lets a farm operation designate managers who are not actually farming, but because they are listed as managers, they can still get a payment from the government, and it can allow them to get around the payment limits.

That does not make any sense. Thanks to Senator GRASSLEY, Senator TIM JOHNSON, who has legislation in this area—and Senator GRASSLEY is a member of our committee who has been such a champion on this issue—we have eliminated that loophole and made sure the payments are going to people who are actually farming.

This farm bill also reforms the adjusted gross income eligibility requirement, lowers it substantially, eliminating any payment to millionaires. Current law includes two AGI calculations, one for farm income, one for nonfarm income, which is confusing and difficult to administer. It may allow some people to split their income in a way that they are eligible for payments they otherwise would not be eligible for. We close this loophole. We use a single, simple AGI calculation and restrict the eligibility to those who have less than \$750,000 in AGI.

Finally, the farm bill caps payments at \$50,000, less than half of what a farmer can currently receive. Coupled with closing the management loophole, the farm bill contains the tightest and strongest payment limit reforms ever, while maintaining and strengthening the farm safety net for farmers who really need it. And this is very important. This is not about eliminating options, it is about focusing on those who have the most risk and have the most need.

In dairy, we also reform our Nation's dairy policies, replacing the dairy programs with new, market-oriented programs that allow farmers to manage their own risk in a manner that works best for them. The dairy industry suffered serious hardship in 2009, as many of us know—and certainly the Presiding Officer knows we in Michigan have the same thing—when milk prices dropped substantially, wiping out many small and medium-sized dairies. Despite spending \$1.3 billion that year, our current dairy programs weren't able to help many of the farmers in crisis. In some cases, dairy farms that had been passed down from generation to generation went bankrupt and, sadly, some farmers even took their own lives.

Dairy operations across the country are extremely diverse, and the dairy policies we are setting in this bill recognize that diversity. We created programs that can be customized by each dairy, and we allow individual dairies to determine whether to participate in the programs at all. Two programs will now comprise the dairy risk management system: the Dairy Production Margin Protection Program and the Dairy Market Stabilization Program.

The first provides support based on margin—that is, the difference between the milk price and the feed input costs. This is important because rising grain prices, coupled with dropping milk prices, can have a devastating impact on America's dairies. Producers will have to share in the program's costs—and this is important—but it will allow them to manage their risk on more of their production at higher protection levels. We are providing a discounted premium for the first 4 million pounds of milk marketed for each producer—which is somewhere around 200 to 250 cows—to make sure that small and medium-sized operations will be able to participate and that all farms will be eligible.

The second program, the Market Stabilization Program, sends clear market signals to producers that indicate when they are oversupplying the market. Dairy is a unique commodity in that it is produced 365 days a year, cows must be milked daily, the raw product requires further handling and processing, and there are significant regional differences in management and marketing. By temporarily reducing a participating operation's payment for milk marketed by a small percentage when there is too much supply, the

margin program removes the incentive for dairies to overproduce during times of low margins. The program also includes a suspension trigger based on world prices that ensures U.S. dairies are competitive in the global market.

Conservation. Throughout this farm bill, we took the same approach as a family sitting around the table would when they are trying to figure out cuts in their own budget. We went through every program, again looked at what was working, what wasn't, looked for duplication and waste, and we focused on principles, not programs. An excellent example of that really is conservation.

Farming is measured in generations. Farms are passed down from children to grandchildren. But a farm can only be successful if it has quality soil and clean water. One of the farmers who testified before our committee told us that conservation programs which "enhance and protect our natural resource base is a crop insurance program for the nation." I would agree. With a growing global population, it is even more important than ever that we conserve water and conserve soil resources. Advances in technology and farm practices have helped our farmers be more productive than ever before, but no amount of technology can overcome degraded soils, poor water quality, or a lack of water.

The farm bill is actually our Nation's single biggest investment in land and water conservation on private lands in our country. As we went through every program, we focused on making them more flexible and easier to use. We have been able to focus 23 different programs into 13. We have reduced it to 13 and put them in 4 primary functions, with a lot more flexibility for the users.

The first function is working lands—giving farmers and ranchers the tools they need to be better stewards of the land. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program—or EQIP—is one of the most important conservation programs for working lands, providing technical and financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, and private forest owners to help them conserve soil and water. This function also includes the Conservation Stewardship Program, which encourages higher levels of conservation and the adoption of emerging conservation technologies.

We also continued the conservation innovation grants and the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, which allows private landowners to get added benefits from their lands by opening them up to hunting, fishing, bird watching, and other kinds of outdoor recreation. We made these programs more flexible—and this is very important—and we added a focus on wildlife habitats and made them easier for farmers to take advantage of.

The second area is the Conservation Reserve Program—very important. It removes highly erodible land from production to benefit soil and water qual-

ity as well as wildlife habitat. Parts of the Southwest—certainly my friend and colleague from Kansas knows this—have experienced record droughts this year. It is stunning what has happened, and it is the worst since the Dust Bowl era of the 1930s. But the soil, while it was dry, stayed on the ground because the Conservation Reserve Program was a part of that change protecting the soil and air. Our conservation efforts are actually working, and we are seeing changes even in the worst of times as it relates to the droughts.

CRP has also been critical in our efforts to rebuild wildlife populations and to reduce pollution in our streams, our rivers, and our lakes. We also continued an important transition incentives program to help older farmers transition their land to beginning farmers.

Third, we focused on regional partnerships. We consolidated four different programs into one that will provide competitive, merit-based grants to regional partnerships comprised of conservation groups, universities, farmers, ranchers, and private landowners to support improvements to soil health, water quality and quantity, and wildlife habitat. That is certainly important to me for the Great Lakes—and I know the Presiding Officer cares about that as well—but it is also critical for the Chesapeake Bay. And I want to thank our colleagues from the bay area, certainly Senator CARDIN and Senator CASEY, who are on the committee, but also Senator WARNER and Members all across the bay who have been deeply involved in making sure we get this right. It is also there for other critical areas around the country that have large-scale regional challenges around conservation.

Finally, I am really proud of the work that was done around easements. Easements allow landowners to voluntarily enter into an agreement to preserve wetlands and farmland to protect against development and sprawl. This year, funding for both the Wetlands Reserve Program and the Grasslands Reserve Program were was out. So we streamlined and consolidated to establish an easement program with a permanent baseline going forward to protect agricultural lands from development.

This bill also includes a bipartisan sodsaver provision, and I wish to thank Senators THUNE, JOHANNES, and SHERROD BROWN for bringing it forward, authoring it, and working with us. This provision helps prevent the plowing up of native prairie. Sod-saver is aimed at protecting grasslands at high risk of being converted to cropland. This is not only good for conservation, it saves taxpayers \$200 million over 10 years, and it is tied to crop insurance.

I should also say that while the conservation title in the farm bill is a big win for conservation of our environment, I am proud to say we have con-

tinued to link the commodity title, which I described earlier, to conservation.

In crop insurance, the sodsaver program creates a penalty if, in fact, someone is plowing up native prairie. They would lose part of their discount under crop insurance if they did that. So it is tied there, and that is very important.

I am very proud of the fact that we received support for our approach from 643 different conservation and environmental groups in all 50 States. I think that says loudly and clearly that it is possible to make smart cuts that increase flexibility without sacrificing effectiveness.

Another area in which we have made significant strides is nutrition and healthy foods. For too long our Nation's farm bill ignored the diversity of agriculture and the kinds of healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, that families in America want to put on their kitchen tables as well. We made significant progress on this front in the 2008 farm bill, with the first-ever specialty crops title, and we have continued the progress in the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act.

As I said earlier, as I go to every part of Michigan, I meet people who have worked all their lives, paid taxes, and never imagined they would be put in a position where they would need help putting food on the table for their families. Because of this recession, which has been way too long in Michigan—it is getting better, but we have been hit harder, deeper, and longer than anywhere—a lot of families have had to ask for temporary help. And when they need it, whether it is food assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which used to be called food stamps and is now called SNAP, or whether it is help from a food bank, those families are grateful, and we should be there when they need that temporary help.

We all expect those programs to have integrity. And as someone whose State has been hit harder than anyone else's, I want to make absolutely sure these programs are in place for families who need it, and that means making absolutely sure every dollar goes to only the families who need it. That is why we are closing loopholes that allowed lottery winners—and, unbelievably, we have had at least two instances of this in Michigan, where someone won the lottery and was able to continue on food assistance. It is shameful that so many American children go to bed hungry at night and outrageous that people who have won millions of dollars in the lottery would be able to continue food assistance. So we made it absolutely clear that those individuals would be removed from SNAP immediately.

We are also cracking down on the trafficking of food assistance benefits. Right now, thanks to the efforts of the last farm bill, fraud is at an alltime low, but we can do even more. We are

giving additional resources to monitor and prevent benefit trafficking, as well as cracking down on liquor and tobacco stores that are currently allowed to participate in the program.

We are making sure that only people returning to school for career and technical training are eligible for food assistance, not college students who are currently at home or being supported by their parents.

Again, with so many families and so many children in need, we can't afford to divert funds in a way that just shouldn't be there.

We must also ensure that the standards Congress created for SNAP are followed by the States. We are eliminating a gap in standards that has allowed 16 States, including Michigan, to give just \$1 to people in the form of energy assistance to help them automatically qualify for additional SNAP benefits. We know families in parts of the country with high energy bills are often those who are most food insecure, and that is why we created the link between food assistance and LIHEAP. But it is clear Congress never intended for State governments to use this in a way that could jeopardize additional assistance for families with the highest utility bills.

Just like with commodity programs, we need to make sure the work we are doing has integrity and is defensible in our current budget climate, and we do this in a very careful way to make sure we do not inadvertently hurt families who truly do have significant energy costs.

In addition to increasing accountability, we are building on the success of programs that reduce hunger and improve access to healthy fruits and vegetables. We increase assistance for food banks through the Emergency Food Assistance Program. In 2010 more than 5 million people visited a food bank, and as we recover from this recession, it is absolutely critical that these organizations have food in stock to help those in need.

We are streamlining the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, which provides food to low-income individuals, to focus on seniors, and we are moving women and children into the WIC Program, where they can be better served.

We are continuing the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, which was authored originally by Senator HARKIN when he was chairing the committee, and I was very proud to work with him on that. It provides free and healthy snacks to schools with a high number of low-income children, and it has been incredibly successful.

This bill triples our support for farmers markets and gives them resources to develop local infrastructure such as food hubs. And we are continuing an effort to give low-income seniors access to healthy fruits and vegetables at farmers markets and roadside stands.

We are increasing funding for innovative projects such as community gar-

dens and urban greenhouse initiatives and protecting funding for programs that improve people's health.

I should say that all of these are done with small amounts of dollars, but they are very effective.

We are creating a national pilot modeled after Michigan's successful Double Up Food Bucks, which gives families relying on SNAP the opportunity to truly be able to buy fresh fruits and vegetables for their families. We are also authorizing the Healthy Food Financing Initiative to offer loans and grants to help address the problem of food deserts in underserved communities.

We increased funding for several organic programs, which, by the way, is the fastest growing segment of American agriculture. We increased support for organic research and extension, and we nearly doubled funding for the organic cost-share program that supports farmers.

This farm bill is a jobs bill, but it is also a food bill, and the 2012 farm bill goes a long way toward making sure every mom and dad can put healthy, nutritious food on the table for their children.

As we worked through the farm bill around our table in the Agriculture Committee, we focused on streamlining and consolidating programs to get the best possible results. I think that is what people want us to do. I certainly know that is what people in Michigan want us to do. We certainly see that in conservation, but we also approached this in every part of the farm bill.

In farm credit and rural development, we are streamlining the existing laws, removing unused provisions, and making authorizations more effective and the administration more effective so that when we have a part-time mayor who is trying to figure out rural development programs, they can actually do it and they actually use what have been extremely effective programs for rural communities.

In our research title, we eliminated dozens of unused or indefensible authorizations but continued the most important research components and functions, while streamlining operations, improving accountability in the use of Federal research funds, and creating an innovative, new research foundation that matches private dollars and leverages Federal research dollars to get more innovative food and agricultural research. And I wish to thank my friend from Kansas, Senator ROBERTS, for his important leadership in this as well.

We funded important energy programs, invested in specialty crops and organic farming, as I mentioned, and we have done all of this while saving the Federal taxpayers \$23 billion. We did it around our table in the ag room, in a bipartisan fashion, working out differences and arriving at real solutions.

In the coming days, as we get to debate on the farm bill, we will talk more

about specifics, and I will join my colleagues from the committee in further explaining various aspects of the bill, and we will continue to work with all of our colleagues to find additional solutions and to improve the bill so that our farm programs work best for all of our regions and all of our States.

While I will do everything I can to work out issues with our colleagues, I wish to stress the important balance we have struck in a bipartisan effort, the reforms we have undertaken, and the work we put into making real reforms without hurting families and without hurting farmers, who are so important to our economic recovery.

I am very proud of the work we have been able to accomplish—it has been a lot of hard work—and the way we saved American taxpayers \$23 billion through these reforms. I would encourage colleagues to look closely at the work we have done in the bill, to find a way to support it, to help us send a strong message to all Americans that this Congress, this Senate can make tough, smart decisions that cut spending, invest in America, and that we can do it together.

Speaking of doing it together, I could not have done this without my friend and my partner, Senator ROBERTS, the ranking member from Kansas. This has been a long and difficult process, but frankly there is nobody I would rather have had sitting across the table from me as we worked out this bill. Too many people look at Washington and only see dysfunction and partisanship and divisiveness. Yet we on the Agriculture Committee have found a way to work together for the good of the country, for 16 million people who depend on agriculture for their livelihood. That couldn't have happened without Senator ROBERTS' leadership and support, and I thank him as we move forward on this bill.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, first, I would like to thank the distinguished Senator from Michigan for her very kind remarks. This has been a team effort. She has been a very strong leader to try to put together a bill. I thank her for her very detailed summary, title by title, of the farm bill—something a lot of us probably couldn't do, but at any rate, she has done that, and it is in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. I urge my colleagues to really take a look at what the distinguished chairwoman has said today because she has literally gone down every title in the farm bill. So if anybody has any questions, it is right there, and, as she has indicated, if anybody has questions of either of us, please be in contact with either us or our very able staff.

I rise today in strong support of the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012, the farm bill, and I am privileged to stand here today with Chairwoman STABENOW, who led this reform legislation through the Agriculture

Committee. It has truly been a bipartisan and a team effort. It represents the final product of numerous hearings and months of discussions as we worked to write a new farm bill during the most difficult budget climate in our Nation's recent history.

I am proud to say that we have put together a bipartisan bill that strengthens and preserves the safety net for our farmers and ranchers in rural America, while providing \$23.6 billion—\$24 billion, as a politician's counting—in deficit reduction under this bill reported by the committee on a bipartisan vote of 16 to 5.

Let me repeat that. The Senate Agriculture Committee voluntarily wrote and reported a bill that provides \$23.6 billion in deficit reduction. It is a bill that represents real reform. We are the first authorizing committee to produce those kinds of mandatory budget savings, and it was voluntary.

We all remember the supercommittee that tried very hard to achieve deficit reduction. The supercommittee was really not that super—not because of those people individually but because of the circumstances. Well, we are a supercommittee. We came up with \$23.6 billion. I don't know of anybody over on the House side—perhaps I am wrong, but in the Senate we are the only folks who have really come up with real budget savings.

It also represents, as I have indicated and as the chairwoman indicated, real reform. Just listen to this. We have eliminated four commodity programs that caused farmers untold hours of preparation—go down to the Farm Service Agency and talk to the folks down there, who are hard-pressed anyway, and ask: "Which program do I sign up for? How can I plan down the road?" We rolled all of these commodity programs into one, while saving approximately \$15 billion from the farm safety net programs. That is truly remarkable.

Twenty-three conservation programs are streamlined into 13, while saving nearly \$6.4 billion. Approximately \$4 billion is saved in the nutrition title, while at the same time expanding our efforts to root out fraud and abuse. Sixteen program authorizations are eliminated in the rural development title, eliminating over \$1 billion of authorized spending over 10 years on top of the mandatory. Two programs are combined and another two eliminated in specialty crops. Over \$200 million less in mandatory money is provided in the energy title compared to the 2008 farm bill. Five programs are eliminated in the forestry title, reducing authorizations by at least \$20 million. Over 60 authorizations are eliminated from the research title, reducing authorizations by at least \$770 million over 5 years. Again, that is \$23.6 billion in tough mandatory savings, at least \$1.8 billion in reduced discretionary authorizations, and at least 100 programs or authorizations that have been eliminated.

This is a reform bill. No other committee in the House or Senate has voluntarily undertaken programmatic and funding reforms at this level in this budget climate—no other committee. Believe me, it would have been much easier to write a baseline bill with no change in CBO spending projections. We could have fulfilled everyone's request on the committee and in the Senate, but we would not have performed the duty that we were elected to perform and that our constituents expect in this budget climate and that farmers and ranchers expect and their lenders expect and all up and down Main Street throughout rural and smalltown America or, for that matter, any taxpayer or any citizen of the United States. We have reduced spending, and we have reformed programs. That is what they want, and they want us to work together, and that is what we have done. At the same time, it is a bill that strengthens and preserves our farm risk management, conservation, research, and rural community programs.

We have strengthened and preserved the Crop Insurance Program—as pointed out by the distinguished chairwoman, the No. 1 priority of virtually every producer who testified before our committee. Why? Because their banker or their lenders say: You have to have crop insurance, and you have to strengthen it, and you have to improve it. In the past, we have been using crop insurance as a bank. No, we are not going to do that anymore given the circumstances our farmers face even today in Kansas as we go through another dry spell, and also in Texas, Oklahoma, and the High Plains.

We have streamlined our commodity programs, while reducing the complexity for the producers. We have updated the acreage upon which support is based to reflect more recent cropping patterns. That is a point I wish to discuss just a little bit more.

In recent days and weeks, it has seemed there has been just a little bit of confusion here in the Capitol region. It seems that some think we should write a farm safety net program and allocate their funding by commodity group or organization, sort of like a pie chart. If all you did was listen to these groups, you would think we were robbing Peter to pay Paul.

I understand that the elimination of direct payments is a big deal to many commodities. If anybody should understand that, it should be me. As a key feature of the 1996 act, I originally authored the program at that time. One of the biggest beneficiaries of the program has been wheat, especially in Kansas. But the taxpayers have been clear in this budget climate: Why should Congress continue and defend a program based on planting acreages established over 25 years ago? That doesn't make any sense.

Yes, the elimination of direct payments means the end of many wheat payments in Kansas, but that does not

mean Kansas producers will no longer have a farm safety net—quite the contrary. They will have a strong risk management program. It will just be for different crops. Why? Because when base acres were established over 25 years ago, Kansas planted over 2.8 million acres of corn, 4.2 million acres of sorghum, 1.6 million acres of soybeans, and 12.1 million acres of wheat.

Now, in the most recent 3-year period, Kansas farmers planted 4.6 million acres of corn, 2.6 million acres of sorghum, 4 million acres of soybeans, and 8.8 million acres of wheat. Why? That is 4.9 million fewer acres of wheat and sorghum and 4.2 million more acres of corn and soybeans.

Why did that happen? Why did these acreage shifts in Kansas and all over the country change like that? It occurred because farmers made those decisions, not Washington. Our producers have planted for the domestic and international market, and we have done so in a way that we do not encourage a WTO challenge. The cropping changes are much the same all throughout the Nation, especially among States represented on the Agriculture Committee.

Money is shifting among commodities because farmers are farming differently. They are becoming much more diversified throughout the States on this committee and the Nation. It is not shifting because we in Washington are intentionally picking winners and losers.

I understand some are frustrated with the decisions and changes we have in this bill. That takes place in any farm bill. Quite honestly, there are things that, if we had the funds available, the chairwoman and I both would have preferred to have done differently. But let's be blunt. This is not the 2002 or 2008 farm bill, and we do not have extra funds available.

This is not my first trip to the farm bill rodeo. I have written bills in times of budget surpluses and extra spending, and I have written farm bills in the middle of deficit cutting exercises—seven of them. Make no mistake about it, it is much easier to write a bill when we are adding money to the baseline—a whole heck-of-a-lot easier.

Nutrition groups, conservation organizations, our commodity groups, our Members of Congress want to stand by you and take the bows when you are adding money to the programs. But when it comes time to make difficult decisions and do what is right for the country by reducing spending and reforming programs, sometimes they are just not even in the same room. They are hiding in the weeds.

American agriculture today is a modern-day miracle. Every American farmer feeds you, Mr. President, and 150 other people. In America today our consumers spend less of their disposable income on food—and their market basket, OK?—than any other Nation in the world. America's farmers and ranchers provide us with the most

abundant and affordable and safest food supply on the planet. That is a speech every farm organization and commodity group and farmers and ranchers have heard over and over, but it is a speech that deserves repeating to all my colleagues over and over so they get it.

They feed our Nation. Our producers feed our country. They feed the world, a troubled and hungry world. They provide food for the food aid programs that help countries around the world send young girls to school. Sending those girls to school helps feed hope and a belief in our American ideals rather than hatred and radicalism toward our Nation. The American farmer and rancher do provide stability in a chaotic world, and in doing so national security as well.

Show me a country that can't sustain itself in terms of food supply, I will show you chaos. Read about the Middle East, Syria, Libya and what is going on over in that part of the world. So the farm program is not only a farm program, it is a program to achieve stability in the world because of the productivity of the American farmer, and our ability to do it is also a national security program.

Every year America's farmers produce more on less land using less water and fewer inputs with ever-stronger conservation practices. It is truly a modern-day miracle what the agricultural sector in America does today.

I understand some are unhappy with some of the proposals put forward in this bill. It is a farm bill. I wouldn't expect it to be any different. But I can assure you, however, if I thought we were in any way writing a bill that would make it more difficult for my State of Kansas or for the State of Michigan or any American producer to feed this Nation and this world, a bill that eliminated their safety net which destroyed their ability to protect our natural resources while also feeding the most needy in our country, I would not be standing here today supporting it. I would not do that.

If I thought it in any way could keep us from feeding 9 billion people—note that, 9 billion people who will walk this Earth in just a couple of short decades—I would oppose this bill. We are going to have to double our agricultural production to help in a humanitarian way and prevent chaos all around the world, 9 billion people.

Agriculture is the backbone of the Kansas economy, employing more than one in five Kansans. More than 65,000 farms dot the Kansas landscape with an average land size of 705 acres. These farmers and ranchers do a tremendous job of feeding a troubled and hungry world. In fact, Kansas ranks No. 1 in the Nation in the production of wheat and grain sorghum, second in cattle farms, and third in sunflowers produced. We expect that, being the Sunflower State. Cash receipts from farm marketings were greater than \$12 bil-

lion, and farm product exports were in excess of \$4.8 billion.

Farmers and ranchers in my State truly help feed—what we have said again and again—a troubled and hungry world, which is why I am proud of this legislation. We have worked hard to put this together. It may not be the best possible bill, but it is the best bill possible given the circumstances we face. We have performed our duty to taxpayers by cutting deficit spending while at the same time strengthening and preserving the programs so important to agriculture and rural America.

Again, we have cut mandatory spending by \$23.6 billion. We have reformed, eliminated, and streamlined USDA programs to the tune of more than 100 programs and authorizations eliminated. And we have done it on a voluntary basis because in rural America you make the tough decisions. When the going gets tough, the tough get going, and you do what is right when it needs to be done. When we have done it in a bipartisan fashion, that is the best way to do it.

How many times have we heard this: What on Earth is wrong back there? Why can't you join together and work together and do what is right for America and for the people? This is what this committee has done under the leadership of the chairwoman.

So I thank the chairwoman for bringing us to this point today, and let's pass this farm bill. It is good for the country, it is good for the world, it is a good bill, and we need to proceed.

I hope every Member could vote for the motion to proceed. If they have amendments they are interested in, please come to us. It is like Bob Barker said: Come on down. Come on down and talk to us. If you have a problem with the bill, we will work with you. Just let us know. OK.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the distinguished Senator from Tennessee, Mr. ALEXANDER, be recognized for 10 minutes when he appears on the floor. I thought he would be here by this time but he is not. At the appropriate time, I ask unanimous consent that he be recognized.

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

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Ms. STABENOW. 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

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

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

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. I want to begin by taking this opportunity to thank the chairwoman and ranking member of the Agriculture Committee for their

very strong efforts in getting this bill to the floor today. Their steady hand of leadership has made vast improvements for America's agricultural community and our economy as a whole. I know the tireless effort of our chairwoman and her staff undoubtedly leave America's farm policy in a stronger position than when she found it, and I know she has worked with a forward-looking vision for a thriving agricultural economy and rural community.

I also thank the chairwoman and the ranking member for working with me and all the members of our committee throughout the process that got us here today. Because of this strong work, I am urging my colleagues to vote for cloture on the motion to proceed to this bill.

When I first came to the Senate 3 years ago, I became the first member from my State of New York to serve on the Senate Agriculture Committee in almost four decades. It is a responsibility I not only honor but I take incredibly seriously. For those 3 years I traveled all across our great State. I met with our farmers in their communities, listened to their concerns, and I understand their needs and priorities.

New York is not home to the corporate megafarms. We are home to small dairy farms, specialty crops, orchards, and vineyards. As we have been shaping and debating this farm bill, those are the farms, the small businesses I have been fighting for.

I am very grateful this bill will help our specialty crop growers by providing them with a dedicated funding stream as well as a better way to protect against disasters. I am also very proud of the good work with broadband investments to make sure our rural communities have access to the Internet. We also worked hard on trying to guarantee more transparency and accountability on how we price milk in this country.

But we cannot forget this bill is much more than a number of esoteric figures. What this farm bill should be about is how we protect and create a growing economy for small businesses, agricultural businesses, the middle class, and those families who are desperately trying to get there.

The farm bill is about the health of the agriculture industry. It is about the health of our families with nutritious food that is actually within reach of the children who need it.

As a mother, I am very concerned this current farm bill cuts \$4.5 billion from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP—better known as food stamps—over the next 10 years. I am incredibly disappointed, and even troubled, that my Republican colleagues are seeking to cut food stamps even more from those cuts.

Under this bill families in New York who are already struggling will lose \$90 a month of food that goes on their tables. Think of food for a family for a long month. It is basically the last week that a family will not have

enough food to feed their children. Now, \$90 a month may not seem like a lot of money to some people, but I can say for those parents who are trying to protect their children and feed them good, wholesome, nutritious foods, it means everything in the world.

I don't know for any parents who are watching today whether they personally ever heard their child say: Mommy, I am still hungry. Well, imagine not being able to help your own child or future child. Imagine that your child says this every single day. That is what we are faced with here.

I have heard stories from New Yorkers who never dreamed they would need food stamps in their lifetime, who never imagined they would have no choice but to apply for this kind of Federal assistance. I heard from one single mom in Queens. She had a job in a supermarket, but she still struggled to make ends meet. She broke down in tears one day when her son came home from school with his school lunch in his hand and said: Mommy, I brought this home for us for dinner, and I asked my friend for his sandwich.

Another woman in Brooklyn, incredibly well educated, went to a prestigious university, but lost her job. She said:

I never thought I would be getting food stamps. But suddenly I was jobless and did not know where my next meal would come from. Food stamps played a big role during make-or-break moments in my life. They are not a handout. I worked all my life, paid my taxes and food stamps helped me get back on my feet again.

As a mother, as a lawmaker, watching a child go hungry is something I will not stand for. In this day and age, in a country as rich as America, it is unacceptable and should not be tolerated and should certainly not be advocated. I know not every State in this country has as many people as we have in New York. We have 20 million people in our great State. So with these cuts, it is going to affect 300,000 families. Imagine 300,000 families in your State or any State going hungry at night. These kinds of cuts hurt children and families. They hurt seniors who are homebound and don't know where their next meal is going to come from.

We are asking these 300,000 families to take a disproportionate amount of the burden. They were not the cause of the financial collapse. They were not the cause of this terrible economy, but we are asking them to bear the burden.

We know food stamps are actually a very effective investment. For every dollar we put into the Food Stamp Program, we get \$1.71 of spending back into the economy. World famous economist Mark Zandi said:

The fastest way to infuse money into the economy is through expanding the SNAP/food stamp program.

This money pays the salary of grocery clerks and truckers who bring food to a store from the farm. The USDA estimates that 16 cents of every one of these food stamp dollars goes

right back to our farmers. Despite widespread myths and inaccuracies, there is so little fraud in SNAP. It is less than 1 percent. That is a penny on a dollar.

I take our Nation's debt and deficit as seriously as anyone else in this Chamber. I applaud the chairwoman and the ranking member for being able to curb spending, but families who are living in poverty, who are just trying to figure out how to keep the lights on and put food on the table did not spend this Nation into debt, and we should not be trying to balance the budget on their backs. Subsidies for large corporations that don't need it—including companies based in Bermuda, Australia, Switzerland—is not the right priority for America. We should be helping the most needy among us, our children, our seniors, and our families at risk.

So today I am introducing an amendment to restore the \$4.5 billion in cuts because it is the right thing to do. It is the right thing to do for our families, our seniors, and our kids. It is the right thing to do for our economy. It invests \$500 million over 10 years in a fresh fruits and vegetables snack program, which connects our kids to our farmers. It gives the authority to the Secretary of Agriculture to make additional purchases as part of the Emergency Food Assistance Program. It is useful when we have an all-time high rate of hunger and unemployment that puts unbelievable demands on these emergency feeding organizations.

To pay for these investments in our children's health and the health of the economy, my amendment makes a modest reduction in government subsidies to some of the most highly profitable companies. My amendment lowers the subsidies to companies from billions per year to hundreds of millions per year. Anyone who argues that these companies will struggle from this shift needs to meet a family who is dependent on food stamps to feed their children.

As I said earlier, this farm bill, like all legislation, is about our priorities. It is a reflection of our values. So I am asking my colleagues, let's agree children deserve healthy meals so they can live healthy lives and learn and grow and reach their God-given potential. Let's agree it is a worthwhile investment in our future to make sure children do not go hungry in this country.

I yield back my time, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BAUCUS. 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. BAUCUS. Mr. President, Abraham Lincoln was no stranger to agriculture. He spent most of his early years on farms. Many years later, he signed into law legislation that created

the Department of Agriculture, which just recently celebrated its 150th anniversary. President Lincoln understood American agriculture.

He said:

The man who produces a good full crop will scarcely let any part of it go to waste. He will keep up the enclosure about it, and allow neither man nor beast to trespass upon it. He will gather it in due season and store it in perfect security. Thus he labors with satisfaction, and saves himself the whole fruit of his labor.

Those timeless words ring true today, and they will ring true tomorrow. American farmers and ranchers are the most productive and efficient in the world. Their hard work creates good-paying jobs in Montana and across the Nation. In fact, one in five Montana jobs is tied to agriculture.

But President Lincoln's observations also apply to many other walks of life, including work in the Senate. Under the leadership of Chairwoman STABENOW and Ranking Member ROBERTS, we have cultivated a farm bill for tomorrow. We must not let that hard work go to waste. They have worked very hard, very closely together, cooperating. It is a good farm bill.

This legislation achieves what many thought impossible: It creates a market-oriented safety net that works for American farmers, strengthens crop insurance, and streamlines conservation programs, while still contributing \$23.6 billion to deficit reduction. That is right. This reduces the deficit by about \$23.6 billion. That is over 10 years.

Direct payments have their place in farm program history, but in light of necessary spending reductions, it was clear we could not continue with the status quo. So the Senate Agriculture Committee worked closely with farmers and ranchers across the country to create a program for a real safety net—one that only pays farmers who actually experience a loss.

Farming is an extremely capital-intensive industry, and our farmers often work with paper-thin profit margins. Even the best farmer is left at the mercy of chance—historic droughts, catastrophic floods, price collapses, and so much more. This new revenue program will make sure there is stability and predictability for our farmers from year to year.

Our comprehensive farm policy contributes to overall security in American agriculture. That is why we spend less on food than any other country in the world. Americans spend less than 7 percent of their disposable income to feed their families—7 percent—compared with almost 25 percent in 1930.

But it is more than just food security. As a net exporter of agricultural products, Montana farmers and ranchers create good-paying jobs and quite literally grow wealth and prosperity from our fertile soils.

The shallow-loss revenue program, combined with the same crop insurance products we have fine-tuned over the decades, creates a fiscally sound safety

net. This is the fruit of our labor, and we must keep this intact.

We improved much more than just the commodity title. We saved \$6 billion in the conservation title without compromising the policy. We did this by consolidating 23 existing programs—consolidating them all together—creating a tight network of efficient and streamlined conservation programs.

I made sure we protected the working lands programs, which contribute to substantial conservation improvements but still allow for productive use of the land.

For livestock, I made sure we extended and made permanent the livestock disaster programs that I worked hard to include in the last farm bill. Since they were created in 2008, the three livestock programs have helped over 100,000 ranchers across the country.

Right now, we are experiencing historic droughts in regions of the United States that also produce much of our beef. The livestock disaster programs will help those ranchers stay in business until the rain starts falling again.

In the forestry title, we permanently authorized stewardship contracting. This is very important. This will help the timber industry sustainably harvest more trees. This permanent authority is critical for reducing wildfire risk and maintaining resilient landscapes and communities throughout our country. As I advocated prior to markup, these returns are well worth the small investment. It can keep companies such as F.H. Stoltze, which is celebrating 100 years in operation in Columbia Falls, MT, in business for another 100 years.

I also was pleased with the inclusion of a workable approach to the bark beetle epidemic spreading throughout Montana and the West. My colleague from Montana, Senator TESTER, has also worked to remedy this epidemic.

Our loggers and small timber mills in Montana are facing the second worst beetle kill in the lower 48, a Forest Service tied up in lawsuits, and a housing market that continues to drag. Sawmills such as those owned by R-Y Timber in Townsend and Livingston will benefit from the approach we take in this farm bill.

I was also very proud of the work the committee did for veteran farmers and ranchers. Not only did the committee accept my amendment to expand access to conservation programs to veterans, but it also will direct USDA to set up a military liaison position.

These strides to extend assistance to veteran farmers and ranchers are vital to our returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who hope to return to rural America and become involved in agriculture. Forty-five percent of those who serve in the military come from rural communities.

The farm bill provision makes it clear that both efficient authorities and adequate resources are crucial for this effort, and I am committed to en-

acting legislation that enables the decisive and responsible action that is urgently needed.

There is a lot of talk on Capitol Hill about creating jobs and cutting debt. The farm bill is our jobs bill. It is also responsible to taxpayers. If we Senators were farmers, I would say we have produced a pretty good crop with this bill. But that is not the final step. All farmers know there is a time for harvest.

Now is harvest time. It is time to pass this farm bill. If we wait too long, we run the risk of compromising the stability of American agriculture and our food supply.

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. KYL. 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. KYL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 12 minutes.

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

AMERICA'S FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, let me speak today about two recent CBO reports and what they portend for the economy and for policy that we might want to make in the Congress. CBO, of course, is the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, and from time to time it looks at economic conditions and presents studies or issues reports about the state of our economy based upon legislation the Congress has adopted.

There are two recent reports that I think suggest some very dire news for this country unless we in the Congress are willing to take some action. The first was a couple of weeks ago, and it dealt with the so-called fiscal cliff, the problem that will occur with the combination of two things automatically happening unless Congress and the President act.

The first is the automatic across-the-board cuts or sequestration that will affect both defense and nondefense spending to the tune of \$109 billion next year, something which the Secretary of Defense has said would be "devastating" and "catastrophic" for our national security. That is the first problem. The Congressional Budget office said the combination of the sequestration with the second item, which is the automatic tax increase, which is a \$4.5 trillion tax increase that begins on January 1, the combination of those two will put this country back into recession.

CBO projected the growth rate next year to be only about one-half of 1 percent. That, of course, is devastating for not just the economy but for job creation, for businesses, for families and the like.

The second recent report of the CBO just came out. It is a report that talks

about the surging debt of the United States Government and talks about the probability of sudden fiscal crisis. So we have a combination of the potential for going back into recession, combined with the probability of sudden fiscal crisis because of the amount of debt the Federal Government is taking on.

Because this second report just came out, let me refer to some things that have been said about that, primarily in the Wall Street Journal in a piece on June 5 called "Obama's Debt Boom." I will just quote a few lines from this editorial in the Wall Street Journal. It says:

The CBO's long-term budget outlook notes that Federal debt held by the public—

That is the part we have to pay back—

will surge to 70 percent of the economy by the end of this year.

Which is the highest in the history of the country except during World War II.

I think that is about \$49,000 or \$50,000 for every man, woman, and child in the United States. They point out that under the present trend the debt will hit 90 percent of GDP by 2022. Then it balloons to 109 percent by 2026.

What does this mean in practical terms? Here is a quotation from the Wall Street Journal about the CBO projection:

We have never been deficit scolds, preferring to focus on the more important policy priorities of economic growth and spending restraint. But the Obama era is taking America to a place it has never been. Inside of a decade the country will have a debt-to-GDP ratio well into the 90 percent to 100 percent danger zone where economists say the economy begins to slow and risks mount.

CBO notes . . . that this level of debt increase increases the probability of a sudden fiscal crisis, during which investors would lose confidence in the government's ability to manage its budget and the government would thereby lose its ability to borrow at affordable rates.

How bad is it? In the absolute worst-case scenario, CBO says debt would exceed 250 percent of GDP in 2035. At that point, CBO's economic model breaks, because so much debt is so far outside "historical experience" and the CBO's "assumptions might no longer be valid."

That is where we are headed if we don't do something about it.

Interestingly, what CBO assumed in order to reach these conclusions is that tax collections would continue to hold to the post-1972 historical average of 18 percent of GDP. The point is we are not talking about raising taxes in order to effect this. They are assuming we will have revenues of a historical level of 18 percent of GDP. The problem is not the tax collections; in other words, the problem is the excess spending. They point out that, of course, excess spending is primarily a factor of the entitlement programs—Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. They point out that the biggest of all those is in Medicare.

Then the Wall Street Journal concludes this way:

This is where the tax burden comes in, and on that score CBO admits that “to the extent that additional tax revenues were generated by boosting marginal tax rates—

This is what President Obama proposed, remember—

those “higher tax rates would discourage people from working and saving, further reducing output and income.” So even the Keynesians who dominate CBO admit that there are costs in lower growth . . .

If they raise tax rates as the President has proposed.

This is, in effect, the most predictable crisis in history. So we have the combination of the CBO report talking about the fiscal cliff—what happens if both the sequestration and the automatic tax increases go into effect—combined with the most recent report about the debt, and we can see the United States is headed for a disaster without intervention by the Congress and the President.

Just one thing. The Director of CBO put it this way:

The explosive path of Federal debt . . . underscores the need for large and timely policy changes to put the Federal Government on a sustainable fiscal course.

What has the President and the Democratic majority in the Senate suggested? We turned to Jay Carney, who had a press conference Monday. He is the spokesman for the President. He said that “the President is continuing to work with his team on potential new ideas.”

I would like for him to work with the Congress because we have had a lot of ideas. The House of Representatives passed almost 30 bills that deal with this, and they range all the way from the Keystone Pipeline, which immediately puts 20,000 people to work, easing environmental regulations, offshore oil exploration, and so on. So we would love to have him work with the Congress, rather than this anemic to-do list he has proposed, which, obviously, would not provide any relief.

The bottom line is that as was reported in a story by the Associated Press, by Andrew Taylor, I think. As he said, after talking about the bills passed by the House of Representatives: “Democrats will try to stop Republicans from forcing a vote on it in the Senate.”

What he is talking about is the vote the House of Representatives intends to have before long that would extend the current Tax Code, so there is certainty in tax rates, and businesses and families don't have to worry about this \$4.5 trillion tax increase. The Democrats will try to stop Republicans from forcing a vote on it in the Senate.

Why would the Democratic leader not want to have a vote on whether to extend the current tax rates as opposed to having an increase in taxes of \$4.5 trillion? Actually, there are a lot of folks—leaders in the President's party, people who have worked with him—who have said it would be a good idea to extend those tax cuts. In fact, the President himself said so when he ex-

tended them for 2 years, along with the support from Congress, on December 1 year ago. He said not to do so would harm economic growth. He was exactly right then, and he is right now.

As a matter of fact, we had a better GDP growth back then than we do now. If that would have been harmful then, it would be more harmful now. His belief then is adhered to by people who have worked with him and former leaders. For example, former Democratic President Bill Clinton suggested Tuesday—yesterday—that Congress temporarily extend all the Bush-era tax cuts. That includes the tax cuts for the wealthy. Remember, the Bush tax cuts applied across the board. They applied to everybody. The President has said that is fine but not for the wealthy.

What President Clinton said is, no, the best thing would be for all of those tax cuts to be extended. I will quote what the former President said:

What I think we need to do is to find some way to avoid the fiscal cliff, to avoid doing anything that would contract the economy now.

He was asked if that meant extending tax cuts, and he said:

They will probably have to put everything off until early next year. That's probably the best thing to do right now.

Then the President's former adviser, who is an economics professor, Larry Summers, said today that Congress should temporarily extend the Bush-era tax cuts. He said:

The real risk to this economy is on the side of slowdown . . . and that means we've got to make sure that we don't take gasoline out of the tank at the end of this year.

He said that on MSNBC's “Morning Joe” program. He said: “That's gotta be the top priority.”

So here you have Larry Summers, former adviser to President Clinton on economic matters, and former President Bill Clinton, both of whom have said we need to extend these tax policies today in order to avoid further damage to our economy tomorrow—exactly what the President himself said when these tax rates were extended a year and a half ago.

I just note this from another Associated Press story regarding the comments by President Clinton. As they say:

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office and others have warned that letting both events occur—

That is to say, the sequestration and the automatic tax increases—

would suck so much out of the economy that it could spark a renewed recession next year.

That is when they refer to the statement of President Clinton that we need to find a way to avoid that fiscal cliff and that would include extending the tax cuts.

The reality is we have somewhat of a consensus beginning to develop that it would be a wise thing for the country to retain current tax policies and not allow this big tax increase, to avoid the sequester or the across-the-board cuts that otherwise would affect both de-

fense and nondefense; and if we don't do those things, according to CBO, the nonpartisan office that advises the Congress, we are likely to go back into a recession with growth that would be only one-half of 1 percent of our GDP next year.

Let me conclude by referring to another article in the Wall Street Journal, dated June 5, entitled “Defense Chiefs Signal Job Cuts.”

Here we are talking about the employers of people in the defense industries that are predicting that if we don't do something about sequester, they are going to have to begin laying off people. The article begins with this quotation:

U.S. defense contractors are preparing to disclose mass job cutbacks ahead of November elections if Congress fails to reach a deficit-reduction deal by then, industry officials said.

One of the people quoted is Robert Stevens, chairman of Lockheed Martin, a big contractor with the Defense Department. He said:

It is quite possible that we will need to notify employees in the September and October timeframe that they may or may not have a job in January, depending upon whether sequestration does or doesn't take effect.

One of the reasons is a Federal law that requires employers to provide this notice—the Worker Adjustment and Retaining and Notification Act, known as the WARN Act, which requires companies to notify employees in advance of mass layoffs or plant closings—if they have more than 50 or more employees, for example. One thing Mr. Stevens said is that it doesn't just affect the big companies such as his but also all these suppliers, people who have to provide the pieces or components of products that they end up putting together. They would have to be notified because they are not going to have subcontracts next year.

One of the industry officials said sequestration is already here. What he meant by that was the reality is that businesses are having to make decisions now. This talk in the Senate about we will somehow be able to deal with this in the lameduck session after the election is simply not true. I suggest to my colleagues in the House and in the Senate that if we try to wait until after the election, I think our constituents, knowing what is happening—some of whom will probably have gotten job notices that they may be subject to termination because of the automatic across-the-board cuts, known as sequester—I think they may be sending a message to us this fall and, therefore, it behooves us to act before rather than after the fact.

There has been talk today about what the Wisconsin recall election meant. I think one thing it must have meant is that people may complain about some of the decisions that are made when there are tough decisions, but they want people who are elected to do something about the problems, to act, have some courage, tackle the

tough problems. Even if they don't totally agree with the solutions, I think they respect political leaders who are willing to do that. Scott Walker, the Governor of Wisconsin, took a lot of heat, but he took the bull by the horns and tried to solve a problem and, as a result of the things they were able to do, the fiscal situation in Wisconsin is much better than had they not taken those actions.

That is what we in Congress need to learn. The people understand we have a big debt crisis facing us, which is confirmed by the Congressional Budget Office. They understand there is a huge risk of another recession because of the twin problems of the biggest tax increase in the history of the country coming our way January 1 and this sequestration that also occurs on January 1. They would like us to do something about that. I think what they resent is politicians saying after the election we will take it up and begin thinking about it. First of all, that is too late for a lot of people whose jobs depend upon it, and it makes for a very inefficient way of running the government.

Secondly, I think political leaders owe their constituents the ideas they would like to put into effect. We don't wait and hide the ball from our constituents, refusing to tell them what we think until after the election. The idea of a democratic republic is people stand for office by saying: This is what I would do to solve our problems. Do you like it or not? If the voters say, yes, we think that is a good idea, they elect us and expect us to follow through on it. If they don't like our ideas, they elect the other person. But if we hide the ball and say we are not going to take votes in the Senate because we don't want to put Members on record because then the voters might know what they are thinking and they might not like it and not elect them, that is obviously a lack of political courage. It also runs counter to what the fundamental concept of elections is all about.

I suggest that what we ought to do is tackle these two issues now, not wait until after the election. Legislation has been introduced in both the House and the Senate to find a way to save the \$109 billion that needs to be saved in order to avoid the sequester for next year. This process will have to be undergone, undertaken, every year for the next 10 years because we have promised the voters we would save a total of \$1.2 trillion.

So how will we do it next year? Well, there are any number of ways. Senators MCCAIN, AYOTTE, myself, CHAMBLISS, GRAHAM, and CORNYN, and some others have introduced legislation that says, well, here is a way you can save the \$109 billion next year: Get half of it by simply extending the President's own pay freeze for many Federal employees through the middle of 2014, and the other half, instead of replacing every single Federal worker who re-

tires or leaves the Federal workforce, only replace two out of the three.

Everybody talks about how wonderful the recommendations of the Simpson-Bowles Commission were. Well, the Simpson-Bowles Commission recommended hiring one new Federal employee for every three who leave the workplace. We double that. We say, well, let's hire two of the three back. The combination of just those two things would result in saving \$109 billion.

If you don't like that way to save money, there are many other ways to do so, and there are revenues from the sale of Federal property, for example, that could also be put on the table. So there are many ways to do this. But let's get about it.

Why aren't we doing it? Well, the majority leader and the President say the only way they would consider doing this is if we also raise a bunch of taxes, and their wonderful idea about raising taxes is a tax on millionaires. Here is the problem with that. The very people we want to create the jobs are the businesspeople who pay these taxes.

According to President Obama's Secretary of the Treasury, that Department says 80 percent of the people who would be subject to this millionaires' tax are business owners—the very people who need the money to hire the workers to put the economy back in good shape.

When Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM asked Defense Secretary Panetta: Wouldn't sequestration be like shooting ourselves in the foot, he said: No, Senator, it would be like shooting ourselves in the head.

I submit that raising taxes on the exact people to whom we are looking to create jobs is the same thing. That is the reason Republicans have said that is the wrong way to come up with this \$109 billion.

The whole idea of the Budget Control Act was to control spending, not to raise taxes. Since there are so many ways in which this government's \$3 trillion-plus budget can save money, I don't think we have to turn to something that would itself have a negative impact on economic growth; namely, raising taxes. So that has been the reason this hasn't been taken up.

One side insists we have to raise taxes in order to deal with this sequestration problem. The other side says: No, we don't have to do that at all. Let's sit down and work together and find a resolution for this problem, and let's get it done before the end of the year. At that point it is too late for a lot of people who will have lost their jobs.

By the way, some of these industry people have told us some of the sole-source suppliers or subcontractors would probably end up taking bankruptcy because their orders could not be filled due to the uncertainty that a contract was there. So we could have a great deal of damage to the economy.

In fact, the estimate is—if sequestration or across-the-board cuts occur—in

the Defense industry alone we are talking about 1 million jobs lost. Remember how many jobs were created last month? I think it was 69,000 jobs were created last month. Compare that to losing 1 million jobs, and you can see the significance of what the Congressional Budget Office was talking about. This is a fiscal cliff.

We cannot allow sequestration to occur, and we cannot allow these big tax increases to occur without understanding the damage that will do to the economy. They said it is going to put us back in a recession. That is before the report they just released on the increasing debt burden of this country.

So, Mr. President, I say to my colleagues, the evidence is here. Leaders such as former President Clinton and economist Larry Summers and, of course, many other economists have said the best thing to do is to keep the tax rates where they are. Don't raise them. Resolve this sequestration issue so we don't have that hanging over our heads, and then look for other ways to boost job growth and economic productivity. That is the way to get out of the recession. That is the way to help families. Ironically, at the end of the day, a growing economy, producing more wealth, produces more tax revenues for the Federal Government, and that helps us deal with the big debt we have accumulated.

So I think everybody agrees economic growth is ultimately the best way to get out of the government's fiscal problem. But it also, of course, is precisely the way for businesses and families to prosper.

I hope colleagues in both the House and Senate—both Democrats and Republicans—can see their way clear to respond to this crisis—this utterly predictable crisis—and to deal with this problem sooner rather than later, exercising the courage our constituents would like to have us exercise and thereby representing them in the way they deserve to be represented.

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I am here today to talk about the 2012 farm bill and the importance of moving forward with this important legislation.

First, I wish to acknowledge the incredibly hard work of Chairwoman STABENOW and Ranking Member ROBERTS and their commitment to producing a bipartisan bill that cleared the Agriculture Committee this April with a strong bipartisan vote.

The Agriculture Committee is a successful model of how we can work

across the aisle on tough problems to get work done. It always has been. This cooperative effort was not on a small or merely symbolic issue but on a major piece of legislation that impacts every single American. Throughout the process, this committee has faced unprecedented budget challenges, as has our country, but under Chairwoman STABENOW's leadership, the committee has worked together on a bill that makes tough choices, works within a budget to provide \$23 billion in deficit reduction, and preserves the core programs that are important for Minnesota and other States across the country.

I believe this carefully crafted bill finds a good balance between a number of priorities, and I urge Members of the Senate to continue to work together in the same spirit that was exemplified in the Agriculture Committee to complete work on this bill as quickly as possible.

I have spent the last year going all around our State; I have talked to farmers and businesses across Minnesota. No matter where I go, I am always reminded of the critical role farming plays in our State's economy. We are 21st in the country for population, but we are 6th in the country for agriculture. It is our State's leading export, accounting for \$75 billion in economic activity and supporting more than 300,000 jobs. It is one of the major reasons our unemployment rate is at 5.6 percent—significantly better than the national average—and that is because we have had consistent farm policy coming out of this Chamber, out of Washington, DC—and you can't say that in every area of industry—consistent policy coming from the government over the last decade. That must continue because it doesn't just help our farmers on the front line, it feeds into many industries, and it certainly feeds into agricultural exports.

Our State is No. 1 in turkeys in the United States of America—a fact you might not have known. We are No. 1 for green peas and sugar beets. We are also home to Jennie-O turkey and Del Monte vegetable processing facilities, just to name a few. We are No. 1 in spring wheat and also home to a rich tradition of milling. We are No. 3 in hogs and soybeans and also home to pork processors and biodiesel plants. We are No. 4 in the country for corn and also home to 21 ethanol plants that produce over 1 billion gallons of ethanol every single year, and that is one of the major reasons our country has reduced our dependency on foreign oil from something like 60 percent 5 years ago to the mid-40s now. That is an incredible record. It has to do with oil drilling in North Dakota, it has to do with better gas mileage in our cars and trucks, but it also has to do with biofuels.

Minnesotans in rural communities and larger cities all benefit from a strong farm economy that provides jobs on the farms, in mills, and proc-

essing plants, equipment manufacturers—another key export for the United States of America—and a diverse range of high-tech jobs in today's modern agriculture. That is why there is so much at stake in this 2012 farm bill and why it is so important for us to finish with a strong and effective bill that gets the job done for America's farmers and for our rural economy.

It is no secret that during each step of the process, we have been working within a tough budget climate, but that doesn't mean the goal of maintaining a strong farm safety net or a safe, nutritious, and abundant food supply is any less critical. The last thing we want to do is be dependent on foreign food the way we are dependent on foreign oil—even though we have seen improvement. We do not want that to happen with foreign food.

How have we done this to get \$23 billion in cuts? The first thing that is important for people to understand who are not from rural areas, who are from metro areas—my State has both—or States that are more urban focused is that only 14 percent of this farm bill is farm programs. It could have had a different name, but a lot of people call it the farm bill. It is only 14 percent. The rest is conservation, nutrition programs, school lunches—you name it. While only 14 percent of the farm bill is farm programs, nearly two-thirds of the cuts over last year are on that 14 percent. Nearly two-thirds of the \$23 billion in cuts—nearly \$16 billion—is cut from farm programs, which are only 14 percent of the farm bill.

I heard from many producers in Minnesota as we dealt with how we are going to get rid of direct payments I have long advocated. We had huge floor fights last time on some reform to the farm payment system. I thought we needed to make some changes there and get that number down in terms of the money that can be spent in the income, but now we have actually eliminated direct payments. So that is why the crop insurance part of this bill becomes even more important.

The bill also continues the Sugar Program, which is important to our country—tens of thousands of jobs across the country, tens of thousands of jobs in the Red River Valley in Minnesota and North Dakota—and also helps to ensure that we have a strong domestic sugar industry.

The bill also simplifies the commodity programs by eliminating a number of programs and replacing them with the Agriculture Risk Coverage Program which complements crop insurance by providing protection against multiyear price declines.

The bill also protects the conservation programs we need. It helps our agricultural producers keep our soil healthy and our water clean. Our State is No. 5 in the Conservation Reserve Program, No. 3 in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and No. 1 in the Conservation Stewardship Program. Specifically, I have worked to

ensure that local communities also have the tools they need to address conservation challenges. Conservation groups, from Ducks Unlimited to Pheasants Forever, know how important the farm bill is, and that is why over 640 conservation groups are supporting the committee's work on the farm bill.

The committee-passed farm bill also preserves the essential nutrition programs that millions of families and children rely on every day. Importantly, this bill avoids the radical cuts to nutrition programs and school lunches that would have been proposed in other budgets.

This bill also includes a number of amendments that I authored, including an amendment that will help beginning farmers and ranchers better manage their risk and access land as they get a start in agriculture. We need to make sure that we have a next generation of farmers and ranchers, that it just does not end here.

Beginning farmers face big obstacles, including limited access to credit and technical assistance and, of course, the high price of land. During committee markup, I introduced an amendment with Senator BAUCUS that helps beginning farmers purchase crop insurance by increasing their help 10 percent for the first 5 years. I believe that people who grow our food deserve to know their livelihoods cannot be swept away in the blink of an eye, either by market failures or by natural disaster. That is why strengthening crop insurance for our beginning farmers is a priority.

I also worked to include an amendment—with Senators JOHANNIS, BAUCUS, and HOEVEN—to allow beginning producers to use CRP acres for grazing without a penalty. I believe this will go a long way, again, in building the next generation of farmers.

As an original cosponsor of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act, which was introduced by Senator HARKIN, I also fought for the mentoring and outreach provisions for new farmers and training in business planning and credit-building—the skills they need to succeed and stay on the land.

Homegrown renewable fuels have helped us reduce our share of dependence on liquid fuels. I believe we can continue this trend. As I mentioned, we have seen an enormous shift in our dependence on foreign oil. Much of that has to do with biofuels, now 10 percent of our fuel supply in this country, as we work to make it more and more fuel efficient, use less water, transition to cellulosic. What we do know is that we should be focusing on the workers and the farmers of the Midwest and not the cartels of the Mideast. That is what helped reduce our foreign oil dependency in the last few years, as well as the drilling I mentioned before.

I also cosponsored the amendment introduced by Senators CONRAD and LUGAR to provide funding for the energy title. This is key in this farm bill.

I know we have all heard from farmers and ranchers in our States about the importance of passing a 5-year farm bill. Think about the work that is done in Congress. Every business says: We need a longer time period, we need consistency for our tax credits, and we need to know what is happening. This is one area where we have actually done it. We have done this with the farm bill over the last decade. The last two farm bills with 5-year windows have been fairly consistent. We have an opportunity to do it again and still save \$23 billion on the budget, still make sure those nutrition programs are there for our kids, still make sure the most vulnerable among us can be fed and not go hungry, and still make sure those vital conservation programs are there for this country.

There is a reason agriculture has been able to keep its head above water in these difficult times. A lot of it has to do with consistent policies. That is one of my main messages to my colleagues. We have one of the stars in terms of exports coming out of this farm bill. That is one of the main reasons it is so important, because we not only are growing food for the people of this country, we are feeding the world, and we are keeping the jobs in America.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

U.S. INNOVATION

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, it was a pleasure to hear the Senator from Minnesota speak on the farm bill. I congratulate Senator ROBERTS and Senator STABENOW for their hard work, as well as the Senator from Minnesota. I would like to take 10 minutes to speak on a related matter.

American agriculture is an area where we lead the world with innovation. I want to talk about innovation of a different type, and I want to refer specifically to a May 20 column in the New York Times by Thomas Friedman that caught my attention.

I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks, Mr. Friedman's column be printed in the RECORD.

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

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. Friedman said he had just returned from Seattle, where he saw a stunning amount of innovation. He said it filled him both with exhilaration and with dread. The question is, Is the United States prepared to deal with the innovation we may be seeing around the world over the next decade?

Yesterday I heard Robert Zoellick, the retiring President of the World Bank, brief a number of us about the problems we are going to have at the end of the year and whether the U.S. Congress and President can rise to the challenge of governing so we can show the rest of the world we are capable of that. Mr. Zoellick says he travels a lot—that is an understatement given

his reputation and the jobs he's held over the last 20 years—and he said that two-thirds of global growth over the last 10 years has come from developing countries and that advanced countries, such as Japan, and Europe and, to some extent, the United States have been stagnant or drifting. Mr. Friedman's column says that we should try to remember the things that made us great and preserve as many of those as we can. He said we need a plan, and then he suggested what he called a magic combination: No. 1, immigration of high-IQ risk-takers, as he called them; No. 2, government-funded research; and No. 3, cutting-edge higher education. That was the plan. That was the magic combination.

He said:

This is not a call to ignore hard budget choices we have to make. It's a call to make sure that we give education, immigration and research their proper place in the discussion.

My purpose as a Senator, as a Republican Senator, is to say that I believe he is exactly right. No. 1, I believe that is the right plan—or at least the beginning of it; No. 2, I believe there is more going on in the direction that he recommended than most people know; and No. 3, I believe that finishing the work on what needs to be done to implement the plan he outlined is perfectly obvious and well within our grasp. Let's take the ideas one by one.

First, the idea, as he called it, of immigration of high-IQ risk-takers—we call this “pin the green card on the STEM graduate.” This idea is supported, I would judge, by most Members of the Senate. Each year 50,000 of the brightest students in the world are attracted to our great universities' graduate programs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and then each year we send 17,000 of those graduates in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics back home. We make them go home so they can create jobs in the countries they came from rather than in the United States.

A number of us have introduced legislation to change that. It came from a recommendation from legislation called America COMPETES, which passed first in 2007 and was reauthorized in 2010. This was legislation sponsored by the Democratic and Republican leaders that had 35 Republican sponsors and 35 Democratic sponsors, and it included the 20 things a distinguished group told us we should do as a Congress to help America compete in the next generation. We have done two-thirds of them. One of the priorities was to double the federal funding for general scientific research over 10 years, and we've made some good progress in that direction.

Part of the unfinished agenda is the idea in America COMPETES of pinning a green card on the science, technology, engineering, and management graduate. There are at least six proposals before the Senate today—one

sponsored by Senator COONS and myself, one by Senator CORNYN, one by Senator COONS and Senator RUBIO, another by Senators WARNER and MORAN. Senators COONS, RUBIO, WARNER, and MORAN have another one. Senator BENNET has yet another one. Many of us say: Let's go ahead and pin the green card on the high-IQ risk-taker and let those men and women create jobs here in the United States when they graduate.

What should we do about it? Stop insisting that we need to pass every single aspect of the immigration law at one time and go ahead and pass this one bill; realize that we can do some things better in the Senate step by step.

The second idea, advanced research—it is hard to think of a major innovation in the biology or sciences that doesn't have some aspect—has not had some support from government-sponsored research since World War II. Nobel laureate economist Robert Solow tells us that half our economic growth since World War II has come from these technological advances. Maybe one of the best examples is unconventional gas—we call it shale gas. It has been around for a century. A lot of people have been trying to do it, but even Mitchell Energy, the people who stuck it out in advanced shale gas, said it couldn't have happened without the Department of Energy and it could not have happened without the invention of 3 D drilling from Sandia National Laboratory.

Yesterday I visited with the head of what we call ARPA-E. Most of us know about a little organization called DARPA, which has been around for 50 years in the Department of Defense. Out of it has come such things as the Internet, stealth technology—a whole series of major innovations that affect the lives of people every day. So the idea was, let's try that in the Department of Energy. That came out of America COMPETES as well. ARPA-E takes promising ideas, brings them into the government, funds them for 3 years, and then spits them out again into the marketplace to see if they can survive. In other words, it is the kind of government-applied research that most of us can support. It had the support of 35 Democrats and 35 Republicans.

Yesterday I was briefed on just three of their innovations.

One company has doubled the density of a battery, a lithium battery. That means an electric car, for example, could go twice as far with a battery or it could go the same distance with a battery that costs half as much and weighs half as much.

A second idea was a laser drill for geothermal. The laser drilling precedes the normal drill and can do remarkable things, which will probably make a massive difference in exploration for oil and gas over time. Then a third, which I would describe as the holy grail of energy advanced research, is

the idea of taking carbon, such as that which comes from coal plants, and turning it into something that can be used commercially. Think of the difference that could make for our country if we were able to find a way to do that.

There is a promising way to do that in ARPA-E, which is to take what they call “bugs,” a biologic solution, apply it to electrodes, and turn it into oil. So this may work or it may not work in a commercial sense, but this is the kind of amazing research they are doing.

What do we do about that? I would suggest that all we have to do is double clean energy research, a sort of Manhattan Project for these kinds of ideas, and pay for it by reducing the permanent subsidies for other energy programs, whether they are Big Oil or Big Wind.

Finally, the third idea of Mr. Friedman is one I have talked about for years, and that has to do with the effect of Medicaid mandates on public higher education. He puts it this way, that the State governments “medicate, educate, and incarcerate.” The courts tell the States they have to spend this much on prisons, and we in the Federal Government tell the States they have to spend this much on Medicaid. There is nothing left for education, and the various orders to States today are ruining public higher education by driving up tuition, driving up loans, and hurting what I believe is America’s secret weapon in our technological future.

What to do about that? End the Medicaid mandates. Let the Governors and legislators decide how to spend money. I guarantee if they do, they will come closer than when I was Governor of Tennessee and we paid 70 percent of the cost of a student’s education and the student paid 30 percent. Today it is the reverse. The State pays 30 percent and the student pays 70 percent.

The students are protesting at the University of California because the State has cut \$1 billion from what is probably the greatest public university in the world over the last 3 or 4 years. They probably have no idea the reason for that is Medicaid mandates from Washington that soak up the money that otherwise would go to keep tuition low and the quality high at the University of California.

My purpose in coming to the Senate floor is simply to say, first, that I think Mr. Friedman is right. He is right on the money. Second, I think more is going on than meets eye; and, third, finishing the job is well within our grasp.

We can pass the green card bill and pin the green card on the STEM graduate. There are six different versions before us in the Senate. We can double energy research and pay for it by reducing wasteful subsidies, and we can end Medicaid mandates and give our colleges and universities and community colleges a chance to prosper again and create the kind of future we want.

That is the plan for the kind of innovation we need in America.

I salute Mr. Friedman for suggesting it, but I hope the rest of the country will recognize that in all three cases the Senate is headed in exactly that direction with legislation that we have already passed or introduced. I hope that on both sides of the aisle we will work together to finish the job.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following Mr. Friedman’s article, an article I wrote in the Wall Street Journal, which was published on Wednesday, May 16, 2012, and talks about the damaging effects of Washington mandates for Medicaid on State governments and how it is damaging public higher education, be printed in the RECORD.

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

(See exhibit 2.)

EXHIBIT 1

[From the New York Times, May 19, 2012]

DO YOU WANT THE GOOD NEWS FIRST?

(By Thomas L. Friedman)

I’ve spent the last week traveling to two of America’s greatest innovation hubs—Silicon Valley and Seattle—and the trip left me feeling a combination of exhilaration and dread. The excitement comes from not only seeing the stunning amount of innovation emerging from the ground up, but from seeing the new tools coming on stream that are, as Amazon.com’s founder, Jeff Bezos, put it to me, “eliminating all the gatekeepers”—making it easier and cheaper than ever to publish your own book, start your own company and chase your own dream. Never have individuals been more empowered, and we’re still just at the start of this trend.

“I see the elimination of gatekeepers everywhere,” said Bezos. Thanks to cloud computing for the masses, anyone anywhere can for a tiny hourly fee now rent the most powerful computing and storage facilities on Amazon’s “cloud” to test any algorithm or start any company or publish any book. Start-ups can even send all their inventory to Amazon, and it will do all the fulfillment and delivery—and even gift wrap your invention before shipping it to your customers.

This is leading to an explosion of new firms and voices. “Sixteen of the top 100 best sellers on Kindle today were self-published,” said Bezos. That means no agent, no publisher, no paper—just an author, who gets most of the royalties, and Amazon and the reader. It is why, Bezos adds, the job of the company leader now is changing fast: “You have to think of yourself not as a designer but as a gardener” seeding, nurturing, inspiring, cultivating the ideas coming from below, and then making sure people execute them.

The leading companies driving this trend—Amazon, Facebook, Microsoft, Google, Apple, LinkedIn, Zynga and Twitter—are all headquartered and listed in America. Facebook, which didn’t exist nine years ago, just went public at a valuation of nearly \$105 billion—two weeks after buying a company for \$1 billion, Instagram, which didn’t exist 18 months ago. So why any dread?

It’s because we’re leaving an era of some 50 years’ duration in which to be a president, a governor, a mayor or a college president was, on balance, to give things away to people; and we’re entering an era—no one knows for how long—in which to be a president, a governor, a mayor or a college president will be, on balance, to take things away from people. And if we don’t make this transition in a

really smart way—by saying, “Here are the things that made us great, that spawned all these dynamic companies”—and make sure that we’re preserving as much of that as we can, this trend will not spread as it should. Maybe we could grow as a country without a plan. But we dare not cut without a plan. We can really do damage. I can lose weight quickly if I cut off both arms, but it will surely reduce my job prospects.

What we must preserve is that magic combination of cutting-edge higher education, government-funded research and immigration of high-I.Q. risk-takers. They are, in combination, America’s golden goose, laying all these eggs in Seattle and Silicon Valley. China has it easy right now. It just needs to do the jobs that we have already invented, just more cheaply. America has to invent the new jobs—and that requires preserving the goose.

Microsoft still does more than 80 percent of its research work in America. But that is becoming harder and harder to sustain when deadlock on Capitol Hill prevents it from acquiring sufficient visas for the knowledge workers it needs that America’s universities are not producing enough of. The number of filled jobs at Microsoft went up this year from 40,000 to 40,500 at its campus outside Seattle, yet its list of unfilled jobs went from 4,000 to almost 5,000. Eventually, it will have no choice but to shift more research to other countries.

It is terrifying to see how budget-cutting in California is slowly reducing what was once one of the crown jewels of American education—the University of California system—to a shadow of its old self. And I fear the cutting is just beginning. As one community leader in Seattle remarked to me, governments basically do three things: “Medicate, educate and incarcerate.” And various federal and state mandates outlaw cuts in medicating and incarcerating, so much of the money is coming out of educating. Unfortunately, even to self-publish, you still need to know how to write. The same is happening to research. A new report just found that federal investment in biomedical research through the National Institutes of Health has decreased almost every year since 2003.

When we shrink investments in higher education and research, “we shoot ourselves in both feet,” remarked K.R. Sridhar, founder of Bloom Energy, the Silicon Valley fuel-cell company. “Our people become less skilled, so you are shooting yourself in one foot. And the smartest people from around the world have less reason to come here for the quality education, so you are shooting yourself in the other foot.”

The Labor Department reported two weeks ago that even with our high national unemployment rate, employers advertised 3.74 million job openings in March. That is, in part, about a skills mismatch. In an effort to overcome that, and help fill in the financing gap for higher education in Washington State, Boeing and Microsoft recently supported a plan whereby the state, which was cutting funding to state universities but also not letting them raise tuition, would allow the colleges to gradually raise rates and the two big companies would each kick in \$25 million for scholarships for students wanting to study science and technology or health care to ensure that they have the workers they need.

This is not a call to ignore the hard budget choices we have to make. It’s a call to make sure that we give education, immigration and research their proper place in the discussion.

“Empowering the individual and under-investing in the collective is our great macro danger as a society,” said the pollster Craig

Charney. Indeed, it is. Investment in our collective institutions and opportunities is the only way to mitigate the staggering income inequalities that can arise from a world where Facebook employees can become billionaires overnight, while the universities that produce them are asked to slash billions overnight. As I've said, nations that don't invest in the future tend not to do well there.

EXHIBIT 2

[From the Wall Street Journal, May 16, 2012]

TIME FOR A MEDICAID-EDUCATION GRAND SWAP

(By Lamar Alexander)

Staring down steep tuition hikes, students at the University of California have taken to carrying picket signs. As far as I can tell, though, none has demanded that President Barack Obama accept a Grand Swap that could protect their education while saving them money. Allow me to explain.

When I was governor of Tennessee in the early 1980s, I traveled to meet with President Ronald Reagan in the Oval Office and offer that Grand Swap: Medicaid for K 12 education. The federal government would take over 100% of Medicaid, the federal healthcare program mainly for low-income Americans, and states would assume all responsibility for the nation's 100,000 public schools. Reagan liked the idea, but it went nowhere.

If we had made that swap in 1981, states would have come out ahead, keeping \$13.2 billion in Medicaid spending and giving \$8.7 billion in education spending back to Washington. Today, states would have about \$92 billion a year in extra funds, as they'd keep the \$149 billion they're now spending on Medicaid and give back to Washington the \$57 billion that the federal government spends per year on schools.

This trade would get at the heart of the problem with today's rising cost of college education: the policies that Washington has dreamed up and then handed off to the states to implement, costs and all. Chief among them: Medicaid.

When I was governor and we were allotting state tax money for roads, schools, state agencies and the like, we'd have to choose between spending on Medicaid or public higher education. When states are forced to spend more of their limited tax dollars on Medicaid, that usually means they spend less on education.

Last year in Tennessee, Medicaid funding was up 16% while state support for higher education was down 15%. As a result, tuition and fees at public four-year universities rose more than 7%.

At Tennessee Tech University, state funding has dropped 30% over the last three years—and the picture is not much different at other universities and community colleges throughout the nation.

In addition to saving states money, this Grand Swap could help improve the quality of education, both in colleges and K 12.

Because of the funding crunch, the quality of many of our higher education institutions is in serious jeopardy, and that's putting our nation's future in jeopardy. America's secret weapons in creating jobs since World War II have been innovation, technology and a trained workforce. We not only have the best colleges and universities in the world, we have nearly all of the best.

At the K 12 level, federal involvement has done little to improve quality. Federal funding for elementary and secondary education programs has increased by 73% over the past nine years, while student achievement has stayed relatively flat.

State and local leaders know best how to create an environment in which students can

learn what they need to know to succeed in college and in careers. Decisions on whether schools and teachers are succeeding or failing should be taken away from Washington and given back to state and local governments. While Washington has provided some important advocacy and requirements for better reporting of test scores, most of the initiative for higher standards, better tests, more accountability and more parental choice has come from the states.

Then there's the Grand Swap's potential for strengthening Medicaid: A single manager, even if it is the federal government, would operate Medicaid more efficiently because it would be forced to implement the mandates it crafts.

So, how about it, Mr. President—a single Grand Swap for the long-term stability of tuition rates, student-loan rates, Medicaid and K 12 education?

Mr. ALEXANDER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MERKLEY). The Senator from Kentucky.

AID TO PAKISTAN

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I think most Americans remember where they were on 9/11/2001. I was doing eye surgery in Bowling Green, KY. When I came out of surgery, I walked into the patient's room and on the television set were the planes crashing into the buildings. My first thought was horror. My second thought was concern for my father who was in Washington and is a Congressman and lives near the Pentagon. As I thought about this, it struck me as so bizarre and hard to believe. But I know exactly where I was and remember it vividly today.

I think Lucky Penny remembers where she was. Lucky Penny was one of the first female F 16 pilots. She was here in Washington at one of the bases, and she was asked to scramble her F 16. After the first two planes crashed, she was asked to intercept United Flight 93, which was coming in from Pennsylvania and thought to be headed toward the White House. She was asked to scramble a fighter jet with no armaments. They didn't have time to load the armaments and at that time we were not prepared and did not have jets already prearmed.

Her mission was to take down the plane however she could, which probably meant ramming her jet into the commercial airliner and bringing it down. Can you imagine being given this task? She took it upon herself and quickly scrambled her jet. The jet had to be scrambled in such a fast fashion that there were still things attached to it. People were trying to dismantle and pull out the gas hose and all the appendages to the plane as she was taxiing down the runway. I think she will never forget where she was on 9/11.

When SEAL Team 6 infiltrated bin Laden's compound, I think Americans were proud of SEAL Team 6 and proud of our military and proud of what they did to finally get this mass murderer. What happened in the weeks leading up to that attack and the attack on the compound by SEAL Team 6 was a doctor in Pakistan who helped us. His name is Dr. Shakil Afridi. He is about

the same age as I, and I have a lot of sympathy for him and for his bravery. Doctors are not soldiers. We are taught to heal and to help, but he thought it was important enough and that bin Laden was a bad enough person that he would help America get bin Laden.

He set up a vaccination clinic, and they did DNA testing to try to prove that bin Laden was in the compound. He risked his life to get this mass murderer. As a consequence though, Pakistan has not treated him very well. The Pakistan Government has put him in prison for 33 years. I find it incredibly insulting that this is coming from an ostensible ally.

I find it troubling that this man who is a hero and should be praised and congratulated and rewarded has been sentenced to prison for 33 years. He has been in prison for the last year without trial and probably being tortured. He has lost a significant amount of weight and now he is told he will go to prison for the rest of his life for helping America to catch the mass murderer bin Laden.

What I find particularly troubling is that the United States continues to fund and give money to Pakistan. Over \$1 billion of U.S. taxpayer money is sent to Pakistan. It troubles me that we are sending \$1 billion to a country that imprisons the gentleman, the physician, who was brave enough to help us get bin Laden. It makes no sense.

Recently, a committee proposed reducing our foreign aid—the \$1 billion—by \$33 million. It is 3 percent. I think they will laugh at us and keep doing what they are doing. They only understand negotiation from strength. So what I am proposing, and what I will insist upon in the next few days, is a vote on ending aid to Pakistan unless they free Dr. Afridi. I think that is the very least they can do. I am also asking the U.S. Government to grant him emergency citizenship and to help his family get over here from Pakistan and to provide them safe passage. I think it is the least we can do.

We shouldn't reward bad behavior. That is what we have done with foreign aid for so many years. It is one thing to talk about aiding or assisting your allies, but it is another to aid and assist the people who persistently persecute their own people—people who continue with human rights abuses.

In Pakistan there is a woman named Asia Bibi. She has been accused of saying something about the prophet. She said she didn't do it. It is gossip. She is set to be executed in Pakistan.

I think Americans should be outraged that 1 billion of your taxpayer dollars is being sent to Pakistan, a country that is imprisoning the guy who helped us get bin Laden, that is imprisoning a Christian for saying she said some sort of religious blasphemy, and the accusation is basically gossip. I think we should be insulted, not to mention the fact that I don't think it works.

Look at the examples throughout the last 30, 40 years of the different dictators we have given money to. We gave over \$60 billion to Mubarak, the military dictator of Egypt. He stole a lot of it. He was one of the richest men in the world. He had some of the largest palaces in the world. His kids were enriched also at our expense.

Look at Mobutu in Congo. He was given billions of dollars and entertained by American leaders. At one time he had seven of the largest palaces in the world, mansions in the United States, mansions in Paris that were all paid for with our money. What did his people have? His people didn't have running water or electricity. Even if we believe in the humanitarian nature of giving money to these countries, it is not going to them. We are making rich autocrats richer in Third World countries, and it is not going to the people of the country. It is stolen and skimmed off the top.

Look at Mugabe. Mugabe in Zimbabwe tortures his opposition, has confiscated land, has basically run his country into the ground, and we have given him billions of dollars. We can't buy better behavior and we shouldn't reward autocrats. Let's not reward folks who torture their people. For goodness' sake, we should not send \$1 billion to Pakistan when they are imprisoning a hero who helped us get bin Laden.

My amendment will call for an immediate halt to all aid to Pakistan now. I am asking President Obama not to send one penny to Pakistan until Dr. Afridi is freed. I am asking that no more money goes there in the future until Dr. Afridi is freed. I think this is the least we can do. I plan on demanding a vote in the Senate, and I hope the American people will pay attention to how their representatives vote. They are voting to send money we don't even have. We are \$1 trillion in debt. We borrow the money from China and send it to Pakistan. It makes no sense. Our infrastructure is crumbling. We have had two bridges collapse in Kentucky this year. We are struggling for money to pay for our own infrastructure, and we are sending \$1 billion to a country that imprisons Christians for their beliefs.

It has to come to an end. It is going to come to an end one way or another. What I ask is that the Senate step up and support ending this money being sent to Pakistan and, at the very least, not send any more until Dr. Afridi is freed.

I thank the Chair.

I yield back my time 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. DURBIN. 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. DURBIN. Would the Chair remind me of the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The pending business is the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 415, S. 3240.

Mr. DURBIN. The farm bill; is that correct? The Agriculture bill?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. DURBIN. I was advised of that, and I wanted to double-check.

Three weeks ago we passed a milestone in U.S. agriculture. The U.S. Department of Agriculture celebrated its 150th birthday. I take some pride in that coming from Illinois because it was President Abraham Lincoln who created the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He called it the people's department. Among other things, it became a launch pad for the development of the United States. It was during that same period of the Lincoln Presidency that they started the land-grant college system as well as the Transcontinental Railroad. These things literally settled and united our great Nation.

Since its inception, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has played an important role supporting farmers, investing in rural communities, researching crops, diseases, production practices, increasing energy production, and helping to fight poverty.

Now the Senate is turning to the debate on the 2012 farm bill that will carry forward the vision of our government's role in agriculture for the next 5 years.

While much of the rest of the country has been struggling through a recession, agriculture in America has really remained a bright spot. We have seen record prices and record income in the farm sector.

Last year farm revenues reached \$98.1 billion. Times are good, but we cannot afford to forget for a moment that there is inherent risk in farming—risks that many other businesses do not face. Droughts, floods, wind damage, rain, and pests are just a few of the risks farmers must cope with on a year-to-year basis. Because of the nature of these risks associated with farming and the important role farmers play in food production, the Federal Government, since the days of President Franklin Roosevelt, has long provided a safety net to help farmers in the worst of times. But the need for a safety net must be balanced every time we have a farm bill with the realistic appraisal of the risk facing farmers and acknowledging the resources available from the Federal Government.

The Agriculture Committee, under the leadership of Chairwoman DEBBIE STABENOW of Michigan, who has done an extraordinary job with Senator ROBERTS, the ranking Republican, in bringing this bill to the floor, and the broader agriculture community deserve credit for stepping up to find savings in this farm bill, to cut subsidies, and to make sure those savings are dedicated toward good programs and deficit reduction. They make real reforms in agricultural programs. The bill on the

floor is a huge step forward in putting our agriculture policy on the right track in light of the fiscal challenges we face. It reforms several titles to help producers better manage their risk, makes key investments in energy and research, ensures programs are in place to help our rural communities grow, and assists those who need to put food on the table. It does all this, and, to the credit of the Agriculture Committee, it still manages to save \$23 billion over the next 10 years against what we had projected spending before this bill was introduced.

Gone are the outdated direct payments that went to farmers even when they were having record positive income years. To replace direct payments, the Agriculture Committee has proposed the new Agriculture Risk Coverage Program, known as ARC. ARC is a market-oriented program to build on the principles of the ACRE Program that I authored in the last farm bill and was expanded on in the Aggregate Risk and Revenue Management Act I joined along with Senator SHERROD BROWN, Senator THUNE, and Senator LUGAR last year.

The biggest change introduced by the ARC Program is that to get a payment, you have to have an actual loss. That may sound odd to people who are observing this from the outside, but this is a fundamental shift in agricultural policy and I think a very wise one. ARC does not guarantee a profit, and it does not make the farmer completely whole, but it smoothes out the downturns and provides the producer time to shift to a new market condition.

Crop insurance protects farmers within any given year. The ARC Program is designed to help manage risk when there are repeated years of low prices or low yields. In other words, it makes the payments when they are needed. And even better, the shift to ARC saves the Federal Government about \$15 billion. I congratulate Senator STABENOW for this extraordinary savings as well as many other changes within the bill.

Other portions of the bill make long-term investments that will help strengthen agriculture. The bill increases mandatory spending and reauthorizes and expands several programs in agricultural research. It is a small part of the Agriculture bill but a critically important part of expanding agriculture in America.

This bill creates the new Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, which leverages public dollars to generate private investment. These investments are going to be important to Illinois producers and major research institutions such as the University of Illinois, Southern Illinois University, and the Peoria Agriculture Lab, as well as several other universities across our State.

The energy title includes mandatory funding for programs to expand bio-based manufacturing, advanced biofuels, and renewable energy. These

programs are going to help companies in my State, such as Archer Daniels Midland and Patriot Renewable Fuels. They are going to be able to process and manufacture products in rural America. There are many examples in Illinois of new markets being developed and new jobs being created in rural areas because of the growth of the bio-based industry.

The bill reforms the conservation title to streamline programs and finds additional savings by limiting the number of acres that can participate in the CRP or Conservation Reserve Program.

I have some concerns with these cuts and believe our most environmentally sensitive lands need to stay out of production, but I understand that the committee had a tough assignment to balance our policies with the need to reduce the deficit. This also holds true when it comes to nutrition, and I would like to say a word about the nutrition programs in this bill.

You can almost argue that this is a nutrition and agriculture bill. But it is the farm bill, and it includes many critical nutrition programs.

SNAP is the old Food Stamp Program. It helps those most impacted by the current recession continue to feed their families. You cannot really improve your situation in life if you are hungry. The committee bill takes some steps to reduce fraud in SNAP, and I heartily endorse that. We cannot really argue against those. But I am concerned about rumblings from other Members considering amendments to cut the program more fundamentally and alter the way SNAP works.

Let's be clear. We should not be cutting food assistance at a time when we are setting record poverty levels. In 2010 the United States set a new record with 15.1 percent of the population living in poverty. That is over 46 million people in our country. For them, SNAP, or the Food Stamp Program, is a lifeline.

I invite my colleagues who are anxious to cut these programs to go visit the local pantry, whether it is run by the church or whether it is a food bank in your area, and watch the people coming through the door. Some of them are very poor. Some of them are very elderly. Some of them are coming from work or going to work; they just do not make enough money to feed their families. Now is not the time to cut food assistance for American families. If you need more savings, I encourage my colleagues to look somewhere else in this bill.

While the Agriculture Committee bill makes major reforms, there is still more that can be done. The bill makes no changes to the Sugar Program that forces consumers in America to pay higher prices at the store and costs us jobs in America. I plan to support an effort from several of my colleagues to make some relatively minor changes that will benefit both consumers and businesses.

There is another area that needs further reform. It is the area of crop insurance. Crop Insurance Program costs have risen dramatically over the last several years, even when farm income was rising dramatically. Just last year the Federal Government spent more than \$7.4 billion in crop insurance premium support. This does not even account for the amount sent to crop insurance companies—the companies that actually sell the crop insurance—to simply sell the policies. Incidentally, by selling those policies, they get a 14-percent return—not a bad deal.

However, the crop insurance title sees the largest single expansion of any title in the farm bill, without making major efforts to rein in the costs. We can do better. I have joined with my Republican colleague, Senator TOM COBURN, to find additional savings in this title. In our opinion, it is not unreasonable to ask the wealthiest and most prosperous farmers in America to pay a little more for their crop insurance. Right now the Federal Government is subsidizing 62 percent of premium costs for crop insurance. For those who are making over \$750,000 a year, a slight reduction in that Federal subsidy is not hard to explain, at least from where I am standing.

I commend my colleagues on the Agriculture Committee for sending us this bipartisan bill. It is a safety net for producers, makes investments in rural America, research, and energy development, protects nutrition programs, and actually cuts spending.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in a bipartisan fashion to debate and pass the 2012 farm bill. I hope they will all join us in voting for the motion to proceed.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

MR. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy with my Senate colleagues.

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

STARTUP ACT 2.0

MR. MORAN. Mr. President, entrepreneurs and new businesses are vital to the strength of the U.S. economy. We need to be a competitive country in which we have great success in creating jobs in America.

Between 1980 and 2005, startup companies—less than 5 years old—accounted for nearly all the net new jobs created in our country. New firms create an average of approximately 3 million jobs each year. In order to create jobs for Americans, we need to create an environment where entrepreneurs are free to pursue their ideas, start businesses, and hire American workers.

Now, why is this important? This is important, obviously, for the purpose of creating the opportunity for all Americans to pursue the American dream. It is important for us to have the ability to put food on our families' tables and save for our kids' education and save for our own retirement. And

it is important because at a time in our Nation in which the fiscal condition of the Federal Government is so serious, so much out of balance—we are spending so many more dollars than we take in—the deficit is holding back the growth of our country. These facts are important because at this point in time, because of our country's fiscal condition, we have an inability to grow the economy, and we have seen little evidence that the administration and Congress are willing to address our fiscal issues.

I raise these facts because we have to act now in order to create jobs in this country. The way to do that is to create an entrepreneurial and innovation environment in which people—Americans—who have ideas want to take a product to market. In the process of pursuing their success, they put other Americans to work. We need to create the environment in which that can happen. In the process of creating the benefits of new jobs in America, we will have a better fiscal condition than the one we find ourselves in today and avoid the chances that the United States will become another Greece or other southern European country.

A number of us in the Senate who believe we can work together to accomplish this have come together and entered into negotiations and created legislation based upon information provided by the Kauffman Foundation on entrepreneurship in Kansas City, as well as the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. On the floor with me today are several of those colleagues. The Senator from Virginia, MR. WARNER, and I gathered together our thoughts several months ago and introduced legislation called the Startup Act. Also on the floor this afternoon is Senator COONS of Delaware. He and the Senator from Florida, MR. RUBIO, introduced the AGREE Act, designed to put some things in place that most Members of Congress agreed upon to grow technology and create jobs. The four of us then came together with an idea and have now introduced Startup Act 2.0.

Today, Members of the House of Representatives introduced companion legislation—this morning—in a bipartisan effort. So we now have a bipartisan, bicameral piece of legislation that we believe is important to the country. We believe it is important to individual citizens, and we believe it is important in the ability for us to have the economic growth necessary to begin the process of making our country fiscally sound again.

This legislation has a number of components related to the Tax Code, related to the regulatory environment, related to the global battle for talent, related to the ability for us to take the money we spend—the taxpayer dollars at universities in conducting research—and to encourage that money be spent in a way for research that is able to be used in bringing new products to market, in commercialization,

and to create an environment in which States across the country can demonstrate their interest and willingness in pursuing an entrepreneurial environment so that entrepreneurs and innovators find a place to build their companies.

It is an honor to be here this afternoon to highlight this legislation, to encourage our other colleagues to join us, and to approach this in a way that says we believe this is something more than just introducing a bill, it is something that is important not just as a symbol that we are working together, but we are of the belief that this is legislation that can follow the JOBS Act that was passed by this Congress and signed by this President several months ago, that we can follow on with legislation that will increase the chances that entrepreneurship is alive and well and America retains its competitive place in a global economy.

Let me ask my colleagues if they would like to join in this discussion. I would yield to the Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I would like to thank my friend, the Senator from Kansas, for his leadership on this issue. This is something on which he and I spent a lot of time working, as have, I know, the Senators from Delaware, from Florida, and we are joined now by the Senator from Missouri as well. We are all new Senators.

We said before when we unveiled this we did not get the memo that we should take Presidential election years off. We still think the needs of our country ought to trump election-year politicking. We think this is one of those spaces where we can find that common ground.

I spent 20 years as an entrepreneur and a funder of startup businesses, and everything in my experience validates what Senator MORAN has talked about. But, candidly, the facts show 80 percent of all of the new jobs created in America in the last 20 years came from startup businesses. They are not all tech businesses. I think of Under Armour, which is right up the road in Maryland, close to our friend from Delaware.

There are certain key things that every startup business needs: They need access to capital, they need access to talent, they need access to new ideas. We need to make sure we have a stable regulatory environment that is not overly burdensome in each way we move the ball in this legislation, both that we passed and that we are working on right now.

Senator MORAN mentioned the JOBS Act, which looked at access to capital issues, how we can perhaps allow companies access to the public markets in a cleaner way. I want to commend the Presiding Officer as well. He took the lead on a whole new area of fundraising around crowdfunding, crowdsourcing, and using the tools of the Internet, in effect, democratizing the ability to raise capital.

In this legislation, Startup 2.0, we take on a series of other issues. One of the issues is the question of talent. Every country in the world competes for talent. We attract some of the best talent in the world to come to our world-class universities. Oftentimes, we then train them in science, technology, engineering, and math with graduate degrees. I wish we could fill all of those slots in American universities with native-born Americans. But we do not have enough.

Consequently, we train the best and brightest in the world, then send them home to start their businesses. I can tell you, in Virginia, where we are proud to have a vibrant high-tech community, an entrepreneurial community, literally one-third of all of our high-tech firms in Northern Virginia, the founders are first-generation Americans. If we had the same immigration policies 20 years ago that we have today, we would not have had that kind of explosive growth particularly all across America in the nineties from technology.

So I want to turn to my colleague, the Senator from Delaware, a State that punches above its weight, a small State but a State with great universities, a State which has a rich entrepreneurial climate as well, what got the Senator involved—I know he has a background in business as well—on this issue. I know the Senator wants to share as well some of the aspects of Startup 2.0.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I am honored to join with the good Senator from Kansas, the Senator from Missouri, and my friend from Virginia in speaking today in a bipartisan colloquy that is also part of a bicameral process that is trying to send a signal to the American people, to our markets, and to our competitors, that we understand that just because we happen to be in an election year does not mean our competitors in China, in India, and Russia, in Europe and other parts of world—in Africa and in other places where there are emerging markets or in places where we have well-developed competitors—we do not take this year off.

The American people expect since we are still drawing a salary, we should still be making progress. We should still be trying to meet the needs of a growing economy that needs to grow faster. So as Senator MORAN referenced previously, last November Senator RUBIO of Florida and I came together to put a package called the AGREE Act before the Senate.

We were pleased that a number of the provisions in that first AGREE Act actually have subsequently become law: One, to ease the path for IPOs, initial public offerings, for high-potential, high-growth companies; another through Executive order to strengthen intellectual property protection. We are hopeful the Senate will consider another provision that dealt with bonus depreciation, which is another way to help make investments in equipment for small businesses.

On top of that, Senator RUBIO and I have now teamed up with Senator MORAN and Senator WARNER to take some of the remaining provisions of the AGREE Act and add them in with your Startup Act and now make an improved and broader and stronger Startup 2.0.

The pieces that we brought to the party were eliminating the per-country caps for employment-based immigrant visas and making permanent the exemption of certain capital gains so investors can provide financial stability to qualified startups. There are a lot of good ideas in this bill. There are a lot of different ways in which it tackles the issues that my colleagues have already spoken to: immigration; retaining high-promise, entrepreneurial folks who come and learn in the United States; moving the inventions and innovations on American college campuses to the marketplace more predictably, more swiftly; providing tax incentives for startup businesses and putting provisions in the Tax Code that strengthen our welcoming environment for entrepreneurship and regulatory relief.

Senator MORAN took the lead in making possible a provision in this bill that provides some regulatory relief for startup businesses. In all I think these provisions make for a terrific package, thus the moniker “2.0.” It has already attracted some other folks to join us.

Before I hand the floor over to the Senator from Missouri, I just want to comment on what I think that means.

There are trillions of dollars in capital sitting on the sidelines. American corporations have more money sitting on their balance sheets, not invested and moving our economy forward, than at almost anytime in modern history. That is because they are not sure this body, the Congress of the United States, can tackle the very real financial and competitiveness challenges in front of us.

There is something about the symbolism of what is on the Senate floor today: the Agriculture bill, the farm bill, and a bill we took up and passed just a few weeks ago, the Transportation bill. I think that is at times lost. The average American sees in the news the fighting, the disagreement, the inability to come together, when, in fact, two fairly broad, strong important bills—the farm bill and the Transportation bill—were passed through committee by strong votes.

Senator BOXER of California, Senator INHOFE of Oklahoma, Senator STABENOW of Michigan, and Senator ROBERTS of Kansas—these are folks from both parties with significant differences in their views. But they managed to hammer out these bills, the Transportation and farm bills.

I want to thank Senators MORAN and WARNER and RUBIO for joining with me and the four of us being able to put this together and putting it on the floor of the Senate today.

To the good Senator from Missouri, a freshman in the Senate but a man of

great seasoning and experience in the House and in public service, we are grateful he has joined us as a cosponsor of this bill. I welcome him to speak for a few minutes about how he sees this contributing to positive progress for our recovery.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I do think there are those things that we can agree on. I am glad to join the three of you and Senator RUBIO as one of the cosponsors of this bill that you all crafted and put together. Good energy policy, good tax policy, good regulatory policy are important to the future. But there are things we can do right now even outside of these bigger debates we need to have that are in this bill.

Who would have thought—Senator MORAN brought this poster to the floor—Great Britain would become a real competitor for us as a better place to do business? I have talked to more than one American business lately that has actually changed their worldwide headquarters and their corporate structure to Britain instead of the United States of America.

Then we have another—this poster is “Entrepreneurs are Great Britain.” I think entrepreneurs are still the United States of America. But this ad would suggest otherwise.

“Your next big idea. Canada.” Canada is a great trading partner. They are a neighbor of ours. They are a friend of ours. But I do not think we would have thought a decade ago that these countries would be repositioning themselves, and that has happened. Also, I think we have not kept up like we should and we could have with things such as the Startup Act.

These countries are putting themselves in a position where they understand that private sector job growth is critical, that government can do some things to encourage that, but government does not create very many private sector jobs.

One of the reasons I decided to cosponsor the Startup Act 2.0, the second version of the Startup Act, is I think it does some of what we need to begin to do. Seventy-five percent of all U.S. engineering and technology firms in the last decade, the decade we have good numbers on, the one that ended just a few—that ended really—the numbers I have are 1995 to 2005—75 percent of the engineering and technology startups were started by people who were born in another country.

This bill simply creates a visa program that allows entrepreneurs who have good ideas and, frankly, have some money to go along with these good ideas, to come to the United States of America and start these jobs, to take advantage of our great workforce, to take advantage of the position we have to be able to send products all over the world, and to do that here.

This act also requires that we have a true cost-benefit analysis of rules and regulations. Last year the Federal Government—of the 66 rules which cost

more than \$100 million, only 18 of them had what one could describe as a cost-benefit analysis. There are lots of things that would be fine to do, but if the cost to the economy, the cost to jobs, and the cost to families is greater than the benefit, we should not do them.

So this bill says let's go ahead. Let's not let the cost of something overwhelm the benefit to the economy or become a negative impact on the economy. Long-term investment in this act with startups would have some exemption from the capital gains. People are risking a lot of money with a startup. This is saying: We want to raise the reward quotient of that risk so we encourage people to take the risk.

If someone is doing a startup, the odds are pretty high that money may not ever come back. So we need to do whatever we can to encourage that money be put on the table and those jobs be created. In 2009, 651 startups were created with university research involved as a component. This further opens the door for grant dollars that are already available, of Federal research and development funds to be even more open to a university partner as part of that private sector effort. So I think we have to be focused on the opportunity for families, the opportunity for individuals.

Who creates the jobs in America? Small business creates the jobs in America. Startups create the jobs in America. I am pleased to be here standing with Senator MORAN.

The next big idea is the biggest idea of the last couple hundred years, which is the United States of America intends to be a competitive leader in the world. What do we need to do as Members of the Senate to see that happen?

I am glad he and Senator WARNER, Senator COONS, and Senator RUBIO are leading this effort. I am glad to join in it and glad to be here on the floor today.

Mr. MORAN. I very much appreciate the remark of the Senator from Missouri and his cosponsorship of this legislation.

Let me highlight something he pointed out, which is in the short time that those of us on the floor today have been in the Senate, about 14 months, seven countries have adopted new laws to attract entrepreneurs. We have not.

Listen to this fact. A recent report from the World Bank shows that America has slipped in the rankings in terms of startup friendliness from first to thirteenth. There are provisions in here about visas for those who were foreign born. This is very much about American jobs. This is about the opportunity for someone to start a company here and hire Americans. If they happen to be someone who is foreign born but highly educated in science, technology, engineering and entrepreneurial with money and they want to invest in the U.S. economy and agree to put people to work, we are saying the doors of the United States of Amer-

ica are open for business for purposes of hiring U.S. citizens.

It is an important component. We do not want to lose this battle. As we see, these are ads from U.S. publications in which entrepreneurs are being lured to places outside the United States to start their companies. When I visited with an entrepreneur recently, they said: We could not get the person we needed to hire to work at our company because they could not get a visa. They were foreign born. So we hired them, but we put them in our plant in Canada. We put them in our facility in Dublin.

The fear is, the concern, there is more than just those number of jobs that we are out to create in the United States. It means people who are entrepreneurial are now in Dublin and in Toronto where they are making decisions not just about what they have to do today for a check, but when they have an idea about starting a business, they are outside of the United States and we lose the benefit of that job growth.

Let me also say something else about this legislation. An entrepreneurial engineer told me to get a plane to fly, there are two forces at work: thrust and drag. Too many times, in my view, Congress spends its efforts in creating new laws, more spending, it promotes the thrust. What we are doing is reducing the drag, increasing the chances that a new business will succeed.

Before our time expires, let me again return to the Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. I commend the Senator from Kansas for his comments. I am fond of Canada. My mom's family is from Canada. It is remarkable. Canada, over the last 3 years, has aggressively sought out worldwide talent.

I ask the Senator from Kansas whether he thinks it is good policy in what we do now—and, once again, I make very clear, this is about growing American jobs because we have more job openings in the advanced fields of science, technology, engineering, and math than there are American citizens applying for those jobs.

I ask the Senator from Kansas whether it would make sense—if we thought about this from a national security standpoint, would it make sense for us to take, for example, a Chinese lieutenant and send him to West Point and expose him to everything we have in terms of our national security ideas and then send him home?

I guess I ask the Senator whether he thought that would be good national security policy. Does it affect our current national immigration policy on an equally important front, in terms of job creation and economic activity?

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, the answer to that in Kansas is that it doesn't make any sense at all. There is no good judgment there. That is a point I would make in a more broad way. The provisions of Startup 2.0 are mostly about common sense, things that would make sense to the people of my State and to the people of the State

of Virginia who, if you looked at a problem said how can you solve it and grow the economy, they would say these things make common sense. That is what this legislation is about.

In my view, I guess 80 percent of our colleagues in the Senate at least would be supportive of the provisions of this legislation. I think the Senators on the floor this afternoon and others are out to prove that when there is broad support for commonsense ideas, we are still in a legislative body that can accomplish much and that, as the Senator from Virginia is fond of saying, we didn't get the memo that says we don't work during an election year. The American people expect us to make the necessary accomplishments to grow the economy, to put Americans to work, and to get our fiscal house in order.

Again, I ask if the Senator has any items to close with.

Mr. WARNER. No. I hope we can get a number of our colleagues to join us. This doesn't fall under a traditional Democratic versus Republican lexicon. This is more about future versus past. This is the future of global competition for talent, for ideas, and for capital. This is where job creation will come from. I look forward to working with the Senator and our other colleagues to make sure we get the support here and in the House and get this bill passed. I thank my friend, the Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. I thank the Senator, and I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Senate is about to turn its attention to one of the most significant legislative issues on our agenda this year, consideration of the 2012 farm bill. I would first like to thank the chairwoman, Senator STABENOW, and ranking member, Senator ROBERTS, for working together in a bipartisan way to advance a farm bill—the Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2012—that can pass the Senate and become law this year. As a former chairman of the Agriculture Committee, and having worked closely with Senator LUGAR on many bipartisan farm bills, I know how difficult the task can be of forging a comprehensive bill that addresses many competing needs.

Some Senators may be scratching their heads trying to understand the urgency of passing this bill and why it matters to constituents in all of our States. The current farm bill expires at the end of September. We also have a serious problem with dairy policy that must be addressed before August 31; our dairy farmers will be left without a vital safety net if we do not act before then.

I recognize that not every Senator comes from farm country or hears from many farmers in their State like I do. But this is a bill that affects every State and touches the lives of every American, through the healthy food on our kitchen tables or in our children classrooms; the clean water that is a

result of critical conservation programs; rural businesses on Main Street receiving assistance from USDA; new energy products resulting from research supported by this bill; and the benefits we all receive from our local farms and food systems that benefit from this bill. The farm bill also has a reach far beyond our borders with the international food aid that provides lifesaving support around the globe.

Make no mistake: Farming is part of our national security. Imagine what it would be like if we had to depend on imported food, the way we depend on imported oil. Keeping American agriculture strong and vibrant is at the core of this bill, but this bill does much more. It will also help keep our rural communities strong, and will support those Americans who are struggling to put food on the table.

Every Senator should know that this farm bill makes real reforms, and nets real savings. This bill makes long-overdue reforms to agriculture policy, and consolidates and streamlines USDA programs, all the while cutting \$23 billion in mandatory spending. The bill before the Senate today proves that when Democrats and Republicans sit down and work in a bipartisan manner we can make progress and accomplish something real, and do so with fiscal restraint.

Is this the farm bill that I, or any individual Senator, would have drafted? Of course not. There are conservation and energy programs that farmers in Vermont would like to see strengthened, many nutrition programs that are vital in keeping food on the tables of millions of Americans, and a wide array of rural development programs that do not have mandatory funding in this bill. But I recognize that this bill is a compromise, and I will continue to work with the chairwoman and ranking member to make this the best farm bill possible.

I am especially pleased that the farm bill includes a major dairy reform proposal that I know will help both our producers and consumers move away from the dangerous roller coaster of price swings. For our farmers in Vermont, these dairy reforms are the key to our consideration of a farm bill. I regularly hear from Vermont farmers about this. We simply must free our dairy farmers from this destructive cycle of volatile price changes.

The current Federal safety net provides no protection for dairy farmers from this roller coaster of price volatility. The 2012 farm bill scraps outdated price supports and the Milk Income Loss Contract Program. It establishes a new risk management plan that protects farm income when margins shrink dangerously, and a stabilization program to allow farmers to take a proactive role in easing the instability in our dairy markets.

And it accomplishes this at a lower cost than the program that it replaces and contributes to the savings in this bill. It is a voluntary program and can

be tailored by the farmer to fit the farmer's individual needs.

These reforms have the support of dairy farmers across the country, and they have been developed to move us away from the regional dairy fights and the constant policy conflicts between small and large farms. The 2009 dairy crisis brought plummeting milk prices and sky-high feed costs that combined to force far too many U.S. dairy farmers out of business, and saddled thousands more with losses and debt from which it will take years to recover. After those dark days in 2009, dairy farmers from across the country came together for a solution that will help them and consumers move away from these volatile price swings.

Dairy is Vermont's single most important agricultural commodity, and dairy products account for upward of 83 percent—or 90 percent, depending on market prices—of Vermont's agricultural products sales. If any Senator has questions about the dairy reforms in this bill, I would welcome discussing what this farm bill does for dairy farms. There has been a lot of misinformation about these provisions, and I welcome the opportunity to eliminate any confusion.

I have tried to be supportive of programs which do not directly benefit Vermont, and I intend to vote to help farmers in other regions—just as I hope other Senators will join me in supporting dairy farmers in Vermont, and throughout the Nation. Just like corn, wheat, soybean, sugar, cotton and the many other types of farmers in our country, our dairy farmers work extremely hard for a living. Dairy farmers deserve a voice in the crafting of this farm bill, and I have been proud to ensure that their voices are being heard in shaping this bill.

While listening to our farmers in writing this bill, we also need to hear the voices of the millions of Americans struggling every day to put food on the table. The nutrition assistance and emergency feeding programs in this farm bill are needed now more than ever. Because of the greater need for services, these programs currently do not satisfy demand. The numbers are staggering even for a State the size of Vermont. In 2010 alone, an average of more than 87,000 Vermonters received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, benefits each month. On top of that, nearly 86,000 Vermonters accessed food from our State's food pantries and soup kitchens. Sadly, those numbers have continued to rise in Vermont and across the country, and they reflect how critically important the nutrition title of the farm bill is to so many States.

Ensuring these programs can continue to serve Vermonters and all Americans in need is a key part of enacting a strong farm bill for this country.

Calls to reduce food assistance as a way to solve our Nation's deficit problems are misguided and shortsighted.

Axing tens of billions of dollars from the SNAP program would eliminate food assistance for millions of Americans and deny hundreds of thousands of American children school meals. I am disappointed that this bill includes \$4.5 billion in cuts to the SNAP program, cuts that will predominately come from Northeastern States.

Despite these cuts, the farm bill does make significant improvements to nutrition programs, including important funding for emergency food assistance and initiatives to encourage better health through improved access to local foods, and better nutrition for our children and seniors. I am pleased that this bill also makes great advances to support self-sufficiency and food security in our low-income communities, helping to correct the "food deserts" that we experience in both urban and rural communities. At a time when more Americans than ever before are at risk of going hungry, and food pantry shelves across the country are bare, I am committed to working with the chairwoman and ranking member to find ways to make these nutrition programs even stronger in order to help the people who need it most.

I hope that the full Senate can now come together in a bipartisan way, just as we did in the Agriculture Committee, to pass this bill, which will have a tremendous impact on our farms, our rural communities, our kitchen tables, and our economic recovery.

This farm bill represents an investment in American agriculture that will benefit our producers, our rural communities, our Main Street businesses, taxpayers, and consumers, and particularly the neediest among us. It deserves the Senate's full and focused attention, and it deserves the support of every Senator.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JEFFREY J. HELMICK TO BE U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Jeffrey J. Helmick, of Ohio, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Ohio.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 90 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, the U.S. Constitution entrusts the Senate with one of our democracies' most important obligations—to "advise and consent" to judicial nominations.

Yet, today, almost half of all Americans, 133 million citizens of our great

country, live in districts or circuits that have a vacancy due to the inaction of Members of this body.

We have an opportunity today to take seriously our responsibility to do something about that and take one significant step by voting to confirm Jeffrey Helmick to serve as a U.S. district court judge. President Obama nominated Mr. Helmick to serve on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio on May 11, 2011.

Based on a bipartisan commission's recommendation and based on my own judgment, I had no hesitation whatsoever in suggesting Jeffrey Helmick's name to President Obama. Let me tell you about our selection process.

In 2009, then-Senator George Voinovich, a Republican, and I assembled a bipartisan commission of distinguished Ohioans in the legal community. The commission included a former attorney general of Ohio, law school deans, and other accomplished Ohioans. In order to avoid any conflicts of interest, leading legal professionals from the Southern District of the State reviewed nominations—that Northern District includes Toledo, Akron, Canton, Youngstown; the Southern District includes Columbus, Dayton, Cincinnati, and other communities. Legal professionals from the Southern District reviewed nominations for vacant judgeships in the Northern District and vice versa.

The members of the bipartisan commission for the Northern and Southern District were about exactly half Republican and half Democratic. They spent a substantial amount of time, as they have on previous judges in the process, screening, interviewing, and discussing the candidates.

At the end of this process, they selected Jeffrey Helmick, a native of Toledo, to be the nominee for this judicial vacancy. They gave me three highly qualified names, suggesting that I interview them, which is part of the process. I then went there to advise and consent, if you will, after speaking with all members of the committee, personally or on the phone. I chose to send Jeffrey Helmick's name in to be the nominee.

Jeff Helmick continues to live in Toledo with his wife Karen, an attorney also, and their son Joel. Each of the members of this commission I spoke with was impressed by Jeff's thoughtfulness, his temperament, and his extraordinary reputation among his peers, even among opposing counsel.

The chair of the commission, Nancy Rogers, a former dean of the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law and former attorney general of Ohio, said of Jeff:

He has shown a commitment to integrity and to excellence, and a dedication to his community and to the administration of justice.

Jeff Helmick not only has the support of this bipartisan selection committee, selected by Senator Voinovich, a Republican, and by me, he has the

support of the larger legal community, including all the Federal judges he will serve beside at the Federal courthouse in Toledo.

U.S. District Court Judge Jack Zouhary, nominated by President George W. Bush, has been a judge in the Northern District since 2006. He is currently the sole active judge of the court in the Western Division of the Northern District in Ohio, and he will be working most closely with this new judge—we hope.

Judge Zouhary wrote to the committee recommending Jeff Helmick's expedient confirmation. For some time, Judge Zouhary has asked when the Senate would confirm Jeff. He wrote:

You will find no better candidate than Jeff Helmick. He possesses the intelligence, the passion for our justice system, and the necessary temperament and people skills to be an outstanding district court judge.

If that weren't enough, he also said:

In the private practice, lawyers are able to choose their partners. Federal judges don't have such a luxury; we must work with whomever you confirm. I would be thrilled to have Jeff as my "partner" on the bench.

Ohio State Senator Mark Wagner, a Republican, represents much of that area in the State legislature in the Western Division of the court. He is chair of the Ohio State Senate judiciary committee and a long-time member of the Toledo Bar Association. He recommends Jeff for this position. State Senator Wagner, a Republican, said:

[Jeff] is someone who has stood for principles, litigated honestly, and ably defended our constitutional system of government. Helmick is held in very high esteem by the local bar, and his support crosses partisan lines.

The bipartisan selection committee, which Senator Voinovich and I convened, did its job well, and today we must do our job.

Jeff Helmick understands the needs and challenges facing the Northern District of Ohio and our legal system generally. Rising costs of litigation and increasing size and scope of court dockets pose numerous challenges to any system of justice.

But it is because of his experience—and respect from fellow lawyers and judges he has worked with—that he is well prepared to meet these challenges.

He is a courtroom innovator, having worked with the courts to integrate cutting-edge technologies into courtrooms to ensure that the administration of justice is efficient, equal, fair, and open for all who seek it. I am not a lawyer, but that is what lawyering and the judiciary should be all about.

Outside the courtroom, Jeff is equally dedicated to serving the public. A supporter of pro bono services, he volunteers at the Maumee Valley Criminal Defense Lawyers Association to improve the professionalism of lawyers and access to justice for the underserved.

He is past president of the Pemberville Boys Ranch, which helps