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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable WILLIAM M. COWAN, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord God, we are merely moving shadows, and all our busy rushing has no purpose without You. Rescue us from our frenetic pace and teach us to be still as we deepen our relationship with You.

Bless our Senators. Give them enough challenges to keep them humble, enough hurt to keep them humane, and enough success to make them certain they are walking with You. Renew their commitment to pray not only for those with whom they agree but also for those with whom they disagree.

Hear our prayers, O Lord, and give us Your peace. We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable WILLIAM M. COWAN led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

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

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

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

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter.

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 20, 2013.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable WILLIAM M. COWAN, a

Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. COWAN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 933.

The clerk will report the bill.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 933) to make appropriations for the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other departments and agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid (for Mikulski-Shelby) modified amendment No. 26, in the nature of a substitute.

Toomey amendment No. 115 (to amendment No. 26), to increase by \$60,000,000 the amount appropriated for operation and maintenance for the Department of Defense for programs, projects, and activities in the continental United States, and to provide an offset.

Durbin amendment No. 123 (to amendment No. 115), to change the enactment date.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of the continuing appropriations legislation. The time until

11:15 a.m. today will be divided and controlled equally between the two leaders or their designees.

At 11:15 a.m. there will be three roll-call votes in relation to the continuing resolution: the Toomey amendment, which is a 60-vote threshold; adoption of the Mikulski-Shelby substitute amendment; and a cloture vote on H.R. 933, the underlying bill.

BUDGET DEBATE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, for the last few years my Republican colleagues have been hollering, yelling, and screaming that the Senate has not passed a budget. They have done so in spite of the fact that Republicans in both Chambers voted for the Budget Control Act which set spending levels for the last 2 years. It was a law. Every reasonable political observer admits that the Budget Control Act, which had the force of law, was a budget, period. No, it was not a resolution. It was a law, which is much stronger than any resolution we do here.

As I indicated, they have yelled and screamed. Still, Republicans pine for the days of the so-called regular order when the Senate would vote on a budget resolution that would set spending priorities for the fiscal year. Republicans—we were told, we heard, we saw—were desperate to have a budget debate. They were desperate. They have had charts out here. They were desperate for an amendment. They wanted a vote-arama. They had charts, speeches, and demonstrations to prove it.

They have had press conference after press conference after press conference. They even had a calendar they brought out almost daily tallying the days since the Senate passed a budget resolution—not a law, which was already in effect, but a resolution.

Yesterday I was amazed, flabbergasted, and stunned when Republicans blocked attempts to begin debate on the budget resolution. In fact, the ranking member of the Budget

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



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Committee said: Let's put it off for a while. Let's wait until after Easter.

Can you imagine that? They have been pining for regular order, and we now have a chance to have a debate. They said: No, we can't do that. Can't do it. There was a chance, and they were not interested in doing it.

My friend, the junior Senator from Kansas, objected to a request debating the budget unless we vote on his proposed amendment to the continuing resolution. He is concerned about air traffic towers in Kansas because of these across-the-board cuts.

I say to all of my colleagues—I say to the Senator from Kansas—we are all concerned about the impact of these budget cuts. They are senseless, they are ridiculous, and we should do away with them. We have already cut \$2.5 trillion from the debt. We can continue to do it but do it in a responsible and reasonable way, not a meat-cleaver way.

More than 100 families in Nevada—almost immediately—are going to lose access to low-income housing because of the sequester. I met with the housing authority people yesterday. Some might say: Oh, that is not such a big deal. It is a big deal for those 100 families. Nationwide, 70,000 little boys and girls are going to lose their ability to go to Head Start. Some may ask: What is that? Head Start will allow them to get started in life.

These cuts—and I have only mentioned a few of them—are painful for millions of Americans, and it is only going to get worse. They are arbitrary.

We are all concerned. The concern for the sequester is not focused on the Senate delegation from Kansas, it is all over. Instead of whining about it, let's do something about it. Let's get rid of it. That is why the Senate Democratic budget proposal actually reverses the sequester. That is one way of doing it, but there are other ways.

The policy outlined in Senator MURRAY's budget will save hundreds of thousands of jobs, safeguard communities by keeping police, air traffic controllers, and meat inspectors on the job. Reversing the sequester would alleviate Senator MORAN's concern about air traffic controllers in Kansas. The Senate cannot debate a thoughtful way to replace the sequester if the Republicans will not even let us debate our budget proposal.

We know Republicans and Democrats will not agree on every aspect of the budget which sets priorities for how the government spends money and how it saves money. Republicans have one plan for Medicare. Their plan is to turn it into a voucher program which will change Medicare forever. Democrats have another plan. The Democrats' plan is to preserve and protect Medicare for our children and grandchildren.

Republicans have a plan for taxes. Listen to this one: They want to lower taxes for the rich and let the middle class foot the bill. Democrats have an-

other plan. We believe the wealthiest individuals and corporations should contribute a little bit more to reduce the deficit. Surprisingly, the intelligent American people agree with us—Democrats, Independents, and Republicans—by almost a 60-percent margin. The only Republicans in America who disagree are those who serve in Congress.

Republicans have one plan to reduce the deficit which will rely on harsh austerity that shortchanges the elderly, veterans, middle class, poor, and others. The Democrats have another plan. We have a balanced approach that couples smart spending cuts with new revenue from closing loopholes that benefit the wealthiest Americans.

We have our differences, and that is fine. But Democrats are willing to discuss these differences; we are willing to debate the issues. Let's debate the issues. The Republicans have said for months and months: Let's debate the budget. Why can't we debate the budget? Because they will not let us.

This is senseless. We have 60 hours of doing nothing—nothing. The American people are on our side. This is a debate we can win, but at least let's have the debate.

Will the Chair announce the business of the day.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 11:15 a.m. will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

Who yields time?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we are not in a quorum call, are we?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. We are not.

Who yields time?

If no one yields time, the time will be divided equally.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum and ask unanimous consent that the time during the quorum call be equally divided.

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

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I wish to discuss with my colleagues here in the Senate an amendment I have filed to the continuing resolution that is now pending before the Senate. It is amendment No. 55. I have spoken about this issue on the floor previously this week but want to reiterate the merits of this amendment and ask my colleagues for their support.

Amendment No. 55 deals with this issue of air traffic control towers. Under the administration's plan in implementing sequestration, the plan is to close, on April 7—just a few days

from now—173 air traffic control towers across the country. The amendment I wish to offer avoids that. The administration would no longer be able to do that. I believe they should not for numerous reasons, but what we do, in order to accomplish that, is to transfer \$50 million from two accounts, one dealing with research at the Department of Transportation and one dealing with unencumbered balances.

This is an example of what we have talked about before: that we can make better decisions than across-the-board cuts. In fact, the amendment I wish to offer deals with an issue that is not even an across-the-board cut.

In closing the contract towers, in eliminating the Contract Tower Program, the administration is cutting that program 75 percent. Sequestration is described to us as, in most circumstances, an across-the-board 5-percent cut. The amendment I wish to offer continues the 5-percent cut. That would occur for the air traffic Contract Tower Program, so that they would be treated like other programs at the Department of Transportation and throughout government, that they are not singled out for elimination of a program, resulting in a 75-percent reduction in that program's funding, not just the more minor 5 percent. So the administration's decision to close contract towers is far from balanced, and in choosing this program, in my view, has taken the opportunity to damage the safety and security of the flying public of America.

I want to talk about that in a moment. But there was also the suggestion that this is a provincial argument on my part, that it is something I care specifically about for Kansas, my home State. Certainly there is not anything wrong with caring about our home States. That is what we do here, and it is part of our responsibility. But this is far from just being a Kansas issue. Many States and Members of the Senate are more greatly affected by this cut, this elimination, than my home State.

In fact, this amendment has the sponsorship of 26 Republican and Democratic cosponsors. More Democratic Senators here are cosponsors of this amendment than Republican Senators. It is Senators ROBERTS, INHOFE, BLUMENTHAL, BLUNT, JOHANNES, KIRK, MANCHIN, HAGAN, KLOBUCHAR, BAUCUS, TESTER, ENZI, VITTER, BOOZMAN, PRYOR, MERKLEY, WYDEN, KAINE, WARNER, AYOTTE, SHAHEEN, RISCH, CRAPO, MURPHY, ROCKEFELLER, and WICKER.

It does not sound very provincial to me. In fact, 42 States will have their air traffic control towers eliminated. This amendment is broadly supported by the aviation industry. If there is an aspect of this that is unique to Kansas, it is that we manufacture many general aviation aircraft. We are the air capital of the world. But this amendment, while being supported by the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, by National Business Aviation

Association, the National Air Transportation Association, is also supported by the American Association of Airport Executives and the National Air Traffic Controllers Association.

Again, it is not a very provincial amendment when sponsored by so many of my colleagues, affecting 40-some—43 States of the United States, and broadly supported by the aviation industry as a reasonable, commonsense solution to a problem we face.

I have been adamant about bringing this amendment to the floor. I am a member of the Appropriations Committee. I will have the opportunity—in fact, I serve on the subcommittee that deals with the Department of Transportation. I should and hope to have the opportunity to deal with this and other issues related to the Department of Transportation in the normal appropriations process that, hopefully, will follow the passage of a budget. So I ought to be in a position to be helpful to the cause I believe in at a point later in time.

But here is the problem: The air traffic control towers will close on April 7. We will never get to an appropriations process between now, here at the end of March, and April 7. So the Appropriations Committee and, ultimately, the Senate, the House of Representatives, and the President will never have the ability to restore a program that is gone April 7.

So while I have tried to put myself in a position to be helpful to the cause in the long run, there is no long-run battle to be fought because the control towers are gone in just a matter of a few short days.

This amendment matters. This is my last opportunity. If and when cloture is invoked later today on the underlying bill, there is no opportunity for amendments to be considered. So my colleagues who indicate to me so strongly that they support my amendment, this is the only opportunity we have to have success.

This clearly is not about my success in an amendment. Although I would love to have the opportunity for this amendment to be voted on, it may or may not pass. But the Senate ought to work its will in making that determination. With the broad support of the industry, with the broad support of my colleagues here in the Senate, one would think this is an amendment which is at least worthy of a vote. That has not been the case.

So it is important for me to again reiterate to my colleagues that if you invoke cloture this afternoon or later this morning, if you invoke cloture, there is no other opportunity for us to address this issue, this problem. So let me again request the opportunity.

I lay awake last night from 3:30 on trying to figure out what it is I can say to my colleagues to get their attention about why this is so important. There are lots of things that can be said. We have so little time before this is either a program that existed in the past and

will no longer exist in the future—the consequences are so dramatic that I would again ask my colleagues for their assistance in at least bringing the amendment to the floor so that the Senate can make a decision, yes or no, about the merits of the amendment.

This is about safety. There was an article I just happened to read today in reading my clips from Kansas. This is in a Kansas paper, but it is an AP story from Chicago. The article is entitled “Trouble in the Air,” and here is what the AP reporter writes about the planned shutdown. The article says:

The planned shutdown of nearly 240 air traffic control towers across the country under federal budget cuts will strip away an extra layer of safety during takeoffs and landings, leaving pilots to manage the most critical stages of flight on their own.

But airport directors and pilots say there is little doubt that the removal of this second pair of eyes on the ground increases risk and will slow the progress that has made the U.S. air system the safest in the world.

It's not just private pilots in small planes who stand to be affected. Many of the airports in question are serviced by major airlines, and the cuts could leave towers unmanned during overnight hours that some big-city airports such as Chicago's Midway and General Mitchell Airport in Milwaukee. The plans have prompted airlines to review whether the changes might pose problems for commercial service that could mean canceling or rescheduling flights.

Without the help of controllers, risk “goes up exponentially,” said Mark Hanna, director of the Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport in Springfield, Ill., which could see its tower close.

But many in the aviation sector are frustrated by the political brinkmanship in Washington that has affected such a sensitive area of aviation. Jim Montman, manager of the Santa Fe Municipal Airport, which is on the list for tower closures, said the absence of controllers raised the risk of midair collisions “or some sort of incident where somebody lands on the wrong runway. . . . That critical link is gone.”

Pilots are trained to watch for other aircraft and announce their position over the radio during approaches, landings and takeoffs. But past crashes, however rare, have exposed weaknesses in that system. On November 19, 1996, a 19-seat United Express flight landing in Quincy, Ill., collided with another twin-engine turboprop that was taking off. They slammed into each other at the intersection of two runways, killing all 14 people aboard the two planes. The National Transportation Safety Board concluded the probable cause was a failure of the pilot in the outbound flight to monitor the radio frequency for air traffic and to properly scan for other planes. “If a tower was there, it's highly likely that the accident would have been prevented,” said Hanna, who became the director of the Quincy airport about two years after the crash.

The 238 air traffic control facilities that could be closed were chosen because they are at airports with fewer than 150,000 flight operations per year. They are located in every state.

Again, the point of this amendment is not whether or not I find the right words to convince my colleagues to allow this amendment to come to a vote. As much as I struggled through the morning hours trying to figure out what those might be, the real issue is

not about my words or my personal success in getting this amendment considered, but it is about the safety of Americans.

I cannot figure out why this amendment cannot be made in order. Again, broad support—broad support with Republicans and Democrats. I have had many Senators, including very senior Senators from the Democratic side of the aisle, come to me and express amazement that this amendment, so broadly supported, so important, cannot be considered. I cannot come up with an explanation. I do not know why this is the case.

Every Senator I have talked to about this amendment tells me they do not oppose it, it ought to be voted on, they support it. Yet for some reason the Senate is incapable of agreeing to even a vote on an important and critical amendment that promotes the safety of the American people. I can only guess—and it is always difficult to attribute motives, but as I talk to my colleagues, the only explanation I ever get that has any semblance of truth is that there is a point to be made here. By denying the amendment's passage, we prove that sequestration cannot work; we cannot cut money from budgets.

Again, I did not vote for sequestration. So when the majority leader says this morning about the hatchet being taken to programs and it is all bad—I did not vote for sequestration. I believe in the appropriations process that allows us to make these decisions to increase funding for some things, decrease funding for other things, and eliminate programs. Yet sequestration, in my view, has an effect upon all programs equally, whether they are effective or ineffective, whether they are valuable or invaluable. We treat them the same.

So I am not here on the cause of sequestration, but apparently there are those in this city, in Washington, DC, who want to make the point that if the air traffic control towers are eliminated, it will demonstrate once and for all—I don't know; to Republican Senators, to Senators in general, to Congress, to the American people—that there is no opportunity to cut budgets.

If people want to make that point and if they can convince people that it is true that there is no opportunity to eliminate \$85 billion in spending, that is fine with me. That is what this place exists for, is for us to have the debate about whether we can reduce spending, increase spending, what our Tax Code ought to be, what the value is of government services and programs and how they ought to be funded. But if it is true that the reason this amendment is not being considered is because we want to prove a point—that there is no money to be cut, that sequestration is a bad idea, that reducing spending is a bad idea, that we have to raise taxes—if that is the point that is trying to be made here in the process of denying this amendment's consideration, then

it is a very dangerous way to try to prove a point.

Prove your point in argument and debate about the merits of spending, about the merits of the program. Prove your point in the Appropriations Committee, in which we take testimony and hear from people about what is important to them, priorities, what their needs are, what their wants are, what has value, what does not. But do not try to make the political point about this topic by reducing the safety of people who fly in and out of communities across the country. As the article said, this reduces the nature of our air traveling safety from the best in the world to something less than that.

So make the point. Have the debate and argument about the value of sequestration, about the value of what money we spend and do not spend. But let's not try to prove the point by reducing the chances that the American people, when they travel, are safe and secure in our airways.

I do not know, and I hope this is never the case—this point may never be proven about the safety, but once there is an accident and someone dies and a plane crashes, the question will always be, what if there had been an air traffic control tower there? What if we had left the program in place?

These communities that have the air traffic control towers have spent years in developing a plan to put them in place, have worked with the FAA and the Department of Transportation over decades to bring their airports and airport safety, flying safety to high standards. An issue here is that this is going to disappear overnight. So you can be an airport manager, an airport authority, a member of an airport board anywhere in the country with 200-plus air traffic control towers, and you have worked hard over years, decades, to get the standards in place and to have the air traffic control process at your airport. In one day, April 7, one night, the lights go off in the tower. They no longer exist. All the work you have tried to accomplish on behalf of your community and those who fly in and out of your airport disappears in one stroke.

So I speak with a level of passion about this issue, for really the purpose of which I think we are here to do, which is to advance the common good of the American people. It is not a provincial amendment. It is not something that just MORAN and Kansas need. There are many States much more affected by this. But the truth is that every American, every person who flies will have less safety and security in the skies as a result of this issue, as a result of the decision made by the Department of Transportation to eliminate this program.

So, once again, I intend to ask later in the morning, when our leaders are on the floor, for unanimous consent to bring this amendment forward before the time expires. In my time in Congress—I have only been in the Senate a

little more than 2 years—I have not been trying to be obstreperous. I have not tried to be difficult to deal with. I believe in the opportunity to reach out and work together. I followed the rules. I did what everybody tells me to do: Go find people who support this amendment who are Democrats and Republicans, bring them together.

And as the leader said earlier in the week—I guess it is now last week—earlier last week about how we are going to get back to regular order, we are going to have amendments offered, I hope we can dispose of them quickly, we have an opportunity to do that with this amendment. It is not controversial. It is not partisan. It is about something that ought to be of importance to all Americans, certainly to every Senator.

Later in the morning when the leaders are present, I will ask unanimous consent once again that we consider this amendment. I know there are others who want to offer amendments. I see my colleagues from Arkansas and Missouri on the floor. I know they have an amendment—I think it is No. 82—with which they want to offer the opportunity to address a problem by taking money from one account and putting it in another account in order to keep meatpacking plants operational, that we have the meat inspectors present at the plants. Boy, that is an important issue too. That is about the safety and security of Americans. It is about food safety. I hope no one objects to the amendment Senators PRYOR and BLUNT are going to offer this morning. That is another amendment which is very similar in nature, about deciding that we are smarter to spend money here than here.

As the Pryor-Blunt amendment comes before the floor, I would ask my colleagues, just as I would ask them to grant unanimous consent, I hope no one objects to their request for unanimous consent that their amendment be considered. I would ask that no one object to the amendment I intend to offer. I certainly will not object to the Blunt-Pryor amendment. I wish it was leverage to get my amendment considered, but it is too dangerous to play that game. That is what we do here in Washington, DC, is strike a deal. In this case, when we strike that deal, we are leaving people behind whose lives are going to be adversely affected.

I certainly will not stand in the way of people who work in the meatpacking industry and the consumers of meat products across our country, in the way of trying to solve a problem that is clearly there. I hope their amendment receives unanimous consent, and I hope it passes by this Senate's will. I would ask the same thing. When the appropriate time comes, I will ask for the same thing on an amendment that is about the safety and security of American people.

I thank the Presiding Officer for his indulgence and at least his appearance of listening to me.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Ms. HEITKAMP). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the next quorum call be equally divided between the Republicans and Democrats, the majority and the minority.

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

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MS. AYOTTE. Madam President, I come to the floor to speak about an amendment I made to the continuing resolution. This is a continuing resolution for appropriations bills which are pending on the floor right now, and we are spending over \$1 trillion.

I filed an amendment, amendment No. 127, which would have struck the funding of \$380 million for a missile to nowhere. This is funding for a program called the Medium Extended Air Defense System, otherwise known as MEADS. Up to this time, we have expended \$3 billion for this system. Yet we will never receive a result our Army or our military can use. This is why it is a missile to nowhere.

The chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator CARL LEVIN, has said of the funding for this MEADS program: With regard to the committee, we feel strongly that it is a waste of money.

In the 2012 Defense authorization, the Senate Armed Services Committee made very clear this was going to be the last appropriation for this missile to nowhere. In the 2013 authorization, on a unanimous bipartisan basis before the Senate Armed Services Committee, the committee voted to say no more money for a missile to nowhere.

Right now, our military is facing great challenges with sequestration. We have heard this from our military leaders. These are difficult choices they must make to cut training for our troops and cut needed flying hours when our troops absolutely need to be prepared and ready. For equipment, an announcement was made we were going to withdraw a carrier, which sends the wrong message to Iran.

Despite all this, the continuing resolution, which is on the floor with the appropriations bill attached, contains \$380 million for a missile to nowhere. This is something our military will

never be able to use. And why is it there? It is there because people are worried about their parochial interests, that their State builds part of this, and also because, apparently, they want to provide employment to the Germans and the Italians, because they are getting a substantial amount of this money. Yet we will never see anything our troops can use from it.

My amendment was very straightforward. The amendment would do this: It would take the \$380 million and strike it from the MEADS Program, then take those resources and, instead of spending the \$380 million on the MEADS Program, it would go to the operations and maintenance fund for our troops for real needs they have on the ground—whether it is equipment or training—rather than for a missile to nowhere that they do not need and don't want.

It seems to me we owe it to our troops to make sure our taxpayer dollars don't continue to be wasted on funding a MEADS Program we will never get a result from. In fact, we have had large unanimous agreement on a bipartisan basis about striking this MEADS Program. In fact, I mentioned the Senate Armed Services Committee has said we should prohibit funding for it. The House Armed Services Committee did the same thing and said we should prohibit funding for it, and the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee zeroed out funding for MEADS. The only committee that allocated funding for it was the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee. Talk about a waste of money.

It is shocking to me, by the way, that this amendment makes so much sense, that it has bipartisan support, and yet I can't get a vote on the floor of the Senate to strike the money for this missile to nowhere and to apply the funds to where our troops need them so the funds can actually be used to make sure they have what they need to be prepared. It is appalling that I am being denied the right to offer this amendment, to bring it to the floor, to let people vote on it. At a time when we face great fiscal challenges, it is absolutely appalling to me that here in the Senate we can't strike \$380 million in funding for a missile to nowhere when we are almost \$17 trillion in debt. This is what is wrong with Washington. It is appalling we cannot be in a position to get a vote that is germane to fund a program that the Concerned Veterans for America has said is wasteful, in support of my amendment; that the Citizens Against Government Waste agrees as well and supports my amendment; and that I have bipartisan support for my amendment. In fact, Senators BEGICH and SHAHEEN are cosponsors of my amendment. So this is not a partisan issue, this is about not wasting taxpayer dollars. I can tell you this sort of thing is what is appalling to the American people, that we cannot and we will not strike wasteful spending. We can't even get a vote on it here in the Senate.

I am going to continue to fight to end the funding for this program and other wasteful spending programs and to make sure the money we have and the taxpayer dollars, particularly in the Pentagon but in every area of government, go for what they are intended—for things our troops need, and not a missile to nowhere where we are protecting, apparently, parochial interests that people are worried about more than they are worried about the overall fiscal state of the country.

This is something that has been very disappointing to me. I think it is appalling we wouldn't allow a vote on such a relevant, germane amendment on a bill in which we are going to spend over \$1 trillion. I don't know why we continue to fund things such as the missile to nowhere when there are real needs our troops have. I know this amendment had bipartisan support in the past. Both sides of the aisle do not want to spend money on a missile to nowhere when there are real needs our troops have.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this issue on the floor today.

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. MCCONNELL. 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. MCCONNELL. Madam President, it took 4 years to get a budget from the Senate majority—4 long years.

As the days go by, it has become increasingly clear why it took so long; their budget is so extreme and so unbalanced. That is why they are having such a hard time selling it to the American people and why they have had to fall back on some tired talking points to defend it, claiming their budget would, for instance, grow the economy from the middle class out. That is a clever sound bite, but it doesn't describe the Senate Democratic budget at all.

Maybe a better way to put it is that the Democratic budget would grow the bureaucracy from the pockets of the middle class out. That is because it would increase Federal spending by almost two-thirds by imposing a massive tax hike that could cost the average middle-class family literally thousands.

The Democrats like to say the up to \$1.5 trillion tax increase authorized in their budget—the largest tax hike in American history, by the way—would be funded by closing loopholes for millionaires and billionaires, but the math simply doesn't add up. They will have to come after the middle class to fund this spending spree.

There is something else. The Senate Democratic budget wouldn't balance ever—not in 2013, not in 2023, not in 2023, not ever. It wouldn't balance in any of our lifetimes. It wouldn't bal-

ance in the lifetimes of our children or our grandchildren. It would simply never balance.

Think about it. That means a child born today would grow up knowing nothing but massive deficits their entire life. That means trillions upon trillions in more debt and an economy that would never ever reach its full potential. That is simply not right, but it is what we would get with the Senate Democratic plan. It is an extreme approach that is more than just fiscally reckless; it is deeply irresponsible.

That is why so many middle-class families agree with Republicans that we should be growing the economy, not the government. They know we need to control Washington spending and balance the budget in order to kick-start economic growth and to create American jobs. They are so tired of the Obama economy.

They are tired of the endless pivots to jobs that never result in the kind of sustained job creation we need. They are tired of the sluggish growth, of always looking to the future with anxiety or worrying whether Medicare will even be there when they retire.

They are tired of the ideological DC Democratic extremism that got us here: knee-jerk, tax-first solutions to almost every single problem, massive overspending, steadfast opposition to reforms that would make government programs more efficient, effective, and sustainable.

So my friends across the aisle shouldn't be surprised their budget is getting such a rough ride. It contains up to \$1.5 trillion in new taxes. This would be the largest tax hike in American history. It contains \$½ trillion more in spending, money that could be siphoned out of the economy and into the hands of politicians and bureaucrats.

It lacks meaningful reforms to save and strengthen Medicare, allowing it to go bankrupt in just a few years, and it enshrines massive deficits into law, ensuring they continue forever and ever without end.

The Senate Democratic budget is nothing more than a rehash of the same tired politics that continue to pummel the middle class. It is time to move beyond this failed extremist approach and try a new one. Instead of expanding the power of the bureaucratic elite at the expense of hard-working taxpayers, I would urge Washington to change course. Let's focus on growing the economy, not the government.

OBAMACARE

I would also like to discuss ObamaCare for a moment.

As I just stated, Senate Republicans want policies to grow the economy, not the government. Yet ObamaCare is a law that grows the government and will slow our economy. On Saturday, we will mark the third anniversary of its passage into law.

Republicans have long warned that ObamaCare would have a devastating

impact on our country. I have spoken about 100 times on the Senate floor against ObamaCare and I have warned about its consequences: increased premiums, lost jobs, and higher taxes.

Unfortunately, many of those things have already started happening. It is not just off in the future. It has already happened, and the Federal Government has only just begun implementing the law.

Instead of premiums going down \$2,500, as President Obama promised, they have actually gone up by about the same amount, \$2,500. Congress's own nonpartisan budget experts tell us the premiums will increase by about \$2,100 after more rules, more taxes, and more mandates take effect.

The Federal Reserve also came out with a report that confirmed something else Americans already know: ObamaCare is costing us jobs. By some estimates, it could end up costing 800,000 jobs at a time when we desperately need more of them.

Members of the President's own party have begun sounding the alarm about the law's tax hike, including its tax on medical devices.

His union allies are concerned the law will make them less competitive too. Of course it will. Perhaps some of the union bosses should have more thoroughly considered the well-being of their members before supporting ObamaCare's passage in the first place.

ObamaCare has already become a regulatory nightmare. I would call the attention of my colleagues to this chart. This is the ObamaCare law, hundreds of pages in itself. But these are the regulations so far: 7 feet tall, almost 20,000 pages of ObamaCare regulations so far.

The law itself is not small, hundreds and hundreds of pages. But nearly 20,000 new pages of regulations, 7 feet tall, and they are just getting started. This monster of a bill, as I indicated, was hundreds of pages long itself, but that is actually nothing compared to the regulations it has spawned.

This more than 7-foot stack of paper next to me is what has become known as the redtape tower—the redtape tower, almost 20,000 pages of ObamaCare regulations so far. It is nearly 20,000 pages' worth of complexity. That is just what the bureaucracy has dreamed of so far, and we can only imagine how much more is yet to come.

Do we expect small businesses to be able to cope with all the rules in this tower? If you were a small business owner, how could you? Would you even be able to read through all of them and figure out which ones applied to you? I doubt it. I don't expect the average American to have much luck either.

The administration released a draft ObamaCare application last week. It is 21 pages long. Unbelievable. If you like doing your taxes, you are going to love applying for the ObamaCare exchanges.

So Washington Democrats may pop the champagne this Saturday to cele-

brate the law's third anniversary, but more Americans and small business owners will be reaching for an aspirin once they are forced to start navigating this bureaucratic nightmare.

In my view, ObamaCare is a colossal mistake for our country. There is no way to fix this thing. It needs to be pulled out by its roots, and we need to start all over. This bill needs to be repealed and it needs to be replaced, not with another unreadable law or another 20,000 pages of regulations but with commonsense reforms that actually lower health care costs.

Anyone who thinks we have given up this fight is dead wrong.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, 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.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, in a few seconds I will be propounding a unanimous consent request. We were originally scheduled to have a series of votes at 11:15. We think we have a way of working out some of our concerns if we just take a little bit of a breather and do the kind of negotiation based on the civility and common sense that we have been using during this deliberation.

Therefore, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the previous order, all postcloture time be considered expired at 2 p.m., with the time until 2 p.m. to be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, with all other provisions of the previous order remaining in effect.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, just to give everybody the lay of the land, it means we are working through our legislative issues, and at 2 o'clock we will then proceed to a series of votes which will be announced in plenty of time for people to know what is happening.

I ask unanimous consent that the quorum calls be equally divided, and I thank the able floor staff for giving me advice. There are days when I think it is an opera and they are calling out the arias we need to sing. But we are moving, and I thank Senator SHELBY for consulting with his side of the aisle.

At 2 o'clock we are going to have a series of amendments, and I think the Senate will feel very solid about the direction in which we are going.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. AYOTTE. Madam President, in a minute I am going to call up an amendment that I was speaking about on the floor of the Senate over the last few days. Essentially, this is an amendment that is pending to the bill—the continuing resolution and appropriations bills—that would strike \$380 million of spending for the MEADS program. It is essentially a missile to nowhere that our troops will never be able to use in theater. We want to transfer that money to the operations and maintenance funding for the troops so we can make sure there are resources they can use to, obviously, make sure they have what they need for the very best equipment and training—particularly in light of sequestration and what we are facing. I know there is an agreement that is being worked out, and I hope my amendment is included in that agreement.

At this time I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment so I may call up my amendment, amendment No. 127.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Ms. AYOTTE. Thank you, Madam President.

Mr. REID. Madam President, before the Senator leaves the floor, I have listened to most of her speeches, and she has been very articulate. I appreciate how she feels. There are some Democrats who agree with her, but the problem is it is hard to arrive at a list of amendments. I appreciate her intensity, and I certainly do not in any way denigrate what she has been trying to do, but this is the situation in which we find ourselves.

I reluctantly object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I too have an amendment that I have been attempting for a number of days to have made in order. This is the amendment that deals with the air traffic control towers. It is an amendment that very directly and simply transfers money from two accounts that have lots of money in them—the unencumbered balances of the Department of Transportation as well as a research fund—transfers \$50 million from those two accounts to the air traffic control program. If we do that, we can at least avert—at least what the Department of Transportation says is necessary to eliminate that program—closing more than 170 air traffic control towers on April 7.

I spoke earlier this morning, and I intend to speak before the vote occurs. I

will not repeat myself at this point in time, but this morning I outlined—and I hope my colleagues were listening—the importance of this amendment to the safety of the traveling public. The modest nature of what we are trying to accomplish has the bipartisan support, as well as the wide range of support, from groups outside the Congress that support this amendment.

I again ask unanimous consent to amend the previous order and bring up my amendment. It is amendment No. 55, that 10 minutes be equally divided, and we proceed immediately to a vote on that amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you, Madam President.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I withdraw that. My understanding is the Senator from Montana has a brief statement to make regarding a big event in Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. That is basically correct.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. I ask to speak as if in morning business.

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

(The remarks of Mr. BAUCUS are printed in today's RECORD under "Morning Business.")

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, at an appropriate time I will ask for some consideration of an amendment of mine, amendment No. 6. My amendment would hold the Obama administration accountable for its recent decision to release more than 2,000 undocumented immigrants from detention centers across the country in the past month. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement claimed they were releasing these people because they needed to reduce their average daily detention population of about 34,000 people—a congressionally mandated requirement. They claimed they had to reduce the detention population for budgetary reasons. Week after week, agents were tasked to release so many individuals.

At first the Department of Homeland Security claimed it only released a few hundred people. However, last week the

Director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement admitted that the administration had misled the American people by confessing that over 2,200 aliens were actually released. They continue to stand by the excuse that budget cuts were the reason for releasing these individuals.

Simply blaming budget reduction as a means to turn a blind eye toward the national security of the American people is a very dangerous plan and one that calls into question the Department's preparation for sequestration, particularly when we consider that months before sequestration the Office of Management and Budget put out an order to all departments that national security, law enforcement, and safety and health should be a top priority. So if keeping criminals off the streets of the United States shouldn't be a top priority—as per the order from the Office of Management and Budget—I don't know what should be. So I want an accounting for it, and that is what my amendment does—requests a simple accounting for why they were released and what it was all about. What is even more disturbing is the fact that the Department had billions of unobligated funds from the past 2 years that could have been put into protecting the American people.

On February 27 I sent a request to Secretary Napolitano questioning the decisions of the Department. The letter, cosigned by Chairman GOODLATTE of the House Judiciary Committee, was an attempt to better understand—just a simple understanding—how the Department will better confront sequestration and reduce operational challenges that could affect the life, safety, and health of the American people—the same life, health, and safety of the American people evidenced by this very administration's directive going out from the Office of Management and Budget of the priorities that ought to be established during sequestration.

Now, you know what. So often what we find from this administration—and have even found in previous Republican administrations—is that letters that are embarrassing go unanswered. Unfortunately, this is not unusual. About a dozen of my letters to the Secretary of Homeland Security on just the immigration issue have gone unanswered. There is no respect for congressional oversight. It is very frustrating.

We are on the cusp of undertaking a massive reform of our immigration system. Yet getting answers to the most basic questions seems to be an impossible operation. Time and again, we have seen this administration refuse to be held accountable, and what we want is just information. It is not as though we are saying that what the administration has done—even if we disagree with it—can't be done or shouldn't be done. But shouldn't the people know about who is being turned out in the streets when they have been held in confinement for a long period of time? I fear what will become of the

President's promise of transparency if and when we do pass an immigration bill. And this is an example of things to fear in the future. Enacting a bill is one part of the process, and implementing the law is another part of the process. If we don't have faith in this administration now, what about trust for the future?

So my amendment would require U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to submit weekly reports—just submit reports—to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations and the Judiciary. The reports will be required to contain detailed budgets on how ICE will maintain the 34,000 detention bed occupancy levels authorized by Congress. It also requires ICE to provide the number of aliens released from detention as well as the following information on aliens released for budget-related purposes: the conviction or charge for which they were detained, fugitive status, existence of a prior deportation order, and the terms of release.

My amendment happens to be cosponsored by Senators INHOFE, VITTER, BOOZMAN, ROBERTS, COATS, MCCONNELL, and COLLINS.

Within the last few days, we have had the Director of ICE, Mr. Morton, testify—well, it was just yesterday in the House. Chairman GOODLATTE said his testimony raised more questions.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a press release that expresses the testimony of Director Morton.

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

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE,
Washington, DC, March 19, 2013.
DIRECTOR MORTON'S TESTIMONY DOESN'T ADD UP

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director John Morton testified before the House Judiciary Committee regarding criminal and illegal immigrants who are priorities for removal but were released by the agency, which claimed release was necessary due to sequestration. However, several of the claims made by Director Morton do not match the facts and here's why:

At today's hearing, Director Morton blamed the release of criminal and illegal immigrants on the lack of funding in the Continuing Resolution (CR) and the sequester. But the CR funded ICE above their budgetary request and provided the required funding to maintain detention beds at their average daily requirement of 34,000 through the end of March. Meanwhile, an internal ICE document shows that the agency began releasing detainees on February 15 and had already released thousands of criminal and illegal immigrants ahead of sequestration.

In addition, while the sequester cuts the agency's funding by 5%, the savings resulting from the decision to mass release criminal and illegal immigrants into the population goes well above 5%. A 5% reduction of 34,000 detention beds is about 1,700, but ICE has already released over 2,200 criminal and illegal immigrants and the plan was to reduce the daily population by 5,000.

Furthermore, Director Morton today acknowledged that he could have made a reprogramming request to Congress or could

have used other funds to keep criminals off of our streets. However, he did not provide any reasoning as to why he did not make such a request.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) released the statement below regarding these inconsistencies.

Chairman Goodlatte: "Director Morton's testimony given to the House Judiciary Committee today doesn't add up. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement had more than enough money to continue detaining criminal and illegal immigrants that are priorities for removal and could have made a reprogramming request to Congress if the money ran out. But Director Morton never made such a request nor provided any rationale as to what is more important than keeping criminal immigrants off of our streets.

"In addition, the sequester mandated a 5% cut at ICE but the agency released more than 5% of detained criminal and illegal immigrants. These facts make it appear that the decision to release more than 600 convicted criminals and others facing charges into our communities was more of a political calculation than a budgetary necessity. This decision not only undermines ICE's credibility but also undercuts the American people's trust in this Administration's ability to enforce our immigration laws."

Mr. GRASSLEY. Last week Mr. Morton said they released 10 level 1 offenders. These are people convicted of violent crimes. They are repeat drunk drivers, as an example. Yesterday he said they only released eight, but he also said they were trying to relocate them and bring them back in. Well, if you have these dangerous people out on the streets, the public ought to know about it.

So I suspect that when I ask unanimous consent now, the other side will object to my amendment. And I don't know why they want to go to such lengths to protect this administration when all we want is simple information—just simple information. We aren't saying that the decisions made—even though we disagree with them—ought to be changed. We are just saying that the public ought to know when we put violent people out on the streets, and when we put people out on the streets who shouldn't be out on the streets, we ought to know where they are, why they were put out there, and what it is all about.

I think the objection to allowing this amendment to have a vote—as I presume it will be objected to—is indefensible, but at this point I call up for consideration my amendment No. 76, and I ask for just 10 minutes of debate and a vote on my amendment. I ask unanimous consent to do that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, I understand how the Senator feels. Over the years I have served with him, he has always made his opinions very clear. We had his amendment in the list of amendments we were going to do before, with some modifications that my friend wouldn't agree to. So I understand his feelings about this, but the good news is that within the very near, foreseeable future—hopefully, I can start it in the next work period—

we are going to start immigration legislation here on the floor. We are finally going to be able to move to something that will include issues people have wanted to deal with for a long time.

So I say to my friend, I object, but I understand how he feels about the issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding cloture having been invoked, the following amendments be in order to the Mikulski-Shelby substitute: Coburn No. 69; Coburn No. 93; Coburn No. 65, as modified; Coburn No. 70, as modified; Inhofe-Hagan No. 72, as modified; Mikulski-Shelby No. 98, as modified with changes that are at the desk; Leahy No. 129, as modified with changes that are at the desk; and Pryor-Blunt No. 82; that no other first-degree amendments to the substitute or the underlying bill be in order; that no second-degree amendments be in order to any of the amendments listed above prior to the votes; that the time until 2:15 p.m. be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, with 30 minutes of Republican time under the control of Senator MORAN prior to votes in relation to the amendments in the order listed; that upon disposition of the Pryor-Blunt amendment No. 82, the Durbin second-degree amendment to the Toomey amendment No. 115 be withdrawn; that it be in order for the Toomey amendment to be modified with the changes that are at the desk; that the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the Toomey amendment No. 115, as modified; that upon disposition of the Toomey amendment, the Senate proceed to vote on the Mikulski-Shelby substitute amendment, as amended; that all amendments, with the exception of the Mikulski-Shelby substitute, be subject to a 60-affirmative-vote threshold; that upon disposition of the substitute amendment, as amended, the Senate proceed to vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the underlying bill; that if cloture is invoked on H.R. 933, as amended, all postcloture time be yielded back and the Senate proceed to vote on passage of H.R. 933, as amended; and, finally, that all votes after the first vote be 10-minute votes and there be 2 minutes equally divided in the usual form between the votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I appreciate everyone's understanding on both sides. This is going to allow us to get to the issue at hand very soon, and that is the budget, with Senators MURRAY and SESSIONS leading us on that issue.

Also, we were able to get a number of these amendments that people have been wanting very badly to get. So I appreciate everything people have done to this point.

AMENDMENT NO. 72

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to support an amendment to H.R. 933 requiring the military services to resume their tuition assistance programs, which are so vital to our military's professional and educational development.

On March 5, 2013, the Department of Defense Comptroller Robert Hale sent a letter to the services to provide "additional guidance for handling budgetary uncertainty in fiscal year 2013." In his letter, Secretary Hale said that "all services should consider significant reductions in funding new tuition assistance applications."

Three days later, on March 8, the Army suspended tuition assistance for all its soldiers—Guard and Reserve—and as a result, more than one million Army soldiers immediately lost this important education benefit. There was not a single exception, not one, not even for troops wounded in combat.

The Air Force, Coast Guard, and Marines also suspended their tuition assistance programs.

This matter concerns me greatly, and I hope it does my colleagues as well. I understand the difficult fiscal decisions facing our military as a result of the sequester, but I object to the way they are handling tuition assistance with what amounts to blunt force policy making.

I want to reexamine the exact wording of Secretary Hale's letter. He stated that the military services "should consider significant reductions in the tuition program." I want to repeat, he said to "consider significant reductions." Although his guidance was non-specific in terms of what amounts to "significant," four of our five military services followed with the most extreme reduction possible—they suspended all tuition assistance, indefinitely.

This decision affects lives, real lives of one of our nation's greatest treasures—the less than 1 percent of our fellow citizens who are willing to volunteer and serve in our Armed Forces, regardless of the dangers they are likely to face in the defense of freedom.

I want to highlight one example of the thousands of lives now affected—a young soldier who recently enlisted in the National Guard. His personal story reflects the negative impact the tuition assistance cuts are going to have on our Armed Forces.

I saw him interviewed by a news station. He is 19, but with his new buzz cut, he looked much younger. His military mannerisms were unmistakable he gave short responses, always beginning with a "Sir" or "Ma'am."

When asked how the decision to suspend tuition assistance affected him, he said, politely, "I was really counting" on tuition assistance for college.

You see, this young man does not have any comparable education benefits to fall back on. He is only 19, as I said, and just back from training. As a Guardsman, he would need to deploy at

least once to receive some of the new GI Bill benefits.

What do you think he will tell his friends about the military as a result of this experience? What will his family say? And how much warning did we give this young man that he could no longer count on \$4,500 per year in tuition assistance?

As I said, this young man was 19 years old. Last month the veterans' unemployment rate for those ages 18 to 24 rose again. It is now a very troubling 36.2 percent. We are in the midst of a grave unemployment crisis and now is the time to invest—not divest—in continuing education for our military.

This is not the way we should treat our service men and women. We should keep our commitments, especially those we have made to those who are willing to sacrifice everything for their fellow Americans and the Nation.

I urge my friends and colleagues to support our amendment to require the services to resume tuition assistance the minute this bill passes. It is sponsored by Senators INHOFE and HAGAN, and it is a necessary response to an unnecessarily harsh and short-sighted policy decision.

The sequester is not a thoughtful or balanced approach to cutting spending, and we should find an alternative. But, until that moment occurs, everyone, especially the military services, must reject the impulse to “grab low hanging fruit,” and cut it down, in its entirety, simply because it is more convenient.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I commend the chairwoman and vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Senators MIKULSKI and SHELBY, on crafting a strong bill to close out the remaining 6 months of the fiscal year. This bill was developed under difficult circumstances and time constraints, and I really feel they have done a good job of returning some semblance of regular order to this process. I am hopeful this progress will continue in the coming fiscal year.

One of my disappointments with this legislation, however, is that we are not able to fund any new Army Corps of Engineers projects.

The lack of new starts in the Corps is of particular concern to my State, as it impedes progress on the flood control project in Hamilton City, CA. It is a project that could potentially serve as a model for Corp projects throughout the Nation. More importantly, the construction of a new levee is critical for the protection of Hamilton City and Glenn County from catastrophic flooding. The project has been ready for construction for several years now but has been entangled in the new starts prohibition.

It is my hope and intention that for fiscal year 2014 we will have regular order in appropriations, and I will work to support this project moving forward.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I met with FAA Administrator Michael Huerta last week to discuss sequestra-

tion and how it will affect our national aviation network. Sequestration will reduce the FAA's budget by approximately \$600 million in the middle of this fiscal year. The Administrator told me this swift and sudden reduction in funding will have serious consequences to the efficiency of our national aviation system, especially in Illinois. Airport managers throughout the State of Illinois have also registered their serious concerns about the sequestration impact on commercial and general aviation.

The FAA will have to severely reduce service or completely close approximately 180 air traffic control towers across the country. Nine air traffic control towers in Illinois will have their service either eliminated or severely reduced: Alton, Aurora, Bloomington-Normal, Decatur, DuPage, Carbondale, Marion, Springfield and Waukegan. The FAA has also said that overnight air traffic control service at Peoria and Midway airports could be eliminated. These are serious steps that will increase delays, reduce capacity and potentially compromise the safety of the airspace in the areas surrounding these airports.

I will continue to monitor this situation and will work with the FAA and airport managers throughout the State of Illinois to address aviation safety and air traffic delays.

However, the aviation system is not the only harm sequestration will have on this country. The White House estimates sequestration will reduce the readiness of our troops; put up to 10,000 veterans at substantial risk of becoming homeless; drop 70,000 children from Head Start, including 2,700 from Illinois; take nutritional assistance away from 600,000 families because of cuts to WIC; and reduce foreclosure prevention and other counseling to 75,000 fewer households.

Many Republicans have said they are comfortable with allowing sequestration to continue. They think no one will notice what sequestration does to the country. I disagree. These sequestration cuts will have real impact on real people in Illinois. We need to stop sequestration with a balanced solution of budget cuts and revenue. I am pleased we will soon start debating the budget resolution. Budget Chairwoman PATTY MURRAY has produced a budget that will stop sequestration and the negative impacts it will have on our economy, our troops and working families across America.

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

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I will vote for the bill before us because it ensures the continued operation of government. The overall spending in the bill conforms to the Budget Control Act yet provides needed flexibility for

agencies to operate as best they can while under sequestration.

I will continue to seek a comprehensive, bipartisan approach to avoid the harmful effects of sequestration. Any compromise to do so will require both prudent spending cuts and additional revenues. Considering that revenues are necessary as part of the way to alleviate the negative effects of the sequester, this bill is not the appropriate vehicle to address our current budgetary situation. I am hopeful that by passing this bill and ensuring no government shutdown occurs, we can work in a bipartisan and responsible manner to undo sequestration.

This bill does contain important funding for Michigan, including \$210.5 million for Army research on combat vehicle and automotive technologies through the Army Tank and Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center, TARDEC, in Warren. TARDEC is the Department of Defense's leading laboratory for research and development of advanced military vehicle technologies, including efforts to protect Army vehicles against rocket propelled grenades, improvised explosive devices and explosively formed projectiles; advanced materials for tactical vehicle armor; more efficient engines; fuel cell and hybrid electric vehicles; unmanned ground vehicles; computer simulations for vehicle design and training of Army personnel; and technology partnerships with the automotive industry.

The bill also includes funding for the programs of the Army's TACOM Life Cycle Management Command, LCMC, in Warren. TACOM LCMC is the Army's lead organization for the development and acquisition of ground vehicle combat, automotive and armaments technologies and systems. TACOM LCMC-managed systems include the Abrams main battle tank, Bradley Fighting Vehicle, Stryker Armored Vehicle, Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle, and all Army tactical vehicles, such as the HMMWV and Family of Medium Tactical Vehicles.

The bill provides full funding for transportation programs authorized under MAP-21, the 2-year transportation bill signed into law in July that provides critically needed funding for our Nation's roads and bridges. This is a victory because the CR for the first half of the year, and the House-passed CR, do not include the full funding levels authorized in MAP 21.

The bill also provides needed support for American manufacturing. The Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership Program, MEP, receives level funding at \$128.5 million. It is the only Federal program dedicated to providing technical support and services to small and medium-sized manufacturers. MEP is a nationwide network of proven resources that enables manufacturers to compete globally, supports greater supply chain integration, and provides access to information, training and technologies that improve efficiency, productivity, and profitability.