

Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 28, 2013, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled "Addressing FHA's Financial Condition and Program Challenges, Part II."

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

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 28, 2013, at 10:30 a.m., in room 215 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "Delivery System Reform: Progress Report from CMS."

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 28, 2013, at 10 a.m., in SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct an executive business meeting.

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

COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Rules and Administration be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 28, 2013.

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

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 28, 2013, at 10 a.m., in room SD-G50 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 28, 2013, at 2:30 p.m.

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I see our distinguished majority leader on the floor. I will yield to him.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I appreciate very much my friend from Iowa allowing me to proceed.

I would just note for the record that I have only had two U.S. Senators visit me in my home in Searchlight. He is one of them.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that on Monday, March 4, 2013, at 5 p.m., the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations: Calendar Nos. 15 and 16; that there be 30 minutes for debate equally divided in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on the nominations in the order listed; that the motions 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 President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S. RES. 64

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that on Tuesday, March 5, at a time to be determined by the majority leader, after consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 20, S. Res. 64; that the only amendment in order to the resolution be a Paul amendment striking provisions relative to the National Security Working Group; that there be up to 30 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form on the Paul amendment; that upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate proceed to vote on the Paul amendment; that upon disposition of the Paul amendment, the Senate proceed to vote on adoption of the resolution, as amended, if amended.

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

APPOINTMENT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, pursuant to Public Law 94-304, as amended by Public Law 99-7, appoints the following Senator as a member of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki) during the 113th Congress: the Honorable ROGER WICKER of Mississippi.

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, MARCH 4, 2013

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate complete its business today, it adjourn until 2 p.m. on Monday, March 4, 2013; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; and that following any leader remarks, the Senate proceed to a period

of morning business until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak up to 10 minutes each; further, that following morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session under the previous order.

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

PROGRAM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, there will be up to two rollcall votes on confirmation of the Chen and Failla nominations, both U.S. district judge nominees for New York.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. REID. Madam President, there being no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that following the statement of the distinguished Senator from Iowa, Mr. HARKIN, the Senate stand adjourned under the previous order.

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

The Senator from Iowa.

SEQUESTRATION

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, we are now on the eve of the so-called sequester. Tomorrow, March 1, Federal agencies will begin making \$85 billion in arbitrary, destructive budget cuts—cuts that economists tell us will damage our fragile economy and cost nearly 1 million jobs. This is a shame and it is shameful. This is yet another self-inflicted wound to our economy, and it is completely unnecessary.

For months, President Obama and Democrats in Congress have urged Republicans to join with us in negotiating a balanced package of spending cuts and revenue increases to head off this sequester. Regrettably, we have run up against the same old response from our Republican colleagues: obstruction, obstruction, obstruction—an adamant refusal to compromise. They reject the very idea of a balanced approach, insisting that all deficit reduction must come exclusively from cuts to spending and investment. Since they have not gotten their way, they are now willing to allow all the destructive impacts of the sequester to happen.

Think about it, because it really is breathtaking. Republicans would rather allow our economy to lose up to a million jobs than to close a tax loophole that pays companies to move American jobs to foreign countries. They would rather risk jolting the economy back into recession than to close a tax loophole that allows hedge fund managers making hundreds of millions of dollars a year to pay a lower tax rate than middle-class families. It really is breathtaking.

I am deeply concerned about the arbitrary cuts to programs that undergird the middle class in this country—everything from medical research to

education to food and drug safety. Earlier this week, the Director of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Francis Collins, warned that the sequester would slash \$1.6 billion from NIH's budget, directly damaging ongoing research into cancer, Alzheimer's, and other diseases.

Funding for special education would also suffer deep cuts, eliminating Federal support for more than 7,200 teachers, aides, and other staff who support our students with disabilities.

Funding for food safety would be severely impacted, resulting in thousands of fewer inspections, a slowdown in meat processing, costing jobs and endangering the safety of the public. The Food Safety and Inspection Service may have to furlough all employees for approximately 2 weeks, which could close down or severely restrict meatpacking plants around the country.

The list of destructive budget cuts goes on and on, and what many people may not understand is that these are just the latest cuts to spending and investment.

Over the past 2 years, the President and Congress have already agreed to \$1.4 trillion in spending cuts, all from the discretionary side of the budget. These have been very dramatic spending reductions.

As I said earlier today, when we hear the Speaker of the House say: Well, since the first of the year, we have given on revenues but we have not had any spending cuts—he says: No more revenues, just spending cuts because we have already done the revenues—well, you see what he is doing is he is drawing an arbitrary starting line. His starting line is the first of this year. But you have to go back a year and a half to the Budget Control Act when, beginning with that, this Congress made \$1.4 trillion in spending cuts—\$1.4 trillion—and in January we did \$700 billion in revenues. So we are still \$2 in cuts for every \$1 in revenue. Yet the Speaker says we should have no more revenues, all spending cuts, to get up to our \$4 trillion that is needed to stabilize our debt in this country. So that means he wants to have another \$2.6—well, let me think about that; I have to add it up—it would be \$1.9 trillion more in spending cuts.

Think about that, and think about it in terms of just one area that I know about firsthand in my capacity as chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies. That subcommittee has jurisdiction over spending, for example, at the National Institutes of Health. Over the last 2 years, Congress has completely eliminated 65 programs under that jurisdiction, totaling \$1.3 billion. What that means is no more funding for education technology, \$100 million; no more funding for civic education, \$35 million; no more funding for creating smaller learning communities in high schools, another \$88 million.

LIHEAP, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, has been cut by \$1.6 billion. That is a 30-percent cut—a 30-percent cut. That cut eliminates home heating and cooling assistance for 1.5 million low-income and elderly households in this country. That has already been done. Now the Speaker wants to do more. Maybe he wants to eliminate the entire LIHEAP program.

The administration's signature education initiative, Race to the Top, has been cut by \$150 million. That is a 20-percent cut—already, a 20-percent cut. That is what we have done already. If we cut any more, you are really going to be destroying education initiatives in this country.

How about lead poisoning, childhood lead poisoning. It has been cut by 93 percent, from \$29 million a year down to \$2 million, meaning that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention no more has any funding to test children for lead poisoning. And we know that if you get kids early, you can stop the deteriorating effects of lead poisoning. But now we are not even going to be testing these kids anymore.

National programs to keep our schools safe and drug free have been cut by two-thirds, from \$191 million to \$65 million.

As I said, national programs that keep schools safe and drug free are cut by two-thirds. I wonder how many people know that. I wonder how many people know we cut that already by two-thirds.

Again, this list goes on and on with deep cuts to vital programs. I wish to emphasize, these are the cuts we have already made in the last 2 years. The sequester will cut them even further.

Fighting childhood lead poisoning, which we know continues on in this country, we know how it destroys kids and their future growth, and we know early intervention can alleviate that. Yet it has been cut by 93 percent. What are we going to do, cut it by another 7 percent? We just will not have any efforts at all to test kids for lead poisoning early on. The sequester will have very real consequences for the economy and for our society.

Finally, let me step back and put our discussion of this sequester in a broader perspective. By all means, we need to reduce deficits further, especially in the longer term. But I have questioned repeatedly the sort of obsessive, exclusive, almost borderline hysterical focus on budget deficits. Meanwhile, we are neglecting other urgent national priorities. How about the jobs deficit, the deficit in our investment in our infrastructure, the deficit in our investment in a strong, growing, middle class?

What we need is an approach to the budget that addresses all of these—reducing budget deficits, yes, but doing it in a way that allows us to strengthen the middle class and lay the foundation for future economic growth.

We also need to look at the demographic projectory of our country as

well as the challenges posed by globalization. Our Nation is growing older with the retiring baby boomers. This will dramatically increase government costs for health care and other services. We are also now in a global economy competing not only in manufacturing but also in a growing range of services, from telemarketing to the reading of medical MRIs. In order to compete successfully and keep quality jobs in the United States, we need to invest robustly both in a 21st century infrastructure, as well as in a system of education and training that equips our young people and workers for the jobs of the future.

In this broader context, what is the best way to address the resulting deficits? Do we just slash spending for education, slash spending for infrastructure, slash spending for research and discovery, sacrificing the investments we will need to grow our economy in the decades ahead? Do we just allow this destructive sequester to kick in, costing us jobs, cutting vital supports for middle-class Americans?

These are the destructive budget options which will take effect starting tomorrow if we fail to act. This is why I come to the floor, at the eleventh hour, to plead one final time for a compromise and common sense from Republicans. Yes, I am here to plead for some common sense, some compromise from Republican leadership.

There are plenty of areas where we can cut spending without seriously harming the economy. There are plenty of commonsense options for raising revenue without lifting tax rates or hurting the middle class.

It is still possible for Senators to come together, but that may only happen if we have some willingness to compromise on the Republican side.

When the Speaker says absolutely no more revenue, how do you compromise with that? We know from the polling data that the vast majority of the American people, 60, 70 percent, believe we should have a balanced approach, both in revenues and in cutting spending.

We have reached out our hand in an effort to shake hands with the Republicans. They have not reciprocated by reaching out their hand to close the deal.

It is still possible, but it is only possible if the other side is willing to make some compromises. Time is short. I urge colleagues to put ideology and this partisanship aside, stop this sequester, tackle these budget deficits in a way that allows us to invest in a growing economy and a stronger middle class.

A lot of people say if the sequester kicks in, people aren't going to feel it right away. Well, maybe not tomorrow night, maybe not even Saturday or Sunday. We will begin next week, when the Food Safety and Inspection Service starts furloughing people and we begin fewer inspections and maybe the week after that when our air traffic

controllers begin to be furloughed because they don't have enough money and air traffic begins to slow down in New York and Chicago and Washington, DC, and Atlanta.

It is always true that in times such as these, when we have these kinds of crises facing us, who gets hurt first and the most are the people at the bottom rung of the ladder, kids with disabilities, families who need some heating assistance in the middle of the winter, elderly people who may need some Meals On Wheels delivered to their homes.

These are always the people who get hit first and the hardest. We can't forget our societal obligations as a Con-

gress to make sure their needs are met also. We can't turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the needs of people in our society who don't have anything anyway. We can't throw them out in the cold. We can't let our children be denied Head Start programs or adequate child care programs. This is not befitting a great and wonderful society such as America.

I am hopeful with a meeting in the White House tomorrow—as I know it is not just a photo opportunity—we will hear from the Speaker of the House that, yes, we need a balanced approach, and we are willing to take that balanced approach. If they do that, we can

get this settled within the next few days and then move ahead.

So that is my hope for tomorrow. And I hope, again, we will see some forthcoming on the part of Republicans that they are indeed willing to compromise.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY,
MARCH 4, 2013, AT 2 P.M.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 2 p.m. on Monday.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:31 p.m., adjourned until Monday, March 4, 2013, at 2 p.m.