

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY
LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader is recognized.

THE BUDGET

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, last week I noted that the Senate Democratic budget was one of the most extreme, most unbalanced pieces of legislation we have ever seen, one that would never balance, ever, and one that would have a devastating outcome on the middle class.

I said that its centerpiece is a \$1.5 trillion tax hike that would be the largest in American history. Some on the other side have argued with this \$1.5 trillion figure. They say their budget only contains a \$1 trillion tax hike, which is a stunning and telling admission in itself. Just months after Democrats got hundreds of billions in new taxes, they now freely admit their intention to hit Americans with another \$1 trillion in tax hikes. But in reality, it would be more than that since their budget envisions \$1.5 trillion in new revenue. While the Democrats' math may be fuzzy, their intentions are unmistakable. Their massive tax hike would cost average middle-class families thousands in lost income and lost opportunity. And despite that massive hit to working families, the Democrats' budget would still not ever—ever—balance.

But that is just one of the reasons this budget is so destructive to the middle class. Take spending for example. Americans know that a good way to create jobs and increase economic growth is to balance the budget and put our massive national debt on a path to elimination. Yet the Senate Democratic budget would actually increase spending by more than \$½ trillion—increase spending by \$½ trillion.

Put another way, Democrats want to take another \$½ trillion out of the economy, on top of all of the money they would take out with their tax increase, and put it in the hands of Washington bureaucrats and politicians to spend or waste as they see fit. And their budget would balloon the debt by 42 percent, increasing every Americans' share to a whopping \$73,000. They want to grow the government at the expense of the economy, and that is not the way to create jobs or get the private sector moving. In fact, by some estimates, this budget could result in more than 600,000 lost jobs if enacted.

Of course, the Senate Democratic budget won't prevent Medicare and Social Security from going bankrupt. It is not going to prevent Medicare and Social Security from going bankrupt.

So here is what we would get with the Democratic budget: No. 1, a massive tax hike and thousands less for middle-class families—a massive tax hike; No. 2, \$½ trillion more in big-government spending; No. 3, 42 percent more debt, with each American owing \$73,000; No. 4, more than 600,000 lost jobs.

Here is what we won't get: We won't get balance, just more and more unbalanced tax hikes. We won't get the kind of deficit reduction our country needs, just more spending to enrich the Washington establishment at the expense of Main Street. We won't get more jobs or a better economy or sensible reforms to prevent Medicare or Social Security from going bankrupt. And we certainly won't get a balanced budget.

Not only does the Senate Democratic budget never balance—ever—but top Washington Democrats now say they simply don't care about balancing the budget anymore. They just don't care about that. Well, Americans do care. A party that once cared about hard-working American families seems to have gone off the leftmost edge of the reservation with this budget. DC Democrats' priorities are just so far removed from the actual needs of middle-class Kentuckians and Americans who continue to struggle in the Obama economy.

I appreciate that the Senate majority has finally decided to put its ideas on paper. It took 4 years—4 years—to get a budget from them, and we now know why it took so long: because their ideas are so unbalanced and so extreme, so destructive to the economy Americans want us to fix.

We can help foster the conditions necessary to make the economy healthier and create more jobs but only if Washington Democrats finally reach across the aisle to address America's real concerns in a truly balanced way. I hope that will ultimately happen because it is time to start making divided government work for the American people who elected it, and it is time to grow the economy, not the government.

PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this week President Obama will travel to two of our closest allies—Israel and Jordan. His visit will come at a moment of great importance for each of our governments.

I join in conveying a message of congratulations to Prime Minister Netanyahu in having formed a new government, in restating our determination to use all available means to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, and in pledging to work with Israel to meet the regional challenge caused by civil strife within Syria. The fighting in Syria has produced refugee flows of at least 1 million people into Iraq, Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon. Also of concern to Jordan, Israel, and other allies in the region is the flow of foreign fighters into Syria, especially the al-Nusra Front.

During his visit, I hope the President makes progress in working with our allies to address these threats that have developed while Bashar al-Asad remains in power and to begin the important planning to address the challenges that will come with his fall, such as how best to secure chemical weapons stockpiles.

None of these threats or challenges can be addressed with simple, easy answers, but I fully support America working with Prime Minister Netanyahu and King Abdallah to craft original strategy that serves all of our national interests.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss something of deep importance to me and, I believe, to our country.

Last night the majority leader of the Senate came to the floor to speak on the continuing resolution, which is essentially the only bill we will consider this year to fund the government. It is over \$1 trillion in taxpayer money. He came to the floor and propounded a unanimous consent request that only contained a handful of amendments that could be brought to the continuing resolution. Many germane and, in my view, reasonable amendments that had been advanced and brought to the attention of both sides well in advance were denied an opportunity for a vote on the floor. Because of that, I objected to the consideration of the continuing resolution and the unanimous consent request.

Frankly, I think that when we are spending over \$1 trillion in the only funding bill we are going to vote on, essentially, this year—appropriations bill—we should be allowed to have votes on amendments, particularly germane amendments, as many of my colleagues have had, and my own amendment, which is one that would strike funding for, essentially, a missile to nowhere, which will never produce a missile program or a product our military will ever be able to use.

My amendment is very straightforward. The amendment would strike funding for the Medium Extended Air Defense System Program, called the MEADS Program, by \$381 million—These funds were appropriated for this program—and would actually transfer the funds to the operations and maintenance portion of the defense budget so the money could be used for our men and women in uniform for things they actually need as opposed to \$380 million for a missile to nowhere for which we will never get a result.

When we are almost \$17 trillion in debt, it is truly shocking that we would continue to spend money on a program the Army says it does not want. In fact, in the Defense authorization last year, the Armed Services Committee actually prohibited funding for the MEADS Program. This is something that was passed unanimously on a bipartisan basis last year in the Defense authorization bill that prohibited any further funding for this missile to nowhere. Yet it got included in the appropriations, in this continuing resolution, despite the fact that we are not going to get anything our warfighters can use from \$380 million of spending.

In fact, when Secretary Hagel was asked about whether the Pentagon

would comply with this law, he said: Yes. Let's just review where we are with this program. The Army has already invested over \$2 billion for this program, and we are not going to get a result. It was underperforming.

So according to John McHugh, the Secretary of the Army, in 2011, he said:

The Army has invested over \$2 billion and that's only the partial cost of the program. Frankly, it was under performing.

What else has been said?

Frank Kendall, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology, said:

MEADS is a program that the U.S. decided not to procure a year ago. . . .

So why, when our country is facing sequestration, when our men and women in uniform need to make sure the defense dollars we are providing them are actually resources that they can use for their needs to protect them, to protect our country, are we spending \$380 million on something we will not procure, for which we will not get a result? To me, this is outrageous. If we cannot cut spending for this, how are we ever going to deal with the underlying drivers of our debt, with our nearly \$17 trillion of debt?

In fact, this is what the chairman of the Armed Services Committee has said. I have great respect for Chairman LEVIN, and he said this about the MEADS Program:

We feel strongly that it's a waste of money.

I stood up on the floor last night because I have bipartisan support for this amendment. This is not a Republican issue or a Democratic issue. This is about making sure we do not waste money at a time when our warfighters need the money for support and training, at the time they are facing sequestration and we are facing real threats to our country. We cannot afford to spend more money on a missile to nowhere.

So I am very proud I have bipartisan support from Senator BEGICH, Senator SHAHEEN. Yet it is shocking to me that I cannot get a vote—it is germane—that we cannot strike this funding or get a vote on this Senate floor to strike this funding from this continuing resolution and to make sure the funds actually go to the operations and maintenance portion of the defense budget so they can use this money, warfighters can use it for needs they actually have.

I also want to mention that the Council for Citizens Against Government Waste supports my amendment.

The CEO of Concerned Veterans for America has said: MEADS is the quintessential Pentagon program that lives on indefinitely despite the fact that it will never see the field of battle. With our Nation drowning in \$16.7 trillion worth of debt, Congress must undertake serious reforms to defense spending to maintain a sustainable fiscal path that preserves American power.

Concerned Veterans for America has supported this amendment.

Basically, this is common sense. This is the kind of thing people see at home and say: How could you possibly spend \$380 million on a missile to nowhere when we know our men and women in uniform can use those funds for equipment they can use in theater, for training they can use to be prepared?

It is really unconscionable that we will not allow a vote on the continuing resolution for something that has bipartisan support, for something that was actually struck by the authorization committee on both sides of the aisle, both in the House Armed Services Committee and in the Senate Armed Services Committee.

When the majority leader took to the floor last night, he said: Oh, we have made reasonable accommodations. I do not see what is reasonable about giving a handful of amendments with over \$1 trillion of spending.

On Wednesday, Senator MCCAIN brought forth an amendment—last Wednesday, so almost a week ago—he brought forth an amendment to strike other unauthorized funds from the continuing resolution and to leave those funds for the military to use for priority items and for things our men and women in uniform actually needed. Do you know what happened? There was a motion to table brought against Senator MCCAIN's amendment. Essentially what he was trying to do is what I am trying to do today—to stop money that has not been authorized, to stop spending money when our men and women in uniform need us to allow them to use these resources for the basic needs they have. That is why he brought this amendment to the floor. Do you know what happened? There was a motion to table filed against his amendment, and I think there was a real shock on the floor from both sides of the aisle because on a bipartisan basis that motion to table failed because both sides of the aisle realized that when we are facing sequestration, when we are facing a dangerous world, when we owe it to our men and women in uniform, we cannot continue to fund things that are not priorities, we cannot continue to fund missiles to nowhere. And that amendment was eventually adopted by voice vote. This amendment is just like that amendment.

The American people are tired of us not allowing commonsense amendments to come to the floor for a vote. With \$1 trillion in spending, if we had started voting on amendments last Wednesday, after the floor was shut down—and I think there was a shock among leadership that Senator MCCAIN won his amendment on a bipartisan basis and was able to overturn the motion to table his amendment. If we had started voting on amendments then, we would have already passed the continuing resolution. So it is an absolute cop-out to say that we are somehow faced with a government shutdown, that somehow we cannot have votes on the Senate floor on amendments that are important, germane, and relevant.

Before I yield, I wish to support my colleague JERRY MORAN because he was also denied an amendment that is an important amendment. I am a cosponsor of that amendment. The FAA has notified 189 towers across the country that it is going to cease to fund the towers' operation because of the sequester. Senator MORAN has a commonsense amendment that would make sure it restores 95 percent of this funding by taking money from other areas in the FAA budget that will not disrupt operations.

Well, there is a tower in Nashua, NH, at Boire Field that was on the list of the FAA despite the airport's importance to both the United States and New England and despite a recent investment of over \$24 million by the FAA to upgrade the airport's runway.

Senator MORAN's amendment, which he is also being denied an ability to bring on this floor to have both sides vote on—he has strong bipartisan support—this amendment would ensure that towers like the tower at Boire Field in Nashua, NH, my hometown, would continue to operate. Yet we will not be given a vote on this Senate floor despite the strong bipartisan support Senator MORAN has for his amendment, just as I have bipartisan support for my amendment.

So I have to ask, what is the problem? Why can't we just vote on the amendments—start voting, keep voting, get it done? We can pass the continuing resolution. We can continue to fund this government. But do you know what. We can make improvements to the continuing resolution by striking money for the missile to nowhere, by making sure the air towers that the FAA is shutting down continue to operate in this country.

I am sure my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have many more ideas as to how we can improve this continuing resolution, but the American people will never know about those ideas because we are on a Senate floor where we are not being allowed to vote, to vote on the amendments that matter to the American people, that strike wasteful spending, that improve this important piece of legislation.

I think if we had started voting last Wednesday, we would have already allowed every person in this Chamber to have a vote on their amendment, as the Senate was intended to operate. This is intended to be the most deliberative body in the world. Yet, if you cannot bring up an amendment that is germane to strike spending for a missile to nowhere, it really renders the operation of the Senate at this point not what the Founding Fathers intended, and it puts a gag on the American people; that their elected representatives cannot come here and get votes on things that are going to strike funding like this, that are going to make sure air towers continue to operate in this country.

I think we owe it to the American people that their elected representatives can come down here and get a

vote on amendments that matter, that make a difference, that can improve this continuing resolution. Frankly, this notion that we cannot have votes on it—obviously, people do not want to have votes on it. They want to continue funding missiles to nowhere, whether it is their parochial interests or whatever interests that are driving them. It is wrong. We have to stop it.

Bring this amendment to the Senate floor. Let's vote it up or down now, and let's move forward.

Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, we were originally looking today to begin the presentation of the budget that came out of the Budget Committee, produced by the Democratic majority. It passed on a party-line vote. It was drafted by the majority in secret. It was produced and brought to the floor.

I see the distinguished floor manager of the bill is on the floor today. I certainly have no intention of interrupting the Senator's debate, but I was using the opportunity to speak in morning business, if that is all right.

Under the Congressional Budget Act, we need to produce a budget by April 15. There are 50 hours allowed for debate and an ability to offer unlimited amendments to that most important document. That is where we are. I had hoped we would start today. Now it looks as though we have floor disputes and things are dragging out.

I want to say how this can be handled. If the floor debate is not shortened, I would suggest we could come back the week of April 8 and complete our work by April 15 easily. That would be my suggested way to deal with the most important issue we face as a Nation, our financial future and the debt course we are on. That would be the right thing to do. If the majority leader is determined to move forward even into the weekend, we will be here. We are not going to concede any of the time that is set aside for debate, because this is the first budget that has been to the floor of the Senate in almost 1,500 days, over 1,400 days—4 years. We need to talk about where we are, where we are going as a Nation. So I want to say there will be no yielding of time on this side with regard to the opportunity to discuss the financial future of America.

The American people need to know about this. It should be done publicly. They need to know the choices we are dealing with, how tough they are, but what an opportunity we do have to get

the country on a sound path without doing damage to the programs we value in America. We need an open process. The American people need to be engaged with it. But I have to say, it has absolutely been the policy of the majority in the Senate to do just the opposite. Senator REID said it would be "foolish" to have a budget. He has held that view for 4 years now.

The law requires us to have a budget by April 15. He has refused to do so because he did not want to be responsible for laying out a financial path for America. Those are the facts.

The House passed legislation that said: No budget, no pay. Now the Senate is moving forward with a budget, at least to get it out of the Senate and pass it out of the Senate, and then probably we will get paid.

It is important that the budget be moved. It should not be a pro forma act but a very serious evaluation of where we are. I want to say this to my colleagues as we confront the difficult choices facing our country: This is so important to me. I believe, based on a series of important studies in recent months, all of which having come to the same conclusion, that the debt level the United States has today is already pulling down economic growth. It is one of the reasons—maybe even the largest reason—that we have had such little economic growth.

Our debt to GDP ratio—the gross debt to GDP ratio—is over 100 percent. According to the Rogoff-Reinhart study that has been out there for a number of years, which was widely praised, which Secretary of Treasury Geithner told us was a very important study, and which maybe underestimated the risk our Nation faces, but has been universally praised—they say, when debt exceeds 90 percent of GDP, based on their studies of economies all over the world that have gotten into financial trouble, the result is a 1, maybe 2-percent drop in growth. The lack of growth of 1 percent represents 1 million jobs in America. So the difference between 2-percent growth and 3-percent growth is 1 million jobs. The difference of 2-percent growth and 4-percent growth is 2 million jobs, people unemployed, not getting work. Why? Because of the debt overhang that is out there, for a whole lot of factors too complex for us to discuss at this moment, but which are out there that begin to pull down growth.

So one of the reasons we need to decrease deficits in America and balance the budget is to create growth, create jobs, and create prosperity, whereas my Democratic colleagues contend the way to create jobs and create growth is to borrow more money and spend it on a stimulus package. In fact, they have got another stimulus package in the bill they passed out of the Budget Committee, another tax, another borrow-and-spend plan, \$100-plus billion.

This is a big difference in where we are. We cannot keep borrowing, to spend, to create some temporary sugar

high. It all rubs off in the end. There are the studies out there. I mentioned Rogoff-Reinhart. That has been out several years and has been a topic of great discussion among economists and throughout the field. But in recent months, the International Monetary Fund, certainly not controlled by frugal Republicans, the European Central Bank, and the Bank for International Settlements, all have independently done studies. And those studies say that debt begins to slow growth. That is what they conclude—that debt slows growth.

Now if that is true, we have a problem, because they say you can carry a certain amount of debt and it does not slow growth, but if your debt reaches 90 percent of your economy, at least according to Rogoff and Reinhart and the numbers they were using—and, by the way, they were using gross debt, it is absolutely clear in their papers, and not the public debt—then you have slow economic growth.

Let us take a minute to discuss growth in public debt. The public debt is external debt of the United States and it is about 76 percent of our economy. The size of our growth of public debt amounts to almost the size of the economy—three-fourths of it. But if you take the gross debt of the United States, including borrowing from Social Security and Medicare and things like that, it is over 100 percent. What I want to say to you is that people have misinterpreted the Rogoff-Reinhart study over the last several years. They thought the debt figure they were referring to was the public debt.

The \$16 trillion we see on the debt clocks that show how it is increasing every year—the \$16 trillion, almost \$17 trillion now in debt—that is the gross debt, and it is over 100 percent of the economy. And they say growth slows every time—it slows relentlessly—we as a Nation run up too much debt and it gets that high. So the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank, the Bank for International Settlements may come at it slightly differently, but they all conclude that when debt levels reach as high as we have in the United States, growth slows.

Jobs are lost when growth slows, tax revenue is lost when growth slows, and people are not going to pay taxes if they are not working. Businesses that are not making profits are not going to pay taxes. If businesses are not expanding, not growing, not investing, not hiring, the economy is hampered and the tax revenue to the Federal Government is less, as a matter of fact. But most importantly, people are not working, jobs are not being created, and more people are on welfare. More people are dependent on the government—unemployment insurance—and that is not good.

Are we making some progress? Yes, we are making some progress. The economy had virtually no growth in the fourth quarter of last year—a stunning development. They are predicting

a slow growth the first quarter of this year. Last year we were well below predictions. Last year our growth, I believe, was about 2.2 percent. Two years before that, the Congressional Budget Office predicted growth for last year would be around 4 percent. They were predicting 2 years ago that growth for 2013 would be over 4 percent, maybe 4.6 percent. That is what the prediction was. But now, as we enter 2013, it looks as if we will be lucky to get much over 2 percent growth.

I am not saying I know with an absolute certainty that the debt is the factor they have to consider when they calculate our growth out of this recession. I don't know for sure. But I am telling you that Rogoff-Reinhart, the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank, the Bank for International Settlements—all of those—have concluded when debt is as high as we have in the United States it will slow growth. So I ask: What should we do to get America on a sound path to increase growth at a time we are discussing the budget? We should balance the budget and get on a course to reduce the debt significantly, and we should do it now. If we get that back down, which we can do, we will see more growth. We will see more jobs.

The idea that we should keep borrowing from the future to spend today in order to create growth only has to be said to understand how bogus it is, how irresponsible it is. Why don't we borrow three times as much and spend three times as much if this puts us on a sound path? It doesn't. It weakens us.

The Congressional Budget Office said—when this Congress, and not with my vote, voted for \$787 billion for the stimulus package—yes, if you borrow \$787 billion from the future and spend it today, you will get economic growth for a few years, but it quickly goes away. The money has been spent. The little lift in the economy is over very quickly. What is left then? CBO now estimates that we are carrying a total of \$830 billion, plus interest, from the stimulus, so now we are at \$1 trillion in new debt that we have to pay interest on every year and the growth benefit is long gone.

Now hear this, colleagues: Back when the President took office and he pushed through the stimulus package, they said over a 10-year period we would have less growth if we had a stimulus package than if we didn't have a stimulus package. Did you hear that, my colleagues? That is so important for us to understand. You cannot get something from nothing. Nothing comes from nothing. Nothing ever could, as Julie Andrews sang in the "Sound of Music." Nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever could.

So we borrow the money and spend it today and it is always with us unless we have a plan to pay down the debt, and we have no plan. So already we are about at the point where all the benefits of that stimulus of 3 years ago are gone and we are beginning to have the

burden of carrying the debt indefinitely. I think the American people understand that. The people who don't understand that are the Paul Krugmans and the people who have been driving the agenda in the Senate and in this Congress to borrow and spend. We have to get our heads together on that subject.

Finally, I will point out that the budget that has been produced is totally promoted improperly. This budget came out of the committee, and it claims it reduces the deficit by \$1.85 trillion, but that is not accurate. It took me a long time, and I had to stay on the staff people for the Democratic majority, but eventually, when confronted with the facts, they had to tell the truth and they told the truth. The sequester cuts—that 60 percent of the Budget Control Act we agreed to 18, 20 months ago—is wiped out. Those cuts are eliminated. But they were really not cuts. They were reductions in growth of spending. But that reduction saved us about \$2.1 trillion, and the sequester part is \$1.2 trillion. So that is the \$1.2 trillion that is wiped out. That means we are going to increase spending \$1.2 trillion, and it is not scored in their budget as an increase in spending to offset the \$1 trillion in tax increases they have.

When you consider all of that, you will find this budget, with other gimmicks included in it, barely reduces the deficit at all—at best, maybe by \$300 billion. And over 10 years that amounts to about \$30 billion or \$40 billion in deficit reduction a year, when last year our deficit was \$1.2 trillion.

So this budget plan increases taxes, it increases spending over our current rate, and it does nothing to change the debt course of America. We need a plan that can balance the budget. We can do that and still increase spending every year. It will balance in 10 years if we stay disciplined, but that is not the plan on the floor right now. Our colleagues need to study this budget and should not be voting for a plan that makes no change in our debt course, that does not create growth, but simply borrows more.

I see my colleague, the Democratic whip, I will call him, on the floor, but I appreciate the opportunity to share these remarks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank my friend for yielding.

Earlier today my colleague from New Hampshire, Senator AYOTTE, came to the floor and spoke about the Medium Air Defense System known as MEADS. This is a program the United States has been developing for air defense with our NATO allies, so U.S. taxpayers are truly investing in this program, but our allies are as well.

I am new to this assignment as chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, and I don't take any pleasure in what I am about to say, but

it is a fact and we have to put the facts out before the American people. As we started developing this system, we reached the point where we concluded, the Department of Defense concluded, it wouldn't work. That happens. Some of the greatest ideas turn out not to be feasible, and that is where we are at this point. The question that has been raised by Senator AYOTTE is: Well, if it doesn't work, why do you want to finish the research on it this year?

That is a legitimate question, and the vast majority of Americans would say: Of course, she is right, don't spend another penny on it. The problem is this: We entered into an agreement with our allies that if we terminated the program, there would be penalties assessed to the United States that we would owe to other nations that participated in funding the research, and it turns out the amount of money needed to finish the program is about equal to the penalties we would pay if we terminated it at this moment.

So we have tried to make the best of a very bad situation. The Department of Defense Appropriations Act for 2013 includes \$380 million—a reduction of \$20 million from the original request—for the Department to bring an orderly close to the Medium Air Defense System by either completing the development program or paying the termination.

This is a NATO program, as I said, that we jointly developed with the Germans and Italians. All of us thought this was a good idea and a good investment. It wasn't until we got into it that we realized it wasn't going to do what we thought it would do. The Department determined it would not procure MEADS but has requested funds for the rest of the year to conclude the program to live up to the agreement with our allies, who have also put money into this. The Department does plan to use the advanced technology we did develop here to upgrade other systems. So it is not a complete waste. And it shouldn't be because the taxpayers have their tax dollars on the line.

I share the frustration of many of my colleagues that we have spent so much money and so many years and have reached this point. But I will tell you, we don't want to build a system that doesn't work. We don't want to create false security. And we do want some honesty from those who are developing these systems if, in fact, something we have spent money on is not going to reach its completion.

The cost to finish the development of this program is almost exactly the same as the cost to unilaterally terminate it—a point not made by the Senator from New Hampshire.

She argues about all the savings from these programs in terminating it but doesn't talk about the termination costs we are liable for as a result of that termination. It is unrealistic to assume that you can terminate a major defense program with our allies and walk away without some obligation.

For example, when the Army's Future Combat Systems Program was terminated, the Department was legally obligated to pay over \$500 million in termination liability. In return, we received several technologies that were incorporated into other programs. The same applies to MEADS but only if we fulfill our obligations and pay the termination liability. The Defense appropriations bill is fiscally responsible by providing the funding to the Army to bring this program to an orderly close instead of levying another bill on the Department in times of fiscal constraint.

I urge my colleagues, if the Ayotte amendment does come to the floor, to oppose it—not because I am asking them to vote for a program which we are in agreement is never going to reach the goal it was set out to reach but, rather, let's be honest about this. We are going to pay this money one way or the other. The Army has said, Give us the option to complete the program or pay the termination fee. That to me is a more reasonable approach.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD statements and letters from a variety of different sources, including the Department of Defense, on this program.

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

MINISTERO DELLA DIFESA AND
BUNDESMINISTERIUM DER
VERTEIDIGUNG.

Hon. LEON E. PANETTA,
Secretary of Defense,
Washington, DC.

Thank you for your continued support of the MEADS program. As you are fully aware of the present situation surrounding the MEADS Program, you will know that Germany and Italy have grave concerns about the outcome of the MEADS funding discussion in the USA. This is, unfortunately, not a new situation.

The results of the Design and Development (D&D) phase of the MEADS program remain vital for both Germany and Italy as they will be the basis for our future Air and Missile Defense System Architecture. As such they are fundamental for the German and Italian contribution to the "NATO integrated Air and Missile Defense", which is a key element of the Defense package agreed in Chicago by our heads of State and Government.

As Germany and Italy have been fulfilling their full commitments under the MoU, we hope and we do expect that the United States will live up to their MoU commitment as well. If the US does not fulfill its funding commitment for 2013, Germany and Italy would need to interpret this as a unilateral withdrawal. Under the terms of the MoU, Germany and Italy expect formal notification of the US intent to withdraw from the MoU (while funding up to the effective date of the withdrawal). In addition funding for all contract modification and termination costs incurred as a result of the US actions shall be paid by the United States.

We assure you, that this is not negligible. In a first estimate the current US position results in an economic damage to Germany and Italy of more than 400 Mio. US\$. This is a result of development activities, which cannot be executed due to the missing FY 2013 US funding and the termination liability for terminating those contracts earlier.

In addition, there are wider implications of the US withdrawing or breaking the MoU and this would set a bad precedent for future transatlantic cooperation in principle. In particular one result would need to be the reconsideration of multinational cooperation in the context of NATO's SMART Defense initiative. After the Canadian withdrawal from the NAEW&C and AGS programs, the current US position would represent the second evidence in one year of the lack of reliability and as such would set a bad precedent for future transatlantic cooperation in principle.

It should be of common interest not to risk the prominent and significant merits of continued transatlantic co-operation and collaboration between our nations. We rely on your intervention to ensure the timely and full availability of 2013 funds by the end of March 2013 (with no prohibition on expenditure of MEADS funds) so as not to disrupt harvesting of MEADS capabilities in order to enable future meaningful European contribution for NATO Air and Missile defense.

The three Nations' investments have been very fruitful to date, which included a successful 360 degree intercept mission in November 2012. We are in the final year of funding under this MoU and not funding this effort would put in jeopardy all of the significant investment made to date by our countries. After the restructuring MEADS has executed on schedule and within budget for more than 4 years now, which is remarkable in particular given the situation of the program after the US decision not to procure MEADS.

The successful completion of the MEADS activities should be in our common interests for a large variety of reason. The FY 2013 funds of the US are a prerequisite to achieve this goal.

Thank you for your leadership and support on this important defense and transatlantic issue.

Yours truly,

Il Ministro della Difesa,
Bundesminister der
Verteidigung.

EMBASSY OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC
OF GERMANY, WASHINGTON, AND
EMBASSY OF ITALY IN WASH-
INGTON,

Washington, January 29, 2013.

Hon. BARBARA A. MIKULSKI,
Chairwoman, Committee on Appropriations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM CHAIRWOMAN, First, let us warmly congratulate you on assuming the chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee. We wish you all the best in steering this important committee through all the challenges that lie ahead.

Among the many issues and decisions to be taken is one at the very center of transatlantic relationships, the future of the Medium Extended Air Defense System (MEADS). This joint development program has brought together three close NATO allies to provide their forces with state-of-the-art technology to meet future threats. The program has achieved important milestones, including a successful intercept test in November 2012.

Italy and Germany have met their MoU obligations by contributing more than 40 percent of the necessary funding for the program since it has started in 2004. A final decision by the U.S. Government to prohibit further funding for MEADS at this advanced stage would lead to a significant loss of technology for which we have commonly worked so hard. It would also be perceived as a serious setback for transatlantic cooperation in general.

The U.S. Department of Defense has acknowledged this fact and requested further

funding for MEADS in fiscal year 2013 to meet its international commitment and also to put itself and its partners in a position to harvest the technologies in which we have all significantly invested.

As the debate on an appropriations bill for the Department of Defense in 2013 continues, we greatly appreciate your consideration of these aspects.

In concluding, we would like to stress that both our governments continue to assume that all parties will ultimately abide by the agreement.

Sincerely,

DR. PETER AMMON,
Ambassador of the
Federal Republic of
Germany.

CLAUDIO BISOGNIERO,
Ambassador of Italy.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

Washington, DC, September 19, 2012.

Hon. DANIEL K. INOUE,
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I concur with Secretary Panetta's letter of June 26 and support, within the Department of Defense budget allocation, funding the final year of Medium Extended Air Defense System (MEADS) development that includes key demonstrations, completion of documentation, and an orderly close of a program of significant importance to two of our important European allies, Germany and Italy. While we are encouraged by the recent Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee action recommending \$380 million in fiscal year 2013 funding for MEADS, we recognize this development will need to be reconciled with other Congressional actions.

Honoring our commitment for the final year of the MEADS "Proof of Concept" would signal the U.S. commitment to working with allies to cooperatively develop capabilities required for the challenges facing the NATO Alliance. Commitment of U.S. funds would enable and further encourage our European partners to make additional contributions to NATO missile defense. Failing to provide the final year of funding when we are so close to completion would send the wrong message to all of our allies and partners at a time when the global situation requires more, not less, cooperation.

The United States relies on our NATO allies to share the burden of defense of NATO territory and peacekeeping in coalition activities. Difficult domestic budget and economic situations make it imperative for allies to consider ways to work together to maintain and build new capabilities to defend against modern threats, like the proliferation of ballistic missiles. These are vital capabilities that many allies can only obtain if they work together to develop and acquire them. We made a commitment to two of our closest allies, Germany and Italy, to develop MEADS cooperatively, share development costs, and realize integrated coalition capabilities. It is critical that we honor our commitments.

At the NATO Summit in Chicago, allies declared an interim missile defense capability as an initial step toward establishing the NATO missile defense capability that allies agreed to develop at the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon. While the United States is making a significant national contribution to this system through the European Phased Adaptive Approach, we expect and have requested additional contributions from allies to make the capability more effective and share the burden of missile defense protection of European NATO territory, populations, and forces.

Germany and Italy envision MEADS not only as an essential basis for their own future air defense capabilities, but more importantly as the basis for their respective contributions to NATO missile defense. The agreement to deploy a territorial NATO missile defense capability and its implementation are major achievements of U.S. and Allied policy. A decision by Congress not to provide or to prohibit funding MEADS at this late date would diminish the consensus reached in Lisbon and Chicago for this capability, discourage allies from participating in cooperative projects in the future, and ultimately, delay greater European contributions to NATO missile defense.

My staff is ready to answer any questions you or your staff may have. Sincerely yours,
Sincerely yours,

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE,
Washington, DC.

Hon. DANIEL K. INOUE,
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: In response to your inquiries, I am writing to ask that you strongly support the President's Budget request for FY 2013 funding to complete the Medium Extended Air Defense System (MEADS) Design and Development (D&D) Proof of Concept (PoC) effort with Germany and Italy. The Department is seeking \$400.9 million in FY 2013 funds to honor the final year of our MEADS D&D Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) commitment that will enable completion of the MEADS development phase as it is currently planned. The PoC effort enables all three nations to obtain benefit from our collective program investment to date and will bring the development program to an orderly conclusion. Failure to fund our FY 2013 commitment will be viewed by our allies as reneging on our promises.

During the NATO Summit in Chicago on May 20, 2012, NATO Allies achieved a major breakthrough on missile defense—10 years in the making—by declaring an interim ballistic missile defense capability as an initial step towards establishing a NATO missile defense system. The European Phased Adaptive Approach will be a major contributor to NATO missile defense and is designed to protect the U.S. homeland, U.S. deployed forces, and our allies against the increasing threats posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles. Where ballistic missile defense was once a controversial subject within the Alliance, we have reached consensus to operationalize this capability and have the Allies share the burden of deterring and defending against those who could threaten us with ballistic missiles. This is a major achievement of U.S. policy; a decision by Congress to prohibit any additional funding for MEADS at this late date would diminish the consensus reached in Chicago.

The United States relies on allies to share the burden of peacekeeping and defense in coalition activities and the development of effective defense capabilities that are of direct benefit to the United States. In this context, I believe that it is important to live up to our commitments to our allies. We made a commitment to two of our closest allies, Germany and Italy, to develop MEADS cooperatively to achieve those objectives. Failure to meet our MEADS MOU FY 2013 funding obligations could negatively affect allied willingness to join future cooperative endeavors, bilaterally or through NATO, that have been strongly supported by the Administration and Congress at a time when cooperation through concepts such as Smart Defense is critical to ensuring NATO and its members are developing needed capabilities for the future.

In addition, failure by the United States to provide funding for FY 2013 likely would lead to a dispute with Germany and Italy, both of which have indicated that they would assert that the United States has unilaterally withdrawn from the MOU. On the other hand, full funding of the final year of the MEADS PoC would ensure that the United States receives a return on its 8-year investment in the form of a data archival package for future potential use on other U.S. air and missile defense improvements.

We must act now to avoid a situation that would cause harm to our relationships with two of our closest allies. My staff is ready to answer any questions you or your staff may have on MEADS.

Sincerely,

LEON PANETTA.

DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, almost 1½ years ago I sent the Government Accountability Office a letter asking them to examine the FDA's Adverse Event Reporting System for dietary supplements.

Dietary supplements, vitamin pills, and mineral pills are common across America. There are shops all over Chicago and downstate Illinois selling these supplements, and many people—including myself—take a vitamin each day. Maybe it is good for me, maybe it isn't. I hope it is good. It is certainly not harmful. But there are thousands of dietary supplements for sale. They are not all made in the United States, and they are not all made to the highest specifications.

So we said to the Food and Drug Administration, We want you to collect information from American consumers if there is a problem. If there is a dietary supplement that is being sold and someone has an adverse event—in other words, a health event—that could be serious, report it to the FDA. If we receive more than one, it is worth taking a look at to see if there is a pattern emerging and we should take something off the shelf.

Today the General Accountability Office released a report assessing how the system is working on this adverse event reporting on dietary supplements, and they had some recommendations. This reporting system is an important surveillance tool the FDA uses to identify and respond to cases of serious adverse reaction, such as heart attacks, hospitalizations, and, in some cases, death.

Over the years the types of dietary supplements sold have evolved from some very basic formulas such as simple vitamin C and calcium supplements to include products with potentially serious side effects, and even foods and beverages masquerading as dietary supplements that could pose a significant danger.

Take a look at these energy drinks that are for sale everywhere. Try to get past the cash register at your local gas station without running into a 5-Hour Energy drink or Monster Energy drink. And for some of them, when you turn the container back you will see it is not being sold as a beverage; it is being sold as a dietary supplement—in other

words, like a vitamin or a mineral. There is a reason for that: because if it is sold as a beverage, FDA has different regulatory authority over the product and its ingredients. If it is sold as a dietary supplement, the regulations are not there in the same way as they would be for beverages.

Unfortunately, people are led to believe these products have all been approved by the FDA and pose no risk. In reality, unlike drugs or over-the-counter drugs, dietary supplements are not reviewed and tested by the FDA for safety or effectiveness before being sold to the American public. That will come as a surprise to a lot of people. Most dietary supplements today are safe and they are used by millions of Americans as part of their personal choice for a healthy lifestyle. That is not true of all supplements.

In 2002, a 16-year-old boy named Sean Riggins from Lincoln, IL, just a few miles away from my home in Springfield, died after taking a dietary supplement containing ephedra. Sean was a high school football player. Before playing in a game, he went to the local gas station and bought something called Yellow Jackets. It was a form of ephedra, clearly marketed to children to give them an energy boost. How often do you hear that? Sean washed the pills down with a bottle of Mountain Dew. Sean was unable to finish the football game that day and died of a heart attack.

Before his death, Metabolife—the largest manufacturer of supplements containing ephedra—claimed they had no ephedra-related adverse events to report. This was 2002. Under pressure, Metabolife later gave FDA over 13,000 ephedra-related adverse event reports that showed people taking their products with ephedra and getting sick.

In 2006, I worked with Senators ORRIN HATCH and TOM HARKIN to pass the Dietary Supplement and Nonprescription Drug Consumer Protection Act. The law requires dietary supplement manufacturers to report serious adverse events to the Food and Drug Administration.

Today's GAO report shows that since the law was enacted, serious adverse events reported to the FDA have increased dramatically, from almost 400 reports of serious events in 2007, to 6,307 between 2008 and 2011. The GAO report highlights commendable efforts by the FDA to improve the safety of dietary supplements. In 2008, the FDA only conducted 120 inspections in the United States. By 2012, that number was up to 400 inspections. Between 2008 and 2011, FDA took 19 regulatory actions, including warning letters and injunctions, against companies that didn't report as required—such as reporting serious adverse events but omitting contact information on their labels. That is pretty basic, isn't it? When you buy a product like a dietary supplement, you ought to at least know who made it and how you can contact the people who made it. If

something goes wrong or if there is a question and you need to contact someone, that basic information should be there.

In addition to outlining steps, FDA is taking steps to strengthen the Adverse Event Reporting System to protect consumers. The GAO report also suggests ways the FDA can improve this process. For instance, in some cases FDA has used these adverse event reports to inform actions to protect consumers. But the Agency could do more and develop ways to educate consumers about potentially harmful products.

The GAO report encourages the FDA to issue final guidance clarifying the definition of a conventional food and dietary supplement. The vague distinction between a dietary supplement and conventional food or beverage has created a murky growing market where some companies sell products potentially dangerous with unapproved ingredients, products such as Lazy Cakes, a brownie marketed as a dietary supplement—not as a brownie, but as a dietary supplement, that contains roughly 8 milligrams of the sleep aid melatonin, almost double the upper limit of the typical dose—and energy drinks sold in huge 16-, 24-, and 32-ounce cans right next to soda and Gatorade. Soda and Gatorade are regulated; the energy drinks are not. How would a consumer know?

The GAO report also encourages the FDA to work with the Poison Control Centers to establish a data-sharing agreement. This is a source of real frustration, and when I describe the information you will understand why.

As you can imagine, when somebody feels sick after using a supplement, they don't usually call the Food and Drug Administration; they call a local hospital or the Poison Control Centers which are all across America. Between 2008 and 2010, Poison Control Centers heard from 1,000 more people who had experienced adverse events with dietary supplements than the Food and Drug Administration did. The Poison Control Centers information could be a meaningful contribution to the information the FDA is receiving about harmful products—information that can help us protect American consumers. I encourage the Food and Drug Administration and Poison Control Centers to work together to share this information. Sadly, the Poison Control Centers are demanding millions of dollars that the FDA doesn't have to get access to the basic information about dangerous products sold in America that are causing harm to Americans. Holding back this information is not in the best interests of keeping America healthy and safe.

Moving forward, I am going to continue to work with the FDA to enhance the regulation of dietary supplements and ensure customers have the information they need to make informed decisions. Every time I come to the floor and say anything about dietary supplements, I can guarantee you that at

some Web site somewhere they are saying, Here comes Durbin again. He is going to take your vitamin pills away. He is going to make it so you need a prescription to take vitamin C. Not the case at all. That is not what I am arguing for.

Let me tell you the bill I will reintroduce this year, the Dietary Supplement Labeling Act, would do. It addresses the growing concern of dietary supplements with misleading information and the bad actors selling it. This bill would require more information on labels. People using dietary supplements have the right to know if there is a risk associated with the product. Some ingredients may be safe for the general population but risky for groups such as kids or pregnant women, or the ingredients included in there might be dangerous for people with special conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure.

The bill would also help curb the growing practice of foods and beverages with added ingredients masquerading as dietary supplements by directing the FDA to establish a definition for conventional foods. This definition would clarify for industry, consumers, and even the FDA what products are foods and which products are dietary supplements. Today you can't tell.

If you have the time and good eyes, go into that gas station and take a look at some of these energy drinks, and then look at the bottle of Gatorade or soda next to it in the case. One often regulated as a beverage, the other—the dietary supplement—is not.

Many people would be surprised to learn that the FDA doesn't even know how many dietary supplements are being sold in the United States. I will bet you the majority of American people are sure their government is testing those things that are on the shelves. Not necessarily. Most people don't know if a dietary supplement ingredient presents any serious health concerns. The FDA doesn't have the information to track down products containing these harmful ingredients in many circumstances. The Dietary Supplement Labeling Act which I am introducing would require dietary supplement makers to give the FDA the name of each supplement they produce, along with a description, a list of ingredients, and a copy of the label. Is that onerous? Is that the heavy hand of government? If you want to sell a dietary supplement product in America, isn't it reasonable that you at least register the name of the product, its ingredients, the name and address of the company that can be reached if something goes wrong? That, to me, sounds very basic, and I hope my colleagues will consider supporting it. With that information, the FDA would be better equipped to protect consumers' health and to work with supplement manufacturers to address problems as they arise.

I visited dietary supplement companies in Chicago. I am impressed. They

take it seriously. It looks as you would hope it would look, like a very sterile, professional environment with medical professionals on board. The same cannot be said of all the things we are importing from all over the world. If you take a look and see that the product was made in China, you may have some second thoughts about buying it or giving it to your children. We have had some scandals associated with adulterated products coming in from China. I would pause if that were the source of a dietary supplement. I would have more confidence if it is made in the United States, particularly by a reputable dealer that I have seen on the shelves in a local drugstore over and over again.

Let me reiterate. Most dietary supplements available in America today are safe and are used by millions of Americans as part of a healthy lifestyle. As I said, I am one of the consumers taking that dietary supplement multivitamin every morning. But the GAO report confirms there is still work to be done to enhance the FDA's Adverse Event Reporting System, and to ensure that people who take these products have the information they need to make healthy, informed decisions.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I am back on the Senate floor today with my favorite chart, one that I think is indicative of the fiscal dysfunction that is occurring here in Congress, particularly in the Senate, now marking 1,420 days without a budget. But people should be encouraged that as a result of the House passing a "no budget, no pay" bill, it has finally prompted our friends across the aisle to mark up a budget in the Budget Committee that will come to the floor in the next few days, and we will be having a lot of important discussions and debates about budgets, taxes, and debt ratios.

I hope everyone remembers what this is really about. It is not just about numbers, it is about our obligation, our moral obligation to future generations of Americans.

I would just footnote that the President in a recent interview said that we do not have an immediate debt problem, and to say: Mr. President, the debt is discouraging and retarding economic growth which we need in order to get Americans back to work.

That is why unemployment is at 8 percent, roughly, with some 23 million Americans either out of work or underemployed, working part time when they would like to work full time. It is

a national tragedy and why we need to get our fiscal house in order here so we can put America back to work and grow our economy and opportunity.

Like many in this Chamber, my father was a member of what we call the “greatest generation.” I think Tom Brokaw coined that phrase, talking about the World War II generation that fought and won a world war. My dad was a B-17 pilot, and on his 26th bombing mission over Mannheim, Germany, he was shot down and captured as a prisoner of war. Thank goodness that after 4 months he was released from captivity thanks to General Patton and his Army sweeping through that part of Germany at the end of World War II.

My father and others like him fought to ensure that his children and his grandchildren would grow up in a country that had greater opportunity than he himself and my mother had when they were alive. Indeed, that is every parent’s dream, that their children and their grandchildren will enjoy more opportunity, more freedom, and a higher standard of living than they themselves had. That is the reason why parents and grandparents sacrifice and why they work hard for their kids and grandkids—because of their hope and their belief in that dream. As a result, my dad and my mother and countless other members of the “greatest generation” left this country better off than they found it. The question for all of us today is, Will the present generation do the same? I certainly hope so, and I am doing everything I know how to do, as one Senator, to make sure we do.

As a parent, I want nothing but the best for my two daughters. My wife and I want and hope and pray for the best for them. As an American, I want to see every child, everyone’s sons and daughters, succeed and prosper. But right now we have, in effect, a war being waged against America’s youth. I know some might consider that hyperbole or perhaps unnecessarily inflammatory, but let me explain to you why I do believe that you could logically conclude that we have been waging a war against America’s youth.

Consider the following: Our national debt is close to \$17 trillion. That means every child born in America today comes into this world owing \$53,000 in debt. Meanwhile, the Federal Government is spending more than \$200 billion a year on interest payments alone. The Medicare hospital insurance trust fund—Medicare—is projected to go bankrupt within 11 years, and we are looking at more than \$100 trillion in unfunded liabilities; that is, promises we have made to future generations, and we currently have no clue how to pay for those. That is what “unfunded liabilities” means.

We know the younger generation has virtually no hope that Medicare and Social Security will be there for them when they retire unless we act—and we must act. But rather than reform and protect our existing programs, such as

Medicare and Social Security, the President chose in his first year in office to create yet another new entitlement program funded by a \$1 trillion tax increase. Of course, we all know it goes by the name of ObamaCare or, if you prefer, the Affordable Care Act, which I think, if you look at it, history will ultimately conclude was unaffordable—not the Affordable Care Act but the Unaffordable Care Act.

One impact of ObamaCare is that young people under the age of 40 are going to have to pay higher and higher health insurance premiums. You might ask how that is possible since they are the healthiest people in America today. This is a phenomenon known as age banding, which says under ObamaCare that seniors can pay no more than three times what young healthy people pay for their health insurance. But it is no secret that older Americans incur higher medical expenses by virtue of their advancing years. Yet they can only pay three times what young healthy people pay for health insurance. That will lead to much higher premiums for young people in America. Indeed, one recent survey found that premium costs for young and healthy Americans “will increase on average by 169 percent.” I have no way of knowing whether that prediction will be entirely accurate, but I can promise that health insurance premiums for young, healthy Americans will continue to rise under the current law known as ObamaCare.

Such a dramatic rise in health insurance premiums will come at a time when young workers and middle-class families are already struggling to make ends meet. After all, the median household income in America has fallen by more than \$2,400 since June 2009. In other words, average households in America are not just treading water, maintaining their place, they are losing, they are taking on water, and they are \$2,400 poorer today than they were in June 2009.

Not only will ObamaCare drive up insurance premiums for younger Americans, it also is destroying jobs. In fact, we already have evidence that many full-time jobs are being reduced to part-time jobs in preparation for ObamaCare’s costs and regulation. In particular, in many places where young people get a start in their work life—working in restaurants, working in hotels, working for retailers—those very same employers are now replacing full-time jobs with part-time jobs in order to avoid the crushing costs of ObamaCare. So this will hurt younger Americans more than anyone else.

Then there is this: While unemployment is, generally speaking, about 7.9 percent—the Congressional Budget Office expects it to go up to 8 percent by the end of this year—fewer and fewer people are still looking for jobs. It is called the labor participation rate. You can go online and look at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and they will show you that the number of people looking

for work as a percentage of the population is as low as it has been for 30 years. So not only are people having a hard time finding full-time work, if they can find work at all, some have simply given up.

A new study shows that the unemployment rate among teenagers is over 25 percent now, and a new study shows that Americans in their twenties and thirties are accumulating savings at a much slower rate than their parents did. What we find among many young Americans and not-so-young Americans is that they are living off of their 401(k) or retirement savings now at unprecedented rates.

I ask my colleagues, is this really the future we want to leave our children and grandchildren? Will this leave them better off than we were or will it leave them worse off? I know that no one in this Chamber and no American in this country wants to leave their children and grandchildren worse off than they are. That is why we have to do everything we can to reverse the Federal overreach of the past 4 years and to boost economic opportunity with policies that will promote fiscal health and strong, broad job creation and upward mobility. In other words, we need to embrace policies that expand our economy and not government. We do not need people more dependent on government, we need more people independent and prospering on their own because we have a growing economy that provides opportunities for them to work, to save, and to support their families and deliver to their children and grandchildren greater prosperity than they inherited from their parents. That is the future Americans want, and that is the future we must strive to deliver.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUNT. 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. BLUNT. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss an amendment that has been filed by my friend Senator MORAN that I am proud to support. This amendment would stop the Federal Aviation Administration from targeting air traffic control towers across the country, including the towers that are considered to be in the Contract Tower Program under sequestration.

As I have said before on this floor and will continue to say, many of these problems will be resolved, I am convinced, if the Appropriations Committee does its work and that work is recognized and debated on the floor. And I hope we will not be having this same kind of discussion on October 1 when we begin the new spending year.

But the impact of sequestration—cutting from this account—is real. Senator MORAN’s amendment is important.

It is something that could impact the communities served by these towers. This amendment tries to ensure that these communities are not impacted.

In our State, there are contract towers in Missouri—in Branson, in Joplin, in Colombia, in Jefferson City and Saint Joseph. All those could be affected, depending on how the FAA administers this cut in the contract tower line. A number of other airports in Missouri, including Springfield, downtown Kansas City, and downtown St. Louis, could lose their towers in the after-midnight service, and those planes that now land there after midnight would either not do that or would do that without the support of the tower they have now that assists in landing.

This amendment of Senator MORAN would protect those towers as well as the federally funded portion of 16 cost-share towers, which also could be closed at the end of this fiscal year. Specifically, this amendment takes \$50 million from one place in the FAA—in fact, it is \$50 million in research and capital funds—that is money that could easily be set aside for this short period of time so that these towers do not close—and then Senator MORAN would add \$50 million in the Federal Aviation Administration operations account. The amendment makes it clear that the Contract Tower Program and contract tower cost-sharing programs are subject to the 5-percent sequestration cuts but, again, would transfer enough money within accounts that there should be money to keep these important towers open in Missouri, in Kansas, in Maryland, in Alaska. Many States—almost every State has something that would be impacted by this contract tower section.

This \$50 million would be more than 95 percent of the estimated money necessary to be sure that the contract tower program and the cost-share program would stay in place. If someone was using one of these airports and bought a ticket to travel out of one of these airports, or if someone is a general aviation customer at one of these airports, the tower is one of the ways they would expect their tax dollars to be spent.

What Senator MORAN is trying to do is find a way to do that which still allows sequestration to occur and still keeps the spending below the spending cap in the law. It is exactly in sync with the spirit of the law as well as the letter of the law. This just tries to solve a problem.

I wish to solve this problem in another way, by saying that Federal funds and employees who are involved in public safety have to be prioritized as people who show up, and we are going to move forward with that particular view legislatively if we cannot get it added to this spending bill which takes us from now until the end of the year.

It is my hope we are not talking next year about how we get to the end of the

year because we figured out how to get to the end of the year at the beginning of the year. That does not sound like an incredible goal for the Senate to have. But in a Senate that has not voted on a single appropriations bill for 16 months, updating the spending—5 of the 12 bills spend 70 percent of the money—in this continuing resolution is in the spirit of what our new chairman and our new ranking member want to do, and what the Senate should want to do, which is to deal with these things in the regular way.

I would very much like to see Senator MORAN's amendment included in what we are doing today. Just as importantly, I want to work with Senator MORAN to see that as we look toward October 1, these kinds of issues don't have to become a regular part of our process, but the kind we look back on and say: Remember we failed to do our job the regular way and all the problems that created? Let's get back to regular order.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, before the Senator from Missouri leaves the floor, I wish to make a comment.

First of all, I would personally like to thank him for all of his cooperation in trying to help move this bill forward within the Senate. It is characteristic of both him and the spirit in which Vice Chairman SHELBY and I have undertaken this effort. We have tried to work together to get this bill disposed of in an orderly way in order to avoid a government shutdown. It is not the bill we like, but it is the bill that was presented to us. At the same time we are beginning to establish both a tone, a decorum, and a process so we can get back to regular order.

I share the frustration of the Senator from Missouri in that we are dealing with a really big bill. The legislation that is pending here includes all 12 of the separate appropriations bills. It is very difficult to parse them out and to have rational conversations on matters of policy.

I hope as we get to October 1, which is our fiscal New Year's Eve, we will have had an orderly disposal of all 12 of the bills. I truly believe we can agree on the process and procedure. We can and should have a debate on policy. There should be a debate on funding. I am not one who likes to contain debates or contain amendments, but the clock is ticking.

We have two big issues before us. One issue is the funding for the rest of the fiscal year—fiscal 2013—and then we have the budget for fiscal 2014 which Senator MURRAY and Senator SESSIONS want to bring to the floor. I would like it if we could bring our bill to an orderly close and move to the budget debate so when we take our Easter-Passover break, if we do that, we will have shown the people of America that we can govern by disposing of two major policy considerations with decorum,

dignity, civility, and pretty robust conversation.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

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

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes as in morning business.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I am here, once again, to sound an alarm about carbon pollution's damage to our oceans and to our climate. It is past time for Congress to wake up to our responsibility as elected officials and as stewards of this planet.

The alarm has been sounded by the scientific community which overwhelmingly warns about the effects of our carbon dioxide emissions on our atmosphere and oceans. Our defense and intelligence communities warn of the threats posed by climate change to national security and international stability. Economists recognize the distortion of energy markets that overlook the true cost of carbon pollution, and government accountants now list climate change as a threat to our fiscal stability.

Today, as we enter the Passover and Easter season and as Catholics the world over celebrate the selection of a new Pope, we turn to voices of faith. They too call upon us. They call upon us to heed the moral imperatives of protecting creation and seeking justice for all people. They call upon us to reflect on our faith, on our relationship to our world and each other and on our responsibility to future generations, and they call upon us, as President Obama reminded us in his inaugural address, to "preserve our planet, commanded to our care by God."

I lay no claim to religious authority, but I must believe this: Something that harms others, something that disturbs God's creation, something that stands on lies and greed—protecting that must not be consistent with God's will.

In his 2010 World Day of Peace message entitled "If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation," Pope Benedict XVI called upon the faithful:

... [t]o protect the environment, and to safeguard natural resources and the climate ... while at the same time taking into due account the solidarity we owe to those living in the poorer areas of our world and to future generations.

In his inaugural mass this morning, Pope Francis said:

Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic,

political, and social life, and all men and women of good will: let us be "protectors" of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.

As early news reports indicated, the new Pope chose his papal name Francis out of respect for Saint Francis's sense of obligation to God's creation. He noted in one of his very earliest comments that our relationship with God's creation is not so good right now. Of course, the Pope is not the only one.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, also reminds us to remember those most affected by climate change:

Climate change is much more than an issue of environmental preservation. Climate change constitutes a matter of social and economic justice.

In the United States, hundreds of evangelical leaders signed the Evangelical Climate Initiative statement which declares: "Love of God, love of neighbor, and the demands of stewardship are more than enough reason for evangelical Christians to respond to the climate change problem with moral passion and concrete action."

The Hindu Declaration on Climate Change affirms that "the dire problems besetting our world will all be magnified manifold by the predicted impacts of climate change."

Buddhist leaders, including the Dalai Lama, urge both individual and institutional transformation to confront what they call "the gravest challenge that humanity has ever faced: the ecological consequences of our own collective karma."

As Rev. Fletcher Harper of the interfaith coalition GreenFaith explains, all faith-based communities have a spiritual connection to the natural world. For example, Sheikh Ali Gomaa, the internationally respected Egyptian Islamist, sees this connection as central to a faithful life. I will read:

If we take seriously our role as God's deputies on Earth, not just by benefiting from the environment, but by preserving it and ensuring that other communities and generations will have the same possibilities to drink clean water, breathe fresh air, and live in a world that is in harmony with itself and with ourselves, we may hope to be among those who are beloved to God due to their care for his creation.

For many, faith compels work toward fairness and justice for all living beings, regardless of nationality or social status, and encourages us to consider the effects of our actions on future generations.

For many individuals all over the world, the fight against climate change is a moral call. As Americans, we have a tradition of calling upon our own deeply held spiritual convictions to address our society's greatest moral challenges. People of faith are answering that call, from major denominational governing bodies down to local parishes and synagogues.

Representative HENRY WAXMAN and I, as part of our work on the Bicameral

Task Force on Climate Change, recently wrote to 300 groups to ask for their views on actions the Federal Government could take to reduce carbon pollution and strengthen our resiliency to climate change. A number of those organizations which answered are religious organizations.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD excerpts of letters from six of these groups.

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

COALITION ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND
JEWISH LIFE AND JEWISH COUNCIL
FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

New York, NY, February 20, 2013.

REP. HENRY A. WAXMAN AND SEN. SHELDON
WHITEHOUSE,
*Co-chairs, Bicameral Task Force on Climate
Change.*

DEAR SENATORS WAXMAN AND WHITEHOUSE: Thank you for requesting our input. The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) and Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA) are pleased to respond to the Task Force's request for input on federal policy responses to climate change.

COEJL deepens and broadens the Jewish community's commitment to the stewardship and protection of the earth. COEJL has been an initiative at the Jewish Council for Public Affairs since 1993. Through a network of 27 national organizations (including all major denominations) and 125 community agencies, COEJL is mobilizing the Jewish community to address today's energy and climate change crisis. Through its role in the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE), COEJL works closely with our colleagues at the Evangelical Environmental Network, National Council of Churches, and US Conference of Catholic Bishops. JCPA is the public affairs arm of the organized Jewish community and serves as the national coordinating and advisory body for the 14 national and 125 local agencies comprising the field of Jewish community relations.

Today, COEJL's priorities are to mobilize the Jewish community to address the climate crisis through advocacy for appropriate legislation as well as action to reduce our own greenhouse gas emissions. COEJL challenges and supports Jewish organizations to pursue sustainability in their facilities, operations and programs in order to protect the earth for future generations.

COEJL's Jewish Energy and Environment Imperative, signed by over 50 Jewish community leaders in 2012, states that "the need to transform the world's energy economy while addressing global climate change is not only a religious and moral imperative, it is a strategy for security and survival." Next month, COEJL is bringing . . .

COMMITTEE ON DOMESTIC JUSTICE
AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Washington, DC, February 21, 2013.

Hon. HENRY WAXMAN,
*Co-Chair, Bicameral Task Force on Climate
Change, Ranking Member, Committee on
Energy and Commerce.*

Hon. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE,
*Co-Chair, Bicameral Task Force on Climate
Change, Chairman, Subcommittee on Over-
sight, Senate Committee, Environment and
Public Works.*

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE WAXMAN AND SENATOR WHITEHOUSE: At the request of Cardinal Dolan and as chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, I am responding to your letter dated January 31, 2013. We thank you for your leadership to

address climate change and for the opportunity to share our suggestions for effective measures to address the moral and environmental challenges of climate change with this Bicameral Task Force.

Effective measures to address climate change are urgent and necessary. Evidence continues to point toward significant damaging impacts from climate related events in the United States, across the globe, and particularly for the poorest developing countries. Some poor nations and small island states already experience these impacts as a matter of survival for their people and cultures.

People living in poverty in communities served by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) already suffer the tragic consequences of climate change. Increasingly limited access to water, reduced crop yields, more widespread disease, and increased frequency and intensity of droughts and storms all make the lives of the world's poorest people even more precarious. CRS, which supports projects in almost 100 countries, already assists many communities to adapt to the consequences of climate change.

In signaling the moral dimensions of this issue and advocating for the needs of the most vulnerable, the Catholic Church brings a distinct perspective to this urgent matter. Throughout his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI demonstrated strong leadership on climate change in his teaching office and through efforts to reduce the Vatican's own carbon footprint. In his 2010 World Day of Peace Message, *If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*, he pointed to the urgent moral need for solidarity with creation and those affected by climate change. The pope insists, "To protect the environment, and to safeguard natural resources and the climate, there is a need to act in accordance with clearly-defined rules . . . while at the same time taking into due account the solidarity we owe to those living in the poorer areas of our world and to future generations" (no. 7).

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is guided by the teaching of Pope Benedict XVI and the principles articulated in the USCCB's statement, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*. This statement notes that, "At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family." As pastors and people of faith, we are not experts on the science, technical remedies and particular provisions of legislation or regulatory measures to address climate change. Our efforts seek to link care for creation and care for "the least of these." As is noted in the bishops' statement, "Action to mitigate global climate change must be built upon a foundation of social and economic justice that does not put the poor at greater risk or place disproportionate and unfair burdens on developing nations."

For the USCCB, a fundamental moral measure of any policy to address climate change is how it affects the poor, in our country and around the world. Well-designed policies can both reduce the severity of climate change and protect the most vulnerable. The USCCB supports strong leadership by the United States in enacting policies that protect poor and vulnerable people from bearing the impacts of climate change and from the human and economic costs of any proposed legislation to respond to climate change.

The USCCB asks the U.S. Congress and the federal government to consider the following principles as they shape policies and measures to address climate change:

Prudence requires us to act to protect the common good by addressing climate change at home and abroad.

The consequences of climate change will be borne by the world's most vulnerable people and inaction will worsen their suffering.

Policies addressing global climate change should enhance rather than diminish the economic situation of people in poverty.

Policies should create new resources to assist poor and adversely affected communities to adapt and respond to the effects of global climate change in the U.S. and in vulnerable developing countries.

Policies to address climate change should include measures to protect poor and vulnerable communities from the health impacts of climate change, including increased exposure to climate-sensitive diseases, heat waves and diminished air quality.

Participation by local affected communities in shaping policy responses to address climate change and programs for adapting to climate change is essential.

Technology should be made available to people in the most vulnerable developing countries to help them adapt to the effects of climate change (adaptation) and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation).

We appreciate your commitment to address this urgent global challenge confronting the human family. The USCCB stands ready to work with you, members of Congress, and the Administration to ensure that needed climate legislation both cares for creation and protects "the least of these."

Sincerely yours,
 MOST REVEREND STEPHEN E. BLAIRE,
Chairman,
Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

EVANGELICAL ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK,
New Freedom, PA, February 20, 2013.

Hon. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE,
 Hon. HENRY WAXMAN,
Co-chairs, Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change, Capitol Hill, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR WHITEHOUSE AND CONGRESSMAN WAXMAN: On behalf of the Board and staff of the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) I write to thank you for your service to our country, in particular for your leadership on climate change, including your co-chairmanship of the Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change. In your capacity as Co-chairs, you have asked us to provide "ideas for actions the federal government can take to address climate change." This letter is our response to your request.

A. THE GREAT MORAL CAUSE OF OUR TIME

We consider overcoming climate change by keeping the temperature rise to 2°C above preindustrial levels to be the great moral cause of our time and the next great cause of freedom. EEN has been seriously engaged on this issue for over a decade, and it remains our top policy priority. We believe overcoming climate change is part of what it means to be a Christian today; it is part of loving God and our neighbors as ourselves, of respecting the sanctity of life given by God, including the unborn and those yet to be born.

B. SOWING THE SEEDS OF BIPARTISANSHIP

We note at the outset that one of the most important things the federal government can do is to act in a manner that enjoys or will eventually enjoy broad bi-partisan support to ensure that whatever actions are taken will carry forward into the future, regardless of which party holds power in the legislative and executive branches. No one knows better than we do how difficult this particular issue can be for the more conservative members of

our society, including many Republicans. We know that bipartisanship on climate action is not easy. But it is necessary.

The simple truth is, those opposed to climate action have done a good job of having climate change viewed as a political issue, even a partisan one. We firmly believe that the need to act to overcome climate change is a moral issue, that it should be viewed morally rather than in a partisan fashion. Science helps us understand that there is a problem and the magnitude and urgency of the problem. The systemic nature, the magnitude, and the urgency of the problem require not only that individuals act in keeping with their values, but that government at all levels must act—especially the federal government. But the decision to act, both individually and through our various levels of government, is a moral one. This is a moral cause whose solutions require government policies in keeping with freedom.

As such, we implore you as statesmen to help move our country forward in a manner that sows the seeds of bi-partisanship to be reaped in the future. Let's work together to stay out of the partisan trap set by opponents of climate action.

C. WE MUST ACT STARTING NOW

Precisely because climate change is the great moral cause of our time and the need for action is urgent, we cannot wait to act until there is complete unanimity. Even in the absence of strong bipartisan support today, actions must be taken now to keep us within striking distance of avoiding 2°C and help us adapt to the impacts that will occur. But such actions must always be taken with an eye towards eventual bi-partisan support, or that would lead to eventual bi-partisan solutions.

D. ACTION TO ADDRESS THE CAUSES: MITIGATION

1. Preference for Market-based Mechanisms

As conservatives, we believe in using the least amount of government power necessary to achieve the common good. Since the issuing of the Evangelical Climate Initiative statement in 2006, EEN has endorsed the use of market-based mechanisms to put a price on carbon, thereby allowing the dynamics of the marketplace to find the most efficient and least-costly ways of overcoming climate change. As such, we favor cap-and-trade or a carbon tax as preferred choices over regulation when it comes to addressing the causes, or climate mitigation.

But we are past time for serious action on climate mitigation, and thus our country must move forward even if Congress is currently unable to price carbon via a market-based mechanism.

2. EPA Regulations, a Second Best Option

Therefore, we strongly urge the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), under its authority contained in the Clean Air Act (CAA), to issue a rule on existing sources that would be finalized in 2014. We further urge the EPA to require strong emissions reductions that keep our country's contribution in striking distance of 2°C, thereby enhancing freedom in the future by reducing impacts. But, also in keeping with freedom, we urge that states be given maximum flexibility as to how emissions can be reduced.

Strength of resolve, flexibility in implementation, infused with freedom—these should be the watchwords for the EPA's regulation of existing sources. Remaining steadfast on the * * *

FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION,
Washington, DC, February 20, 2013.

DEAR SEN. WHITEHOUSE AND REP. WAXMAN: FCNL is delighted that you have formed the bicameral Task Force on Climate Change.

We are thankful for your leadership on climate disruption—the greatest challenge humanity has ever faced—and look forward to working with you to ensure that Congress does its part to address it. We are honored to be invited to respond to the questions you have posed.

In recognition of the gravity and immensity of climate disruption, the questions posed first merit contextual background—much of which you know all too well—yet bears repeating, for without it, the tangible paths of specific negotiations and actions in present day circumstances can turn in unexpected directions or end in inadequate places.

CONTEXT

As you know, the scientific community feels the world is unable to stay below the 2 degree Celsius target that the global political establishment set in Copenhagen as the maximum global temperature increase acceptable to avoid serious and catastrophic disruptions of Earth's ecosystems and in turn human societal systems. Some scientists, observing and monitoring present day manifestations of climate disruption, feel that this target is now too lenient. Other scientists think it's too late to prevent catastrophic consequences on human civilization even if world GHG emissions halted right now.

Yet human civilization is increasing global GHG emissions in quantities exceeding the worst case scenario posited in the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report. The International Energy Agency says we must keep in the ground 2/3rds of the world's proven fossil fuel reserves to prevent catastrophe, yet some nations and corporations aggressively and successfully pursue policies to the contrary. Few if any national or international policies are in place to abate these trends. Grim is the understated description of these circumstances.

What must be done?

The ideal and mandatory goal is for the world to urgently and dramatically reduce global greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., by transitioning to renewable energy sources, energy efficient buildings and technologies, and protection of carbon sinks like rainforests), and for significant resources and expertise to be directed towards building the resilience of human infrastructure and critical ecosystems to prepare for and withstand the impacts of phenomena generated or exacerbated by climate disruption. With regard to the first aspect of this goal, some suggest reductions more ambitious than that proposed in prior comprehensive climate legislation, e.g., 80% reductions in global GHG emissions by 2025, not 2050. * * *

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE USA,
Washington, DC, February 25, 2013.

Hon. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE,
Co-Chair, Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change, Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight, Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Hon. HENRY WAXMAN,
Co-Chair, Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change, Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce.

DEAR SENATOR WHITEHOUSE AND REPRESENTATIVE WAXMAN: The National Council of Churches (NCC), on behalf of its 37 Christian denominations, is grateful for your leadership on the issue of global climate change and the opportunity to provide input regarding potential actions and legislation that can respond to the global climate crisis. We are appreciative of your continued commitment to bring this issue to the forefront for both houses of Congress.

The NCC, through its Eco-justice Program, has, for more than 30 years, sought to address the issue of global climate change with a focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions to prevent the worst impacts of climate change, ensuring economic protections for those living in poverty as we shift to a low-carbon future, and preparing communities at home and abroad for those climate impacts that we can no longer prevent. In 2006, the NCC along with an interfaith coalition developed its Faith Principles on Global Warming. This document lifts up justice, stewardship, sustainability and sufficiency as guiding tenets for our work and ministry on climate change and has informed the following recommendations.

A central component of the NCC's efforts is focused on minimizing our contribution to global climate change by reducing heat-trapping pollutants both in our congregations and at the national level. This is critical if we are to achieve climate justice and prevent the worst impacts of climate change.

In order to effectively address climate change, the United States must incorporate the principles of mitigation and adaptation at every level and in every branch of government. We currently have a number of administrative options available to us through federal agencies that should be used to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Currently there are a variety of policies that could be both adopted and enforced by federal agencies would limit greenhouse gas emissions. First, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should use its authority under the Clean Air Act to address methane released from energy extraction processes such as mountaintop removal coal mining and hydraulic fracturing. Both processes release significant amounts of methane, a gas often found in fossil * * *

THE REGENERATION PROJECT
INTERFAITH POWER & LIGHT,
San Francisco, CA, February 20, 2013.

Rep. HENRY WAXMAN,
Sen. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE,
Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SEN. WHITEHOUSE AND REP. WAXMAN: Thank you for forming the Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change and for including Interfaith Power & Light in your request for ideas for actions the federal government can take to address climate change.

As President Obama said in his inaugural speech, we are "commanded by God" to preserve the planet. In his State of the Union address he further said, "for the sake of our children and our future, we must do more to combat climate change". We are encouraged that the president sees this as a moral issue. People of faith agree and support bold action. The president's call for Congress to act opens an opportunity, and we thank you for your leadership to advance that action.

In response to your questions we have listed some ideas for your consideration, below.

1. What actions or policies could federal agencies adopt, using existing authorities, to reduce emissions of heat-trapping pollution? We urge Congress to support proposed EPA standards on carbon pollution from new power plants and ensure timely action to limit carbon pollution from existing power plants and oil refineries.

2. What actions or policies could federal agencies adopt using existing authorities, to make our nation more resilient to the effects of climate change?

A coordinated strategy involving FEMA, Department of Agriculture, DOT, DOE, and EPA to help prepare communities for the impacts of climate change could be productive. Communities must become more resilient, more equipped for storms and high heat

events, droughts and transportation challenges. Supporting local food infrastructure, cooling centers for urban areas, and shelters with their own power sources (preferably renewable) could help communities cope with extreme weather events that disrupt food, transportation and electricity infrastructure.

Superstorm Sandy offered lessons in this regard, and could be used as a case study to be better prepared for future events. However, each community is different, and local communities should be encouraged to come up with their own preparedness strategies. A public campaign coming from the government that declares the climate issue is real, and response is urgent might move more Americans to understand that we need to act. This should be framed as a moral issue, not an environmental or scientific one.

3. What legislation would you recommend Congress enact to strengthen the ability of federal agencies to prevent and respond to the effects of climate change?

We suggest legislation to advance energy efficiency and renewables and to upgrade the electrical grid which would allow for more renewable energy to come to market. In order to level the playing field between renewable energy and traditional fossil fuels, we suggest legislation that would limit the amount of subsidies to oil, coal and gas and redirect these subsidies to renewables. Legislation could also remove barriers to investment in renewable energy, so that wind and solar and other clean energy development can benefit from Master Limited Partnerships and Production Tax Credits.

The Department of Energy could also be directed to help low-income communities and households, as well as nonprofits, take advantage of energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions by providing rebates rather than tax-credits. The upfront cost is currently a major barrier to low-income households, houses of worship, and other nonprofits that want to weatherize, retrofit their facilities or install solar or on-site wind.

4. Additionally we suggest legislation to secure and direct robust funding for international climate adaptation and mitigation. The U.S. must maintain and increase our investments in critical international actions to the impacts that are already being felt, particularly in developing countries and the most vulnerable communities. These investments are essential to promoting global solutions to climate change; protecting our national interests and economic competitiveness, shared security, and development goals; and enabling developing countries and vulnerable communities to plan and prepare for climate-related disasters and losses. In addition, the U.S. should ensure that all our international investments promote low-carbon development pathways and support climate resilience and preparedness, especially for the most vulnerable communities. This is not only our responsibility as a global leader, it is a moral imperative.

I want to assure you that our 40 state affiliates and thousands of congregations view a swift and equitable transition to a clean energy economy as our moral responsibility, and are prepared to support your efforts every step of the way. Thank you for your important work to steward God's Creation and protect our children's future.

With faith,
THE REV. CANON SALLY BINGHAM,
President.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish life and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs wrote to us that "the need to transform the world's energy economy while

addressing global climate change is not only a religious and moral imperative; it is a strategy for security and survival."

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops says:

At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family.

The bishops ask Congress to consider seven principles in shaping responsible climate change policies:

No. 1, addressing global climate change means protecting the common good.

No. 2, climate change will hit the most vulnerable communities the hardest.

No. 3, we must seek solutions that enhance rather than diminish the economic standing of the poor.

No. 4, new resources must be made available to poor communities to adapt to the effects of a changing climate.

No. 5, we must protect vulnerable peoples from the negative human health effects of climate change.

No. 6, local affected communities should have a voice in shaping the response to climate change.

No. 7, technological solutions to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to a changing climate must be made available to the people of developing nations.

That is from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

We heard from the Quaker Friends Committee on National Legislation. They wrote that climate change is "the greatest challenge humanity has ever faced."

The Evangelical Environment Network urges immediate, bipartisan action saying:

The simple truth is, those opposed to climate action have done a good job of having climate change viewed as a political issue, even a partisan one.

We firmly believe that the need to act to overcome climate change is a moral issue, that it should be viewed morally rather than in a partisan fashion.

The National Council of the Churches of Christ, representing 37 Christian denominations, calls for a national policy that "lifts up justice, stewardship, sustainability and sufficiency as guiding tenets."

Interfaith Power and Light, a national faith-based campaign against global warming, tells us that its "[40] state affiliates and thousands of congregations view a swift and equitable transition to a clean energy economy as our moral responsibility, and are prepared to support [the Task Force's] efforts every step of the way."

These religious leaders and groups are, unlike Congress, not sleepwalking through history. Faith groups throughout America are acting on their sense of spirit, justice, and stewardship, and are mobilizing locally to combat and prepare for the effects of climate change.

In my home State, Rhode Island Interfaith Power and Light provides

free energy audits, training workshops, and online information about implementing and maintaining energy efficiency programs for houses of worship. The Jewish Alliance of Greater Rhode Island's Community Relations Council is working to reduce the carbon footprint of Rhode Island synagogues by 14 percent by next year.

In East Providence, RI, the Newman Congregational Church made some simple changes, such as installing occupancy sensors and better lighting, and experienced a 25-percent reduction in electricity costs.

Last year, the Beneficent Congregational Church of the United Church of Christ in Providence undertook an ecumenical Lenten carbon fast. This spring, from Easter to Pentecost, the congregation will be taking part in the United Church of Christ's national campaign of volunteering and environmental advocacy.

These urgent calls from religious leaders of so many faiths, and these conscientious actions by individual houses of worship, demonstrate the powerful connection men and women of faith feel to the wonders of creation and to our fellow humankind. For some, this connection derives from a connection to a higher power. For others, it is hope for future generations or a commitment to justice for all living things.

I once heard a colleague here in Congress brush off the warnings of science about climate change saying: "God's still up there," implying that there is no need to worry about climate change. Well, if God is still up there, what better use of the gifts of moral reasoning that we have been given as His people than to protect His creation—and one another—from harm?

As we sing in the old hymn:

Field and forest, vale and mountain,
Flowering meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain,
Call us to rejoice in Thee.

We are each called in our own way to wake up and to do the right thing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I want to comment on the comments of the Senator from Rhode Island.

First of all, I know it is so heartfelt and so genuine, and I want to thank him for that. And I want to thank him for approaching it from a faith-based standpoint about this fragile ecosystem we live on called planet Earth. He has brought a perspective, with that chart he has of the Earth, that it is so beautiful and yet it looks so fragile. As a matter of fact, when you look at the rim of the Earth from the perspective in space, you see a thin film, and you realize that is what sustains all of life, which is the atmosphere. Even with the naked eye from space, you can see how we are messing it up.

I could see, coming across Brazil, the color differentiation where they were destroying the Amazon. Then I could

look to the east at the mouth of the Amazon and see the effects of the extra silt that discolored the waters of the Atlantic for hundreds of miles.

So the Senator brings a great perspective, and I thank him for it.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, if I may respond by thanking the Senator from Florida for his kind remarks. He is the only Member of this body now or ever to have seen that view of our planet from the space capsule in which he looked down on Earth. He has spoken with enormous eloquence and passion about what that experience meant to him, both on the floor and to us in our caucus. I am very grateful for his kind remarks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I want to say, first of all, we have had three astronaut Senators. We have Senator BILL NELSON, who just spoke so eloquently about the planet and the way he saw it, we have had our own very beloved and hero with the right stuff, Senator John Glenn, and also Senator Jake Garn, our wonderful colleague who retired many years ago but was also on the VA-HUD Committee. When I first came to the Senate, Senator Garn was one of the Members from the other side of the aisle who helped me learn the Senate and he gave me a tremendous introduction to the space program.

In fact, we went, in a bipartisan way, to every space facility in this country so we could learn: what were the great assets we had, how we needed to fund them, and what was the future of the American space program.

So we have had three Senators who were certified astronauts and actually went into space. We have had other Senators who have been in orbit. Some maybe still are out there somewhere.

But I say to my two colleagues, with my feet firmly on the ground, we want to thank them for what they are doing to save the planet. Because of the advocacy talked about by the Senator from Rhode Island and the Senator from Florida, we, in the Commerce, Justice, Science bill, which I fund—which funds not only the American space program but also funds the National Science Foundation—we need to understand our great planet.

Another great astronaut, Sally Ride—a very happy and blessed memory who passed away last year—was asked by NASA to do a strategic plan. What should NASA be looking at? Should we be going to Mars? Dare we go even further? Venus? What about, should we do it with human beings? Should we do it with robots?

Dr. Ride came back with many suggestions, one of which was, she said we should study planet Earth as if it were a planet in our solar system. She said there was a great belief that there was

even intelligent life on planet Earth, and we will continue to search for it from time to time here.

But, really, Dr. Ride encouraged us to look at our own planet, and our own planet as if those from outside of our solar system were looking at us. Because she said that what every astronaut feels—and I have talked to many, along with Senators NELSON, Glenn, and Garn—is that when they go up and see the majestic universe that God has created, their greatest thrill is to look back on planet Earth, and how touching and how moving it is, and how we want to protect it.

We need to protect it because there is life on this planet. There is the life of human beings, and there is the life of the bounty that God has given us in both the sea and on the land in agriculture or in others that help take care of us, and we are now called to take care of them.

I pledge to them, if we can work together on a bipartisan basis, it is really not about global warming, it is about saving the planet. We need to look at all of our science across all of the subcommittees and say: What are the best practices that nourish us and nourish our planet and nourish the way we wish to continue to proceed in the 21st century?

I believe science and technology leads the way. It is a great gift given to us: the gift of reason and the gift of discovery. So let's all work together, and I thank the Senators for what they said.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I thank the Senator.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, we are now a few minutes before we are going to recess for the luncheon hour.

POPE FRANCIS

I want to comment briefly to say for those of us of the Roman Catholic faith this is, indeed, a great day. We now have a Pope who has been formally invested as the leader of our church: Pope Francis.

We know there are many Members of the Senate who would have liked to have gone to that investiture. But duty called and we are here bringing to a close our debate on the continued funding resolution to make sure we are funded through fiscal 2013 in an orderly, agreed-upon way and move to our big budget debate.

But Pope Francis is calling us today, as he has in other sermons, to think about the poor, the elderly, the children, and the vulnerable in our society, as well as the very planet. So we say to His Holiness, we really wish him well. We wish him well in the ministry we believe he will provide to the world. But we should also take heed to this message about the children, about the elderly, and about those who are vulnerable populations.

Again, we think what we have in here, our step, is an appropriations that will guarantee funding through fiscal year 2013. I do not want to link it to His Holiness's message. We wish him

well. But I also wish now we could do what we could in these closing hours. We have been guaranteed 30 hours of debate—we have used probably about 5—that we look at how we can bring this debate to a close in an agreed-upon way on both sides of the aisle so we can then move on to the budget debate of fiscal year 2014.

I am sorry, I did not know the Senator from Kansas was here. We will not recess until the Senator has a chance to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Maryland, my chairwoman.

I spoke last night on an amendment I have continued to ask be made in order on this continuing resolution. As I indicated last night, we are going to spend in excess of \$1 trillion in this bill, and I am hoping that my amendment, and perhaps others, could be made in order yet during this postclosure 30-hour period of time.

One of the concerns that has been raised is whether, if my amendment were adopted, this would create difficulties in the House of Representatives for the final passage of the continuing resolution. I am pleased to be on the floor, particularly with the chairwoman being here, the Senator from Maryland, to indicate that I now have indications from the Speaker's Office that they would have no objection to the amendment I continue to offer, that I hope will be made in order, that I hope a vote will be taken on related to the air traffic control towers.

Also in the period of time since I last spoke, we have numerous Members of the Senate who have now joined as co-sponsors of this amendment. The number is now 14 Democrats and 12 Republicans. The number continues to grow. And I have had a number of conversations with particularly Democratic Members of the U.S. Senate who indicate to me: Why can't your amendment be made in order?

So I am hoping, as Members of the Democratic Caucus and the Republican Conference meet during this 12:30 lunch period, that perhaps there is still an opportunity for this issue to be resolved.

I would indicate once again that, while I listened to the suggestion of the majority leader this morning that we move to the budget during this 30-hour postclosure timeframe, in the absence of some agreement related to this amendment, I will object to moving to the budget until the 30 hours expire.

I also have indicated publicly that I will object to the next 30 hours—the next opportunity in which unanimous consent is requested as we get back to the base bill. It is not my nature to be an obstructionist. This is an amendment that matters greatly. It has been determined by the Parliamentarian to be germane and, in my view, ought to be made in order.

Just as the chairwoman talked about bipartisan efforts, this is one that clearly is bipartisan and apparently bicameral. So I am hoping to utilize the rights as a Member of the Senate to see that there still is an opportunity for this amendment to be considered. I would say that the reason this matters so much in this timeframe is that I am of the view, and I think it is shared by many, in the absence of this amendment being adopted and included in this continuing resolution, and the continuing resolution being passed, that the control towers will be eliminated on April 7, and there will be little if any opportunity for the Appropriations Committee then to restore funding to, in a sense, a program that no longer exists.

There are many of the topics I share with my colleagues here about the consequences of the sequester. I am willing to work with them to see that we move money from one place to another to solve that problem. In the absence of that happening, there is still an opportunity for the Appropriations Committee and ultimately the Congress in the appropriations process to solve those problems. But should April 7 come, the 179-plus contract towers are eliminated. Then it seems highly unlikely to me that any appropriations process would include money for a program that is no longer in existence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I appreciate the tenacity and persistence of the Senator from Kansas in being an advocate for his constituents. I would hope that during this noon hour—I can give no promises. There are leadership concerns on both sides of the aisle. But we have to acknowledge the Senator is a real fighter for what he believes in. We admire that. How that gets translated will be subject to further discussion during this noon hour.

RECESS

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 2:15 for the respective party conferences to discuss important issues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:32 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND FULL-YEAR CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2013—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for up to 7 minutes.

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

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, we have been listening to our good friend from Kansas concerning this contract air traffic control tower amendment. I think there is no better example to use when talking about a bureaucracy taking something that everybody wants, that is very inexpensive, and using that to try to force people to do something that should never have happened.

In terms of the contract air traffic control towers, this is not just a rural issue. This is something that can happen all around. It happens that I have six in my State of Oklahoma and up in Kansas I believe they have five, but the fact is this is a major safety issue. We have a huge, bloated bureaucracy in the FAA. Yet we are saying we have to close a handful of towers and let people be uncontrolled. I know a little about that; it is what I did for a living. It is totally outrageous.

So we have an amendment, Senator MORAN and I, to redirect the money within the FAA budget. There would be no additional cost. It would rescind \$23.8 million from FAA facilities and equipment. Now, I ask, are facilities and equipment more important than actually having an active control tower in these congested areas? Also, it would take \$26.2 million from FAA research and development. Well, I can assure you this is more significant, and no one looking at this would rationally say it is not. So I encourage my good friend from Kansas to pursue this.

Similar to this is something that I, along with several Democrats—the primary one being KAY HAGAN—am concerned about, and that is what has happened in terms of a decision that was made by the Secretary of Defense to take out the tuition assistance. This is a very small amount of money for our troops who are over there serving now.

This is kind of interesting because I was a product of the draft. My service was not voluntary when I was in, and I thought a total voluntary force would not be effective. As I found out, it was. Well, one of the main reasons people do sign up—a lot of people say: Yes, I want to serve my country. A lot say: Yes, I want a career in the Army, Navy, Marines, or Air Force. However, they also want to advance themselves. They want an education, and in many cases, the only way they can get one is to have this tuition assistance program.

I can recall being over in the mess halls in Afghanistan and actually out in the field in Afghanistan where we have some 200,000 Army troops there now who are participating in this program. This is not an expensive program. All we want to do is make sure we give what was taken away from those individuals who are trying to better themselves, trying to better their lives, perhaps work toward a career in the military.

Stop and think about the amount of money that could come out of, say,