

dispute resolution venue. Ideally the bill would give Federal district courts exclusive jurisdiction in matters concerning the implementation of this legislation. Policy changes with such far-reaching effects inevitably lead to unexpected issues and consequences. Giving Federal courts this jurisdiction would ensure greater uniformity and application of this legislation across the country.

These are only a few of the concerns I have regarding the Marketplace Fairness Act. I don't believe these are necessarily fundamental concerns, but they are issues that need to be addressed.

I am quite certain that, if given an opportunity, the Finance Committee could address these issues without inexorably changing the underlying purpose of the bill. However, if we proceed with floor debate on the Marketplace Fairness Act as is, we will not have that opportunity.

The Senate simply cannot continue to operate this way. Once again, we need to restore the deliberative traditions of the Senate, and that means a return to regular order.

I know a number of my colleagues have expressed similar concerns about the need to restore the committee process in the Senate. I hope they will join with me in voting no on cloture on the motion to proceed to the Marketplace Fairness Act. This doesn't necessarily determine how I am going to vote on the final analysis of this, but I sure as heck would like to approach this in a much more intelligent and legislatively profound way than we are doing here tonight.

By the way, we can talk about the fairness of this thing, but there are a lot of stakeholders that are not quite convinced this is as fair as those who are supporting the bill actually claim.

I hope we can have a more deliberative process to examine these matters. The distinguished chairman of the committee has offered to have a hearing on the bill, mark up the bill, and consider it in a regular-order approach in the immediate future as soon as we get back from this next recess. Frankly, I think that is a pretty good offer, and it is one we ought to honor if we honor our committee structure in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I understand that unanimous consent was given earlier to have printed in the RECORD an op-ed from the Wall Street Journal by Arthur B. Laffer entitled "Tax Internet Sales Stimulate Growth."

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. Laffer, as most Americans know, is a distinguished economist. People sometimes said he was President Reagan's favorite economist. He makes the argument that many conservatives and many Governors across the country make, which is: Give us the authority to

make these decisions for ourselves. We will collect taxes from everybody who already owes the taxes by requiring sellers to collect the taxes whether they are in State or out of State, and then we will lower the tax rate.

Mr. Laffer says fairness legislation that collects taxes from everyone who owes it and then lowers the tax rate is better for economic growth, which is something our country desperately needs.

Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the comments supporting specifically the legislation from Al Cardenas, chairman of the American Conservative Union, Governor Mike Pence of Indiana, and former Governor Mitch Daniels of Indiana.

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

CONSERVATIVES SUPPORT MARKETPLACE
FAIRNESS

AL CARDENAS, CHAIRMAN OF THE AMERICAN
CONSERVATIVE UNION

"When it comes to state sales taxes, it is time to address the area where federally mandated prejudice is most egregious—the policy toward Internet sales, the decades old inequity between online and in-person sales as outdated and unfair."

GOVERNOR MIKE PENCE

"I don't think Congress should be in the business of picking winners and losers. Inaction by Congress today results in a system today, that does pick winners and losers."

GOVERNOR MITCH DANIELS

"Sales taxes that states impose ought to be paid, and paid by everybody equally and collected by everybody in the retail business . . . We're not talking about an additional or new tax here—we're talking about the collection of a tax that's existed a long time."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, what is the parliamentary situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business for 1 more minute and then morning business will be closed and we will proceed to the motion under the agreement.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I will take that 1 minute, please.

This is pretty simple. This legislation is new and only recently introduced. It has never been vetted. Others have but not this legislation. This bill is fraught with all kinds of problems, some of which have already been enumerated on the floor. There are many unintended circumstances.

The only right thing to do is to permit this to go back to the committee so the committee can take it up. As chairman of the committee, I have made that promise many times. We have already had hearings. We will have a markup on this bill in the next work period. A markup means there will be a vote. I stand here ready to abide by the vote. I submit right now that the majority of the Members of the committee maybe will let us work this thing. I don't know. But that is the process. That is what we should be doing, not just ramming this thing

through, which is so complex. There are so many unintended consequences. Many of the consequences have been enumerated and not addressed but could be addressed and would be addressed in a proper committee forum.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING
BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

MARKETPLACE FAIRNESS ACT OF
2013—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 743 which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 41, S. 743, a bill to restore States' sovereign rights to enforce State and local sales and use tax laws, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion to invoke cloture.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 41, S. 743, To restore States' sovereign rights to enforce State and local sales and use tax laws, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Richard J. Durbin, Sherrod Brown, Sheldon Whitehouse, Amy Klobuchar, Joe Manchin III, Richard Blumenthal, Patrick J. Leahy, Martin Heinrich, Angus S. King, Jr., Al Franken, Tom Harkin, Carl Levin, Mark Begich, Brian Schatz, Robert Menendez, Tammy Baldwin.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 743, a bill to restore States' sovereign rights to enforce State and local sales and use taxes, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY), and the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. SHAHEEN), are necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON) and the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 74, nays 20, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 107 Leg.]

YEAS—74

Alexander	Feinstein	Mikulski
Baldwin	Fischer	Moran
Barrasso	Flake	Murphy
Begich	Franken	Murray
Bennet	Gillibrand	Nelson
Blumenthal	Graham	Portman
Blunt	Hagan	Pryor
Boozman	Harkin	Reed
Brown	Heinrich	Reid
Burr	Heitkamp	Risch
Cantwell	Hirono	Rockefeller
Cardin	Hoeben	Sanders
Carper	Isakson	Schatz
Casey	Johanns	Schumer
Chambliss	Johnson (SD)	Sessions
Coats	Kaine	Shelby
Cochran	King	Stabenow
Collins	Klobuchar	Thune
Coons	Landrieu	Udall (CO)
Corker	Leahy	Udall (NM)
Cowan	Levin	Warner
Crapo	Manchin	Warren
Donnelly	McCaIn	Whitehouse
Durbin	McCasKill	Wicker
Enzi	Menendez	

NAYS—20

Ayotte	Heller	Rubio
Baucus	Inhofe	Scott
Coburn	Kirk	Tester
Cornyn	Lee	Toomey
Cruz	McConnell	Vitter
Grassley	Paul	Wyden
Hatch	Roberts	

NOT VOTING—6

Boxer	Lautenberg	Murkowski
Johnson (WI)	Merkley	Shaheen

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 74, the nays are 20. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I was unable to attend the rollcall vote that occurred on Monday, April 22, 2013. Had I been present, I would have voted in favor of the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 743, the Marketplace Fairness Act. •

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time during adjournment, recess, and morning business count postcloture on the motion to proceed to S. 743.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I designate the Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN, as the floor manager for the consideration of S. 743.

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. UDALL of Colorado. 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 Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I heard the Senator from Colorado. My remarks are about 25 minutes. Are the remarks of the Senator from Colorado significantly shorter?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I have 3 or 4 minutes of remarks.

Mr. FRANKEN. I yield to my colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I am very grateful to my colleague from Minnesota for yielding for those 3 or 4 minutes. I thank him for his forbearance.

I rise in support of our local small businesses and retailers across Colorado and I would like to think across our great country. Senator DURBIN and Senator ENZI have introduced a bipartisan bill, the Marketplace Fairness Act, of which I am a cosponsor. It would level the playing field for businesses located in Colorado by requiring out-of-State online sellers to collect and remit the same local and State sales taxes they have to pay.

It just makes common sense, which is why a similar amendment during the budget debate a few weeks ago, which I also cosponsored, passed by a bipartisan vote of 75 to 24.

The Marketplace Fairness Act is about achieving equitable treatment for all sales so businesses with a physical presence in Colorado, employing Colorado workers living in our communities, are not at a competitive disadvantage with out-of-State businesses that sell products online.

Online marketplaces have created great companies and innovative ways of doing business, but Federal law has failed to keep up with the pace of online sales. Again, we have had a lot of innovation in the online space, but Federal law has failed to keep up with the pace of online sales.

Back when trading posts and local markets were the most prevalent places for consumer goods, they did not have to worry about out-of-State sellers. Today, though, nearly 1 in 10 sales occurs online. Because of these online sales, we now have two inequitable forms of treatment in the marketplace: one where local brick-and-mortar retailers have to pay sales taxes and one where out-of-State online retailers get to take advantage of a loophole and avoid collecting any sales taxes at all. This has, unfortunately, created a disincentive to shop at and support our small local businesses.

It has been said, for at least a decade, that fixing this inequity is too difficult or it will burden certain online retailers and consumers. However, it should be noted this legislation requires States to simplify sales tax laws that apply to these out-of-State sales, in addition to providing software free of charge to sellers in order to make the task of collecting and remitting this revenue as painless as possible.

Many States have already taken this step. My State of Colorado is considering legislation this year to conform to the rules set out in this bill.

The version of the Marketplace Fairness Act we are going to consider has

been negotiated by Members of both political parties, and it is a testament to what we can do when we work together to benefit our country and our economy. Not only will this legislation help level the playing field for mom-and-pop shops across our State and our country, it will help restore a lost revenue base for local governments that has slowly been eroded with the expansion of online out-of-State sales.

Most Americans know those commonsense, fair taxes support our schools, police and fire departments, and other critical local services. At the very least I think we can all agree that we do not want to penalize Main Street retailers for creating jobs in Colorado communities, which is why this bipartisan bill is so important.

I look forward to voting for the Marketplace Fairness Act, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same. I want to acknowledge my colleague from Minnesota for yielding me the time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DONNELLY.) The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. DURBIN. Would the Senator from Minnesota yield for a moment? I believe the Senator from Oregon would like to make a very brief statement for the RECORD.

Mr. FRANKEN. I will yield.

Mr. MERKLEY. I thank my colleague from Minnesota. The vote was closed as I came in the door. Had I been here, I would have voted against cloture. I want that to be a clear part of the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 25 minutes.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about climate change. But I first do want to say how pleased I am that we just got cloture to move to debate on the Marketplace Fairness Act. I am a strong supporter of the legislation. As I said, I am a cosponsor. I look forward to the upcoming debate. I plan to speak on this legislation further tomorrow.

Now I would like to talk about climate change. More specifically, I rise to suggest that we in this body talk more about climate change so that we can agree on taking action to address it. We need to address the environmental impacts that we are currently facing and the future impacts that will only become exponentially worse if we fail to act. 2012 was the hottest year on record in the continental United States. In fact, it beat the previous record by a full degree.

To give you some idea about how remarkable a full degree of warming in 1 year is, scientists tell us since the last ice age 20,000 years ago the Earth has warmed only 16 degrees at the most. Since we began actually measuring

temperatures in the continental United States and recording them 117 years ago, the variance between the coldest year and the warmest year has only been 4.2 degrees.

So for the temperature to jump a full degree in 1 year is not just remarkable, it is alarming. Often when people consider the harmful consequences of climate change and its cost, they are talking about the future. But make no mistake, climate change is already costing the United States serious money.

2012 was a year when a historic drought caused more than 70 percent of U.S. counties to be declared disaster areas. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has estimated the drought's impact on the agricultural sector to be around \$50 to \$60 billion. That cost gets passed on to every American. The drought destroyed or damaged major crops all over this country, making corn and soybeans more expensive, increasing animal feed costs. So Americans are paying more for meats and other animal-based products.

The 2012 drought dramatically lowered water levels on the Mississippi River, seriously interfering with our ability to transport our agricultural goods to market to compete with those from other countries. So that barges did not run aground, shippers sent them down the Mississippi River the last few months half full, say, with soybeans, making our beans less competitive with Brazilian beans.

More and more of my conversation with Minnesota soybean growers who export over one-third of their crop focused on this very issue. Climate change is exacerbating our Nation's wildfires, and that is costing us serious money. When Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell testified before the Senate Energy Committee, I asked him about the link between forest fires and climate change. He told us that throughout the country we are seeing longer fire seasons on average by more than 30 days. Wildfires are also larger and more intense.

I asked Chief Tidwell whether scientists at the Forest Service thought that climate change was increasing the size and intensity of wildfires and extending their season. Without hesitation he said yes. The Forest Service is spending more and more of its budget fighting wildfires, now about half of its budget. Longer fire seasons and larger more intense fires are just going to eat up more of that budget.

Not only is climate change worsening our forest fires, it is also exacerbating other problems plaguing our forests. That includes a very serious bark beetle crop. The bark beetle is normally kept in check because cold winters at high altitudes kill its larva.

Let's talk about the bark beetle at high altitudes. Their larva used to freeze. But now, because of climate change, that is not happening. The winters have gotten warmer and at higher altitudes, and the bark beetles

are surviving. That means they are destroying more forests.

Similarly, in some Colorado forests scientists have shown that because of warmer weather, mountain pine beetles have gone from reproducing once a year to twice a year. In a little over a decade, this mountain pine beetle has killed more than 70,000 square miles' worth of trees. That is an area equivalent to the entire State of Washington.

Of course, we cannot talk about climate change without talking about sea level rise. I serve on the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Several months ago we had a hearing on sea level rise. We heard testimony about how rising sea level is increasing the size of flood zones and increasing damage that occurs from storm surges.

One of the witnesses told us that just a few extra inches of sea level could result in a storm surge that could flood the New York City subway system. It sounded like something out of science fiction. Yet a little over 6 months later that is exactly what happened. That is exactly what happened when Hurricane Sandy hit New York City and flooded the subways.

My colleagues do not need to be reminded of the cost of Hurricane Sandy. It is costing taxpayers a staggering \$60 billion. Unfortunately, only one of my colleagues from the other side of the aisle, the ranking member, Senator MURKOWSKI, attended this hearing. This has been pretty much the case whenever we have a hearing that even tangentially relates to climate change.

A number of my colleagues in Congress do not believe that human activities contribute to climate change. Many others, I suspect, do not talk about climate change because addressing it requires making some difficult choices. But let's be clear about this. Climate change is already costing us. If we do not act now, it will worsen dramatically and be far more costly.

The Defense Department has studied potential threats to national security imposed by climate change. DOD's 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review states that climate change may act as an accelerant of instability or conflict. That, in turn, would place burdens on civilian institutions and militaries around the world. The top commander in the Pacific, ADM Samuel Locklear, has said the biggest long-term security challenge in the Pacific is climate change. As the Pacific commander he understands the impact sea level rise and extreme weather events can have on our military resources and on civilian populations in the Pacific.

My constituents in Minnesota also understand the threat of climate change. That is why recently nearly 400 people gathered at a local Lutheran church in Willmar, MN, to talk about climate change. Willmar is not a big city. So when this many people gather in one place, you know it is a big deal. They are concerned about climate change and the marked increase in severe weather occurrences.

But when they look to Washington they see a disconnect. They see a disconnect between what the country is experiencing and what Washington is doing about it—or, rather, what Washington is not doing. Outside of Washington, and not just in Minnesota, things are different. In fact, many respected Republican leaders outside of Washington understand the importance of addressing climate change.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, for example, Republican Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey acknowledged that climate change is a problem and that human activities are playing a role.

Former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California, also a Republican, has launched an organization to fight climate change. Former Utah Governor and Republican Presidential candidate John Huntsman has noted that whenever a party takes a position that runs counter to the position of 98 out of every 100 scientists, that party has a problem.

Governor Huntsman is right. Let me illustrate with an analogy. Say you went to a doctor who told you: You know, you better start eating more sensibly and start exercising because you are tremendously overweight. I see in your file that your father died of a heart attack at an early age. So you really have to go on a diet and start working out.

You say: You know what, I would like a second opinion.

So you go to a second doctor and he examines you, or she examines you, and says: OK, look, you have a family history of heart disease. Your father died of a heart attack at 40. You weigh over 300 pounds. Your cholesterol is out of control. Your blood pressure is through the roof. It would just be irresponsible of me not to immediately send you to the Mayo Clinic to this place I know. You have to go there.

Then you say: Thanks, doctor, but I would really like a third opinion.

The third doctor says: Wow. This is a problem. You know, looking at your family history and looking at you and your tests, I am amazed you are still alive. You have to do something about this.

You say: You know, I would really like a fourth opinion—and this keeps going. It takes months. Finally, you get to the 50th doctor. The 50th doctor examines you and says: Boy, it is a good thing you came to me because all this diet and exercise would have been a waste. You are doing just fine. Those other doctors, well, they are in the pockets of the fresh food and vegetable people. Enjoy life as much as you want and watch a lot of TV.

Then you learn this doctor was paid his salary by the makers of Cheetos. Don't get me wrong—Cheetos are a delicious snack. They can and should be eaten in moderation.

If 98 out of 100 doctors tell me I have a problem, I should take their advice. If those two other doctors are paid by

"Big Snack Food" the way certain climate deniers are paid by "Big Coal." I shouldn't take their advice. However, 98 out of 100 climate scientists are telling us we have a problem.

Governor Huntsman is right. Outside of Washington, many people get this. Even some of the very companies that previously funded anti-climate change efforts have turned the page on this issue. ExxonMobil used to fund the Heartland Institute, which is one of the leading climate change denial organizations. If you go to ExxonMobil's Web site today, it states, "Rising greenhouse gas emissions pose significant risks to society and ecosystems." Shell Oil states on its Web site, "CO₂ emissions must be reduced to avoid serious climate change." Even the major oil and gas companies have begun to acknowledge that climate change is real.

I respectfully suggest that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle here in Congress also need to engage in a serious conversation on climate change. At a time when Americans are dealing with record droughts and devastating hurricanes, the Senate cannot afford to simply ignore climate change. We need to talk about this, as Democratic and Republican leaders outside of Washington are talking about it. Ultimately, we need to come together to address climate change before its damaging costs to society are out of control.

I do not pretend this will be easy. Some people will point out that climate change is a global problem. It is. We can't solve it alone. We can't, and they are right. Emissions in the developing world are now on the rise. China surpasses the United States in total greenhouse gas emissions—not per capita; we are still ahead on that. But China is also making major investment in renewable energy. According to the United Nations Environmental Program, in 2011 China led the world in renewable energy investments, with nearly one-fifth of the global total. This is in spite of the fact that China's GDP in 2011 was half of our GDP. If we are going to lead the clean energy race and create good-paying jobs for Americans, we must invest in our renewable energy infrastructure.

Last year the Senate Energy Committee heard testimony regarding a report from the American Energy Innovation Council's report entitled "Catalyzing Ingenuity." The report, authored by former Lockheed Martin CEO Norman Augustine, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, and other business leaders, states:

The country has yet to embark on a clean energy innovation program commensurate with the scale of the national priorities that are at stake. In fact, rather than improve the country's energy innovation program and invest in strategic national interests, the current political environment is creating strong pressure to pull back from such efforts.

This is very important. I encourage my colleagues—especially those who oppose Federal funding for clean en-

ergy—to read this report because what people often forget is that this is nothing new. Government has always supported strategic energy priorities. As Mr. Augustine noted in his testimony, commercial nuclear power was the result of government investments in naval reactors. Do you know why natural gas is transforming our energy sector today? It is because of years of Federal support to develop hydrofracking technology. The Eastern Gas Shales Project was an initiative the Federal Government began back in 1976, before hydrofracking was a mature industry. The project set up and funded dozens of pilot demonstration projects with universities and private gas companies that tested drilling and fracturing methods. This investment by the Federal Government was instrumental in the development of the commercial extraction of natural gas from shale. In fact, microseismic imaging—a critical tool used in fracking—was originally developed by Sandia National Laboratory, a Federal energy laboratory.

The industry was also supported through tax breaks and subsidies. In fact, Mitchell Energy vice president Dan Stewart said in an interview that Mitchell Energy's first horizontal well was subsidized by the Federal Government. Mr. Mitchell said of the Department of Energy:

DOE started it, and other people took the ball and ran with it. You cannot diminish DOE's involvement.

So the basis of the natural gas revolution that is helping make America more energy independent can be traced back to Federal support. In the same way, we must support the renewable energy sector now. We need to be the ones—our country, the United States, Americans—we must be the ones who sell this transformative and environmentally friendly technology to other nations. We must do this.

We need to start by having a conversation about climate change. It would be irresponsible to avoid the issue because it is uncomfortable to talk about. The stakes are too high and we would be shirking our responsibility to our constituents, to our children, to our grandchildren, and to posterity. The discussion is not going to be easy because there are going to be painful tradeoffs. I certainly don't have all the answers. I do know we need to have the conversation. We cannot leave this issue to future generations. I have a grandchild on the way—my first. I don't want to look back and tell him that when his grandfather was in a position to do something about climate change, he chose not to because it involved some politically difficult choices. I don't want to tell him that we compromised our moral integrity for political expediency.

We all have constituents who care about this issue. When I go back to Willmar, MN, I want to tell my constituents who met in a church and spoke about climate change that we

heard them. I want to tell them we are working together across the aisle to talk about and address one of the most difficult problems we face.

I invite my colleagues to join in this endeavor and make dealing with climate change a bipartisan issue. We owe it to the Nation and to future generations.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, before he leaves the floor, let me commend my colleague from Minnesota for making so many thoughtful points in this effort to deal with climate change. Having returned from Oregon, with a whole host of meetings in connection with Earth Day, the Senator is spot-on in speaking about the enormity of the problem. It is very clear that the planet is getting warmer, drought is becoming more serious, the fires are becoming more catastrophic and the storms increasingly brutal. It is very clear that now Democrats and Republicans must come together around this issue.

The Senator and I serve together on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. This will be priority business for us, and his thoughtful remarks today are yet another effort in terms of trying to bring people together. The focus of the Senator's remarks has been not to say it is this person's fault or another person's fault, it is about how Democrats and Republicans need to come together.

I commend my Democratic colleague for his good speech and the good fortune to chair the subcommittee on Energy and Natural Resources, where he will be able to focus on these issues.

I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business for up to 30 minutes.

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

Mr. WYDEN. The Senate has now moved to the Marketplace Fairness Act. I say this, frankly, a little dubiously because I think it really ought to be called the Shop Canada or Shop Mexico Act. It will make it attractive for businesses located in the United States to set up shops overseas as the coercion that is applied to the United States will not affect foreign retailers.

What I wish to do tonight is speak for a brief period of time—because we are going to have opportunity throughout the week to discuss this—in the hopes that the points I highlight tonight will help start a bipartisan effort to attempt to fix what I think are the most serious problems with the Marketplace Fairness Act.

The essence of my concern is that coercion and discrimination are not what America is all about. Those are the fundamental principles of the Marketplace Fairness Act. What I wish to do is be very specific with respect to how this coercion and discrimination, particularly against some of the most innovative forces in the American economy, are going to take their toll.

With respect to coercion, this is legislation that enabled one State to impose the enforcement of its laws on 49 other States and the territories without the approval of such States and territories. Let me repeat this. It is coercion. It can be forced on these other States against their will. In effect, under the Marketplace Fairness Act, businesses may be audited by a myriad of out-of-State tax collectors and be forced to defend themselves in out-of-State courts.

A vote for the Marketplace Fairness Act without efforts to try to promote some element of voluntary participation is a vote to subject a Senator's home State Internet companies to the whim and will of tax collectors and State courts around the country. This, in essence, is the coercion aspect of this legislation.

I have suggested to Senators that at a minimum this effort, this legislation should be altered to allow for voluntary compacts. Congress would say States could voluntarily take these steps with respect to interstate tax collection rather than being required to do it. I have heard my colleagues who say perhaps this would make one State a haven with respect to Internet sales. The reality is that States rights are about States rights. One State may look to choose to incent one particular type of business or another, but this is ultimately a State decision.

If you are, in fact, a supporter of States rights, why would you oppose something that allows a State to voluntarily choose what course it wishes to promote with respect to the collection of online taxes? This is not what this bill is all about. It is not voluntary, it is coercive. That is why, in my view, it undermines what I think the principles of our country are all about. Our country is not about coercion, it is not about discrimination. This is what the bill, regrettably, is all about.

Let me outline the second point with respect to how the Marketplace Fairness Act discriminates against Internet companies. The Marketplace Fairness Act relies on Internet sellers to determine the address of where consumers are located in order to generate an approximation of where goods or services sold by an online retailer will be consumed. There is no similar requirement with respect to brick-and-mortar businesses—no similar requirement with respect to brick-and-mortar businesses—even though consumers often travel across State lines in order to purchase goods and services that may be unavailable to them in their home jurisdictions or available at lower sales or use tax rates.

The Marketplace Fairness Act does not require brick-and-mortar firms to obtain and use consumer information to determine where a good or service may be consumed. Why should the Federal Government require Internet companies to collect and remit sales and use taxes on behalf of consumers but

not impose any such burden on brick-and-mortar firms providing goods and services to out-of-State consumers?

So the irony of this is that really about 15 years ago—and it has been particularly satisfying to me in terms of our service in the Senate—as we began to look at policies that would allow innovation and technology to grow—and I will talk a little about how some of those policies led to the first investments in social media—we established two principles with respect to technology policy: No. 1, we said let's ensure there is no discrimination. What goes on off-line and what goes on online should be parallel so that we can encourage both parts of the American economy.

That principle has made a lot of sense. In fact, it has led to a great many stores—I am sure at home in Indiana for the Presiding Officer of the Senate—with bricks and clicks looking to try to have a vigorous presence in States because the two are mutually reinforcing. To do that we have to ensure there is a policy of nondiscrimination.

What I have done is outline very specifically about how the Marketplace Fairness Act moves away from that principle of nondiscrimination by giving, in many jurisdictions, the brick-and-mortar retailers a leg up. And what I am in favor of is continuing that policy which has made sense for 15 years.

We also talked about doing no harm and ensuring we especially promoted voluntary approaches—voluntary approaches. I think it was before the Presiding Officer was in the Congress, but one of the things I was especially proud of was our help in generating investment in the social media back when I came to the Senate. There was a great concern about censorship online. Of course, all of us, as parents, were horrified by some of the smut and pornography that was coming available online, all over the Web, and so a big debate was held.

There were essentially two approaches: One was to set up a big censorship effort that would say, for example, if somebody posted some of this horrible pornography on a Web site or a blog, the Web site would be held secondarily liable for this material posted on the site. A lot of us said: No way the Net is going to be able to grow if Web sites and blogs are held liable for something that is posted on their site, which they probably aren't even going to know anything about because there are, of course, thousands and thousands of postings—millions in the case of some of the big sites.

So working with a very conservative Republican in the House, Congressman Cox, we wrote an alternative approach which encouraged voluntary approaches with respect to dealing with a societal problem, and a very serious problem with respect to pornography. Back then the Congress didn't know how to deal with these issues, so both

approaches—both the censorship approach and the voluntary approach to help parents filter out the smut—actually got into the law and it went to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court struck down the censorship approach and upheld the voluntary bipartisan approach Congressman Cox and I put together.

Today, when we talk to people in the social media, they will tell us that voluntary approach was, to a great extent, what encouraged the first investments in social media. People in social media will say nobody would have invested in the future Facebooks and Twitters and the like if they thought the social media sites, the Web sites and the like, were going to be held secondarily liable for something that was posted.

That voluntary approach, which did so much to boost our economy, is being rejected in the Marketplace Fairness Act as it is written because this bill goes to a coercive approach, as I said, that would outline the ability for one State to impose the enforcement of its laws on 49 other States and territories without the approval of those States and territories.

So I bring up this tonight because I am very hopeful as this debate goes forward and the bill is considered further that at a minimum the sponsors of the legislation—and all of us here can count and look at vote totals—will see that allowing for voluntary compacts is really what States rights are all about, No. 1. It is that voluntary approach that has made such a difference in encouraging the innovation and growth of the Internet and technology.

One other point I would like to mention tonight is what this bill does with respect to America's ability to compete in a global economy. This is, in effect, an unprecedented approach that would apply local laws to the global medium that is the Internet.

For example, I just came back—flew about 6,000 miles over the last few days—from meeting with constituents at home. I was in southern Oregon until the middle of the day yesterday. They have a big e-commerce effort going in a wonderful company called Fire Mountain Gems in Grants Pass, OR, with hundreds of employees and a very exciting online business. Their big competitor in Grants Pass, OR—which is a town that has been hard hit economically. We are working hard on their forestry issues, particularly trying to get the harvest up. That is something I am working on as chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and I had a good chance to talk about resources policy with the Presiding Officer of the Senate.

One of the things they very much want to do in Grants Pass is find as many good-paying jobs as they can, given the fact the economy is hurting in rural areas.

So as I try to boost the harvest in Grants Pass, OR, and get people back to work in the woods, I am obviously looking for other areas where businesses could grow. This legislation, as

written, will deal a significant body blow to a business's ability to grow, such as the one I know about in Grants Pass, OR. Here is why: The legislation doesn't apply to foreign retailers, and the competition for Fire Mountain Gems is certainly overseas, with a host of companies in this space.

It also has huge implications for the northern border and the southern border of our country because so many of the promising businesses in those communities are going to say to themselves: We are patriotic Americans. We deeply believe in our country and our values, but how are we going to compete? How are we going to figure out a way to wade through more than 9,000 taxing jurisdictions? Wouldn't it be more sensible to just move a half hour across the border and not have to go through any of this?

I just don't think this works as it relates to the global economy. Maybe this bill ought to be called the Shop China or Shop Mexico or Shop Canada bill. Whatever you call it, it seeks to apply local laws to a global medium. That, in my view, defies common sense, and, by the way, that too has been a principle that has been rejected in debates about tech policy over the years.

So I hope Senators are going to be open to working with the bipartisan group—there are a host of Senators on both sides of the aisle who care about these issues—to take some of the principles that have been central to the growth of innovation, online business—particularly as it relates to new apps and new technologies—that have worked for the last few years and build them into this legislation, rather than repudiate the principles of voluntarism and nondiscrimination that have been so key, as I have outlined here tonight, to investment in the social media, to encouraging innovation through non-discriminatory tax policies, and to new innovations that we began to bring into the policy arena, such as digital signatures.

There we had the same thing—a great concern about whether this was equitable, whether it would work, but after hearings and a thoughtful analysis, a group of us wrote that law as well. So whether it was regulation, whether it was taxes, whether it was innovation such as digital signatures, the four or five laws over the last 15 years that have paid off for technology and innovation and small business—the basic principles behind those laws—are being repudiated in this bill and, I believe, will be injurious to the country.

So my hope is, as we go forward, that we can take some of those principles that have been key to growth in the technology sector and start building them into this discussion with respect to collection of online sales taxes.

By the way, for more than a decade, this has been a topic. I and others have said we are very open to any and all approaches to collect taxes owed, and particularly ones that don't amount to what looks like bureaucratic water tor-

ture associated with the collection process. And I think Senators are underestimating how difficult this will be.

I would particularly cite the proposition that if it was so easy, it would have been done some time ago. By the way, it would have been done with voluntary actions through many of these taxing jurisdictions rather than the coercive approach that is advanced in this legislation.

I see my friend from New Hampshire. I was particularly struck, I would say to my colleague, about how the principles I am talking about today—coercion and nondiscrimination—apply in my colleague's State as well because her State, as so many others, would face the prospect where online retailers would have one set of burdensome rules that wouldn't apply to a whole host of other businesses. It brings back the principle of discrimination we rejected years and years ago.

Having heard the Senator from New Hampshire speak eloquently on these issues, I look forward to her remarks. When I came to the floor, I said the key to successful tech legislation for the last 15 years has been two principles: a voluntary approach rather than a coercive approach and nondiscrimination rather than discrimination. The Senator from New Hampshire and I are from States where this bill brings those policies—coercion and discrimination—back in very stark terms that will be injurious to the citizens we represent and harm the cause of innovation across the country.

I thank the Senator from New Hampshire for all her contributions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I couldn't say it any more eloquently than my friend from Oregon whose small businesses are facing the same kind of discrimination our small businesses in New Hampshire are facing.

I came straight from the airport—my flight was delayed; so I wasn't here to vote no on this legislation that I think has not been thought through carefully because, as the Senator from Oregon points out, it is going to affect innovation and the ability to use the Internet in a way that I think most of this should be used. It is going to set up a whole new set of rules that are very difficult for our businesses in New Hampshire and Oregon to comply with. I think it is not the best way for us to go about taxation and doing it in a fair way. Sadly, as a result of this legislation, if it passes, as the Senator pointed out, we are going to see a whole different set of rules for one set of businesses than for another and that just isn't right.

So I plan to come down to the floor and speak at greater length about this tomorrow, but I wanted to come this afternoon, when I heard the Senator was speaking as I came from the airport, to join the Senator in opposition to the legislation and point out that I

certainly would have voted no and intend to continue to do everything I can to try to address what I think is a very unfair way to deal with taxation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I wish to thank the Senator from New Hampshire for her contribution.

Obviously, the vote this afternoon didn't go our way. My hope is that as Senators from both political parties have a chance over the next few days to lay out the consequences of the two principles we have been talking about—staying away from coercion and staying away from discrimination—by the time the Senate has completed debate and votes, we can come up with a proposal that will not set back the cause of innovation in this country.

We both have talked about the fact that the March numbers on jobs were not where we would like them to be. Particularly distressing is the number of people who seem to be either dropping out of the workforce or working part time because they can't find anything full time. Now we are looking at policies that will make efforts to put those people back to work even harder.

So I am very appreciative of the fact that the Senator was able to come to the floor; because what I tried to do over the last 20 minutes or half an hour is outline what has worked in technology policy for the last 15 years. It has been nondiscrimination and non-coercion. This bill repudiates both of those. My hope is the Senator and I and other Senators on both sides of the aisle can find a way to change this legislation so as to at least not go backward with respect to those values that have been so key to the growth of jobs in the technology sector. To have the Senator here is so helpful, and I am very appreciative.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I look forward to working with my friend from Oregon to try and amend this legislation to address some of the concerns that we, along with a number of other members of this body, share. It should be an interesting week.

Mr. WYDEN. A good note to close on.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and 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. MORAN. 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. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I address the Senate as if in morning business.

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

VETERANS CLAIMS BACKLOG

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, next month, Americans across the country will gather on Memorial Day to remember the sacrifices made by generations of men and women in service to

our country and to preserve our freedoms.

There is no group of Americans I hold in higher regard than our Nation's veterans. Their service and sacrifice have allowed us to live in the strongest, freest, and greatest country in the world. We should, in the Senate, utilize their service as our role models.

America's veterans have fought tyrants and terrorist to keep our country safe and secure. Yet when they return home from war, they have to continue to fight many battles.

Veterans are struggling to find a job. The unemployment rate for the post-September 11 veteran remains well above the national average of 10 percent.

Some veterans continue to face difficulties accessing quality health care services, especially those as in my State where there are rural areas and long distances to travel for the care they need, and many veterans must wait long periods of time for their benefit claims to be processed by the Federal Government, which is what I would like to highlight today.

Honoring those who served our country certainly means more than paying tribute to them on Memorial Day. It means keeping our promises. We owe our Nation's veterans the absolute best—the best health care, the best educational opportunities, the best support possible to help them continue to have successful lives after their service to our country. But all too often, veterans tell me they had to wait months—and in some cases years—for their benefits to be processed. This is simply unacceptable.

I served on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee for 14 years. I now serve on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. Making an improvement in the quality of life for our Nation's veterans is one of my top priorities, and I want to continue to raise the concerns that are raised to me until progress is made.

In January of this year, the VA outlined a strategic plan to reduce their enormous claims backlog. According to this new plan, they estimate they will resolve around 1.9 million claims in 2015, which is an ambitious goal because that would be roughly an 80-percent increase in the productivity over the 2012 level.

I certainly appreciate Secretary Shinseki's commitment to eliminating the backlog of claims and his initiatives to transform the claims process, but there is evidence against the VA's assertion that the claims backlog will be remedied by 2015.

In the 2010, the VA projected that by this year—2013—it would take 160 days per claim to reach a decision. But in the first quarter of this fiscal year, it actually took more than 270 days per claim. It seems the numbers are, once again, continuing to be headed in the wrong direction.

In fact, the number of claims considered backlogged—or have been pending

for more than 125 days—grew from fewer than 150,000 in 2009 to 600,000 in March of this year. In total, about 70 percent of the currently pending claims are considered backlogged.

The Presiding Officer has probably heard the saying that past performance is a good indicator of future performance. If this pattern continues, my fear is—and reality suggests—this problem only gets worse.

As we draw down in Afghanistan and the Armed Services reduce their force structure, the number of service members who will rely upon the VA will increase significantly. If the VA is not able to adequately handle claims now, how will the process work when even more veterans claims are being submitted?

As recently as September of last year, the inspector general of the VA found that the VA had not yet fully tested their new system, which is supposed to help them process these claims more efficiently. At that point, the new system could not even process a claim from the beginning of the end of the rating process.

I met recently with Kansas veterans who were here in Washington, DC, as part of national veterans service organization—the American Legion, the Disabled Veterans of America, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars—and their No. 1 concern is the unreasonable amount of time it takes for benefits claims to be processed.

Oftentimes the conversations I have are with folks who have an urgent need related to their home or health care, but they are stuck waiting on the VA to get back to them. I know my colleagues in the Senate experience the same kind of stories. These are real individuals, with real needs, whose lives are impacted when their benefits claims go unresolved day after day.

A step in the right direction was announced this last Friday from the Department of Veterans Affairs: The VA is finally responding to our concerns about claim backlogs and expediting the process for claims that have been held for more than 1 year.

It is absurd a veteran would have been waiting for 1 year or more to have claims processed, and I am pleased to see the VA is taking action and I am glad the message is being heard. I hope it has success.

Nonetheless, we certainly know that challenges remain, and it is important to me that the VA get to the bottom of this issue and come up with a solution to improve the claims process and eliminate this backlog in a timely manner.

The government is not the only industry that has to process an enormous volume of benefit claims. Large insurance companies process claims successfully every day, so the VA should consult with the private sector and learn from their experiences a way to process claims. The VA does not need to waste more time and money recreating the wheel when solutions may be ever

present in the private sector and within the agency among those who service claims.

Until then, Congress should continue to hold the VA accountable as to how they will resolve this problem in a real way, with real results for our veterans.

We must never forget that our country has a responsibility to its veterans. The brave men and women who have put their lives on the line to defend our country deserve our respect and that means receiving the benefits they have earned in a timely manner.

Especially at a time when more and more troops are transitioning out of the military, and the needs of aging veterans are increasing, I am committed to keeping our promise to those who have served our country.

REMEMBERING DON CONCANNON

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I also wish to speak this evening about a Kansan who recently died and pay tribute to his life. My tribute this evening is to Don Concannon. Don Concannon of Hugoton, KS, is an example of a life I admire and respect so much. He exemplifies so much the folks from my home State of Kansas. It is a tribute to the folks at home who get so involved in their local communities. They volunteer at school. They serve on their church board. They get involved in public service. Kansans are always looking for ways to improve the lives of those around them, their friends and neighbors and people they do not even know.

One of those Kansans is our former Republican Party State chairman, Don Concannon. We have lost a great man, a strong advocate and a dedicated public servant when Don recently passed away.

Don grew up on a farm in southwest Kansas and graduated from Garden City High School in 1945. Early on in life, Don began serving our country when he joined the U.S. Navy and fought in the South Pacific during WWII.

After the war, Don graduated from Washburn Law School in 1952 and moved to Hugoton to practice law. It didn't take long for him to get involved in his new community because one month after his arrival, Don was elected Stevens County Attorney and went on to serve the county for four years in that role.

That same year, Don married Patricia June Davis and spent the next 49 years by her side before her passing in 2001. Don later re-married his wife of the past ten years, Sharon Collins.

As a young man, Don became interested in politics and at the age of 32, Don was elected Chairman of the Kansas Young Republican Federation. The following year, Don served as Chairman of the Kansas Presidential Electors for the presidential election between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Then, from 1968–1970, Don served as the Chair of the Kansas Republican Party. His zeal for politics never faded and kept him involved for many

years—chairing committees in support of his favorite candidates. He even put his name on the ballot one year for Governor but fell short by just 530 votes in the primary.

As a long-time Kansas resident, Don was well known and respected by many throughout our state, but especially in Southwest Kansas.

Don was a strong advocate for rural Kansas and the special way of life we enjoy in small communities across our great State. Through his service on several committees focused on the future of rural Kansas, Don helped make certain the next generation can return to the towns and communities they call home.

From his participation in Kansas politics to his public service career, Don was always looking for ways to serve his fellow Kansans and improve their lives. In recognition of that service, Don was awarded a lifetime achievement award by Washburn Law School in 2010.

His family and friends described him as someone whose generosity, enthusiasm, and overall optimism towards life touched the lives of so many. It has been said that Don had the character of “one in a million,” and that he did not “just participate in life, but made life happen.” Don had the unique ability to connect with just about anyone, but he was especially revered by his family and friends who looked up to him in many ways. Don lived each day to its fullest and his commitment to his fellow man serves as an inspiration to us all.

I extend my heartfelt sympathies to his wife, Sharon, his son, Craig, his daughter, Debra, and his many grandchildren. I know they loved him dearly and will undoubtedly miss him. I ask my colleagues and all Kansans to remember the Concannon family in your thoughts and prayers in the days ahead. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

CONGRATULATING PROFESSOR MUHAMMAD YUNUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week Congress recognized one of the planet's leading visionaries and humanitarians by awarding Prof. Muhammad Yunus the Congressional Gold Medal.

The ceremony occurred just a few hundred yards from here in the august Capitol Rotunda. There to pay tribute to this proud son of Bangladesh, this banker to the poor, this Nobel laureate were Members of Congress, former

heads of state, diplomats, heads of major companies and foundations, and grassroots activists—all of whom have been inspired by the work of one great man—Prof. Muhammad Yunus. It was a great privilege for me to be there.

More than 6 years ago I introduced a resolution in the Senate to award Professor Yunus the Congressional Gold Medal. I was joined in this effort by my friends, former Utah Senator Robert Bennett and Representative RUSH HOLT in the House.

We had a lot of help outside of Congress in making this happen. Joanne Carter and her team at RESULTS were instrumental. Thousands of RESULTS grassroots volunteers across the country contacted their Members of Congress and asked them to support the effort to recognize Professor Yunus. Two of those volunteers were Cindy Levin and Richard Smiley from Illinois. I am pleased that both could be here to see their hard work pay off.

I first met Muhammad Yunus more than two decades ago in Bangladesh. His revolutionary concept of micro-credit and the Grameen Bank that he founded was helping to lift millions out of poverty. He loaned small amounts of money traditional banks wouldn't bother with to individuals traditional banks wouldn't bother with.

His innovative idea defied old beliefs. He proved banking could be done without collateral and that investing in women worked. Most of Grameen Bank's loans go to poor women who go from beggars to entrepreneurs.

I have seen it myself. Several years ago, in a ramshackle hut in Uganda, I met with three mothers who worked in the local market. I asked them, through an interpreter, how micro-credit had changed their lives. One woman said: “My knees have gone soft.” I didn't understand what she meant so I asked her to explain. She said that before she received the micro-credit loan that gave her a chance to go to market and make a little money, she used to have to crawl on her knees and beg her husband for money to feed her children. But she doesn't have to crawl anymore. Her knees have gone soft.

Over the last nearly 40 years, more than 160 million people on five continents have received microloans. His idea changed the world.

The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest civilian honor Congress can bestow and the practice dates back to the Continental Congress. Unlike other awards, each Congressional Gold Medal is unique to the recipient. It is specifically designed and sculpted according to the wishes of the recipient. I couldn't be more thrilled with how this tribute to Professor Yunus turned out. It is truly beautiful.

The obverse of the medal was designed by Indiana artist Donna Weaver and sculpted by Phebe Hemphill. The portrait of Professor Yunus is meant to “accurately reflect his optimistic and cheerful personality.” He is depicted

wearing the traditional Bengali jamdani fabric design.

On the reverse, a “lotus open in full bloom, rising above the water and cradling the world in its open petals” evokes powerful symbolism. It was designed by Wisconsin artist Richard Masters and sculpted by Jim Licaretz. The Bangla inscription in the center is a quote taken from Professor Yunus' Nobel speech and reads, “Let us send poverty to the museum.”

Beyond the typical pomp and circumstance of these ceremonies, last week's event truly made history. Professor Yunus becomes the first Muslim to win the Congressional Gold Medal. Additionally, he becomes only the seventh person in history to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal and the Nobel Peace Prize. In doing so, he joins truly exceptional company. Consider the six others with whom he now shares this honor: Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr., Norman Borlaug, Elie Wiesel, Mother Teresa, and Aung San Suu Kyi. To most of us these individuals are giants of history; to Professor Yunus they are peers in the struggle to advance human dignity.

Many probably thought Professor Yunus would be a contender for the Nobel Prize in Economics, but in awarding him the Peace Prize, the Nobel Committee recognized that lasting peace and prosperity can only come when the poor can escape the prison of poverty. As I noted at last week's ceremony, this simple but important lesson from a Bangladeshi professor should not be lost here in Congress.

In addition to those I have already mentioned who contributed to this endeavor, there are many more who deserve a great deal of thanks. I would like to thank a few of them.

First of all, Professor Yunus' assistant and the director of the Yunus Centre, Lamiya Morshed. She has worked tirelessly throughout this process—helping in the medal design and development and successfully taking on the daunting task of planning and coordinating a complex series of ceremonies, receptions, and meetings for Professor Yunus.

The dedicated and professional staff of the U.S. Mint deserve great praise for their work to design and produce the medal. Throughout the process one person has held this project especially close to her heart. Leslie Schwager, program specialist for the Yunus Gold Medal, worked tirelessly with my staff, Lamiya, and within the Mint to keep the process on track.

I would finally like to thank Speaker BOEHNER and his staff, as well as the staff of the Senate Sergeant at Arms, for their cooperation and leadership on the ceremony.

At last, Prof. Muhammad Yunus, my friend, has received from Congress an honor he has deserved for so long. I congratulate him and his family. I thank the country of Bangladesh for sharing this beloved national hero with the world.