year focus on the threat of violent Islamist extremism is that, in order to understand and counter the threat we face, we must clearly identify that threat. We have repeatedly expressed our disappointment in the administration's reluctance to identify violent Islamist extremism as our enemy—while making the sharp distinction between the peaceful religion of Islam and a twisted corruption of that religion used to justify violence. The administration's inconsistent statements about whether this was a terrorist attack are symptomatic of this recurring problem. We hope this lesson will finally be heeded.

Ultimately, it is with the goal of enabling continued U.S. engagement around the world to support our own national interests that we offer our findings and recommendations regarding the terrorist attacks in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11, 2012. The men and women who serve our country in dangerous posts deserve no less.

Mr. President, I thank the chairman for his extraordinary work on this very important project.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, first, I thank both of my colleagues for their diligent work. They committed themselves to this work, and I appreciate it. They keep us all informed.

(The remarks of Mr. MANCHIN pertaining to the introduction of (S. 3714) are located in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

INCREASING AMERICAN JOBS THROUGH GREATER EXPORTS TO AFRICA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise with the intention of asking consent for the immediate consideration of passage of S. 2215, the Increasing American Jobs Through Greater Exports to Africa Act that I have introduced in the Senate with Senators BOOZMAN, COONS, CARDIN, and LANDRIEU. It is being sponsored and led in the House of Representatives by Congressman CHRIS SMITH and Congresswoman KAREN BASS.

It is a straightforward and bipartisan bill that tackles a very serious problem by specifically making sure that American companies have the ability to compete in the growing African market. Economists have called this the next frontier, and it is hungry for American goods and services. It is also a market that others are competing for too often at the expense of American businesses, American employees, American products, and American values.

China, in particular, has an aggressive strategy to help its companies invest in Africa, leaving a troubling footprint across the continent of its economic, labor, environmental, and governance values and standards. The loss to American workers and American influence on the continent is enormous and inexcusable. That is why we introduced this bill to make sure a senior administration official brings desperately needed coordination and leadership to the U.S. export strategies in Africa. It also makes sure the various agencies, such as the Department of Commerce, the Export-Import Bank, the Department of State, and others are fully engaged in helping foster U.S. investment in Africa.

For months we have been working with various committees of the House and Senate on this effort. I want to notably thank JOHN KERRY of Massachusetts and Senator DICK LUGAR of Indiana for seeing its unanimous support through the Foreign Relations Subcommittee was secure—as well as the Banking and Financing Committees for their help in allowing us to go forward.

The bill cleared the hotline on the Democratic side some time ago, and we worked with a number of our Republican colleagues to address many legitimate concerns. So imagine my disappointment at this closing hour when I learned that there is a new Republican hold blocking this bill at the very last minute.

Mr. President, you have been to Africa. You know what we are facing. This is a continent which is emerging in the 21st century in a way that we never imagined. It is surprising to some to learn that when they try to project forward where the economic growth in the world will occur in the next 10 or 20 years, 60 percent of that growth will be in Africa. Many people still view it in a stereotypical context of some backward continent of people with limited resources and limited ability. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Africa is going to emerge in the 21st century. The question is, Will the United States be there as a trading partner sharing not only our goods and services but our values? We ought to take heed to the fact that the Chinese are there, and their role is growing. If we step back and allow the Chinese to master this continent at our expense, we will pay for it for generations. They will literally have ensconced themselves in this economy in so many different ways.

Currently, they are making what they call concessional loans, which means discount loans. If they want to build a stadium in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, go see the Chinese. If they need to borrow $100,000 or $100 million, whatever it happens to be, they will give it to them. They just need to pay them back 70 percent of what they borrowed—only 70 percent. How could the Ethiopians say no?

Then the Chinese say: On one condition; the contractor is going to be from China and at least half of the employees will be Chinese employees, as will the engineering firm, the agricultural firm, and all of the different agencies of the private sector that come in to build this stadium. Then when it is finished, they don't leave. They stick around to bid on the next project. They become an integral part of the economy of that nation at the expense of the United States.

What should we do about it? Nothing? After hearing this story in Ethiopia, I came back and gathered the American agencies that promote exports to Africa. It turned out there were a half dozen of them. They were glad to see one another. They don't get together that often. I asked them what they were doing. They said they each have concerns, and they are doing a little of this and a little of that but no coordination.

How many speeches have we heard about the waste of government and taxpayer dollars because of the fumbling and uncoordinated effort by our government. That is why I introduced this bill to avoid that.

The purpose of this bill is to dramatically increase exports to Africa, to use existing resources at existing agencies to achieve it, and to make sure that at the end of the day we create more jobs in America and more businesses successfully exporting goods and services to that great continent. At the end of the day, the Africans will have quality products, goods, and services, and there will be more jobs in the United States. What is wrong with that equation? Obviously, there is at least one Senator who thinks it is a bad idea, and he has put a hold on this bill after I spent months working to clear it through all of the committees in the hopes that we could have this bipartisan bill.

This is a bill that is supported and sponsored by Republican subcommittee chairman CHRIS SMITH over in the House of Representatives. This is supposed to be what we are about—to come up with a bipartisan effort, an effort that will create jobs in America, coordinate existing agencies, and open new markets for America's goods and services that will benefit every State in the Union. That is what I set out to do.

I am so close to getting it done. One Senator is going to object. It is unfortunate after all of the work we put into this that they would stop this bill. I hope the Senator will reconsider his position. I have an official request that I am going to make at this point.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 536, S. 2215; that the committee-reported substitute amendment be withdrawn; the Durbin substitute amendment which is at the desk be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements relating to this measure be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I wish to make just a couple observations and explain why I am going to object.

First, for the record to be clear, it is my understanding this measure—and there is no question the Senator from Illinois has put a great deal of work into this. All his motives are absolutely commendable and legitimate. The measure itself, I believe, has not gone through a markup in the Banking Committee. There are many Members who have serious concerns about this particular bill for which the unanimous consent request is being made.

More broadly, about the Ex-Im Bank—in fact, I would argue this bill and this unanimous consent request puts a light on one of the concerns many of us have with the Ex-Im Bank in the first place. Let's remember what the Ex-Im Bank is. This is a taxpayer subsidy for large corporations to export products. I am a big fan of trade. I am a big fan of exports. I am not a fan of taxpayers having to subsidize the activity, and some of us, myself very much included, believe it ought to be a very high priority of this and any other administration to work for the mutual end of these taxpayer-subsidized export vehicles all around the world. They exist in other places as well, and that is the excuse that is usually given for why we have to also subsidize our corporations on their exports. I don't think that is a very good argument. I would certainly prefer to see a broad curtailment and eventually the end of this process; whereby, Europeans and Asians and Americans all engage in this flawed policy of subsidizing their respective corporations' export efforts.

Here is what happens with this bill, and this is exactly the kind of thing that happens when the government sets up a political venture to engage in economic activity. It gets politicized. Someone comes along with perfectly good motives and good intentions and decides there is some category of activity that is more important than other categories of activity. In this case, it is a geographical prioritization that the Senator from Illinois wishes to make by requiring a certain amount of business be transacted in Africa. I suspect there are people in this body and in other places who would make similarly persuasive arguments that there are places in Asia that ought to get this special treatment which the Senator from Illinois is recommending, and there are other people who would suggest maybe it shouldn't be a geographically based preference, but it ought to be a product line-based preference or it ought to be driven by the number of American workers who are involved in whatever it is that is being exported.

I can imagine all kinds of export criteria by which political forces could decide that the Ex-Im Bank ought to have special treatment in special categories, all of which simply distorts the normal market activities that would actually optimize exports, economic growth, and job creation.

So despite all the good intentions and the hard work done by the Senator from Illinois, I think this specific policy would be a mistake. More broadly, I think we are not yet on the right path of curtailing the taxpayer obligation for these export subsidies.

For that reason, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to clarify a few things. The Parliamentarian referred the bill to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It was reported favorably by that committee. It was referred to the Senate Banking Committee, but I made a point with Senator BOOZMAN, our colleague on the Republican side, of taking this bill to the Banking Committee, which clearly shows this is not an attempt to go around this committee. I have the greatest respect for the Members of the Banking Committee on both sides and we have done our best to work with them.

Secondly, this argument that we have to get out of the business of having government support for business activity is a naive argument. Let me give just a couple numbers to reflect on, when it comes to the future of our chances of American businesses working successfully to export to Africa.

Right now, the Export-Import Bank of the United States has supplied the support of about $1 trillion in 2011 for all exports to Africa. Some of these are guarantees on loans. Some of them allow for lower interest rates because the guarantees do exist. But let me tell my colleagues what is happening with the Chinese at the same time. While we are putting in $1 trillion in Africa, the Chinese are putting in $12 trillion. Who is going to win that competition? When it is all over, who will win that competition? By a margin of 12 to 1 the Chinese will win it. Many of those who say they support business and new jobs for America basically want to abandon the field and walk away from it. They want to let the Chinese take it away: We are going to play free market, that is all; no government involvement. We are just going to have a flatout arms' length transaction with these countries—and we will end up with fewer jobs in America, fewer exports to Africa, fewer businesses working on that continent.

Some people say: Why did you pick Africa? Of all the places, we could have picked Asia or all these different places. When we take a look at the indicators, the African Continent is undergoing a period of rapid growth and middle-class development that most Americans aren't even aware of. In the year 2000, 6.7 percent of the population of Africa had access to the Internet. Talk about the Dark Ages: 6.7 percent, in 2000. By 2009, it had grown from 6.7 percent to 27.1 percent of the population with access to the Internet. Seventy-eight percent of Africa's rural population now has access to clean water. Our images of a backward continent are just plain wrong. Our opportunities are unlimited but not if we ignore the reality. The Chinese are going to outthink us and outwork us and we are going to lose and we will ultimately say: We are pure of heart. We are not going to have our government in this. The Chinese may want to do it. We will just give up the jobs that could have come to America. We will give up the opportunity for businesses to export to Africa from the United States. What a terrible outcome that is. It truly is shortsighted. It argues for a good economic theory but one that doesn't reflect the reality of the world we live in today.

After all these months of hard work by a bipartisan group of Senators and Congressmen, we come down to one objection. That is how the Senate works. I know it and I respect it. Each Senator has a right to make an objection. I wish to applaud my colleague from Pennsylvania for coming to the floor and saying it in his own words. Many times this is done in secrecy without any disclosure of who is behind a hold or an objection, and I salute the Senator from Pennsylvania for his honesty in coming to the floor, even though we obviously disagree on this important issue.

THE FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is hard to imagine we are a little over 24 hours away from going over the so-called fiscal cliff, which occurs at midnight on December 31—tomorrow. This cliff is self-imposed. It is a penalty we voted for if we fail to deal with the deficit our Nation faces. Unfortunately, as of this moment, we have not reached an agreement to avoid it. I haven't given up hope. Conversations and negotiations continue all through this day and I am sure into tomorrow, and I hope by the end of tomorrow night we can celebrate the end of this year and the beginning of a new year with good news for the American people.

This is exactly the wrong time for us to go over this cliff. We are in the midst of an economic recovery. We are seeing new job creation. Businesses are seeing new growth. We are seeing the kind of economic indicators we have been waiting for, for years. Going over the cliff is going to bring uncertainty to our markets and, with that uncertainty, a pullback in consumer confidence and a reduction, I am afraid, in business activity and in the creation of new jobs.

There are sensible ways to avoid it. The President has suggested one. In addition to spending cuts, we need to increase revenue to reduce our deficit. The President said let's have the tax rates which applied during the Clinton administration—a time of great economic expansion—apply to those making over $250,000 a year. That is only 2 percent of the population, but it generates hundreds of billions of dollars in savings over a 10-year period of time. There has been resistance from the