

Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, California, and any numbers, would have insisted on some amendments and some procedures to help our people who are going to be affected by these very significant increases in flood insurance, to give them more time to meet their obligations.

I know we are on a judgeship so I am going to yield the floor, but I am hoping we can continue to work on this issue.

I thank Senator VITTER for his support, as well as Senator BOXER, as we are continuing to work on the language of this amendment.

I yield back all time on the nominations.

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

Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Shelly Deckert Dick, of Louisiana, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Louisiana?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Nelson Stephen Roman, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of New York?

Mr. COATS. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG) is necessarily absent.

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

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

The result was announced—yeas 97, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 118 Ex.]

YEAS—97

Alexander	Donnelly	Landrieu
Ayotte	Durbin	Leahy
Baldwin	Enzi	Lee
Baucus	Feinstein	Levin
Begich	Fischer	Manchin
Bennet	Flake	McCain
Blumenthal	Franken	McCaskey
Blunt	Gillibrand	McConnell
Boozman	Graham	Menendez
Boxer	Grassley	Merkley
Brown	Hagan	Mikulski
Burr	Harkin	Moran
Cantwell	Hatch	Murphy
Cardin	Heinrich	Murray
Carper	Heitkamp	Nelson
Casey	Heller	Paul
Chambliss	Hirono	Portman
Coats	Hoeven	Pryor
Coburn	Inhofe	Reed
Cochran	Isakson	Reid
Collins	Johanns	Risch
Coons	Johnson (SD)	Roberts
Corker	Johnson (WI)	Rockefeller
Cornyn	Kaine	Rubio
Cowan	King	Sanders
Crapo	Kirk	Schatz
Cruz	Klobuchar	Schumer

Scott	Thune	Warren
Sessions	Toomey	Whitehouse
Shaheen	Udall (CO)	Wicker
Shelby	Udall (NM)	Wyden
Stabenow	Vitter	
Tester	Warner	

NOT VOTING—3

Barrasso Lautenberg Murkowski

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table. The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2013—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Madam President, I rise to urge my colleagues to support a bipartisan amendment I worked on with Senator WICKER to make our communities more resilient in an era of extreme weather that we live in. No corner of America is being spared: blazing wildfires in the West, massive tornadoes in the South, crippling droughts in the Midwest, routine hurricanes battering the gulf coast and the northeast coast.

We cannot accept the status quo. I think we must do more, because as we have seen in New York, the storm of the century has literally become the storm of the year. In 2011, we saw widespread and devastating damage from Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. One year later, Superstorm Sandy hit us harder than we could have ever imagined.

The Federal Government must step in. It must step up to do the hard work, to lead the way in preparing for and protecting against these extreme weather events. This does not mean just building a higher flood wall or moving public infrastructure out of the flood zone; it means taking a smarter, longer term regional approach to disaster planning.

Along with saving lives, this makes smart economic sense. For every \$1 we spend to reduce disaster risk, we save \$4 in recovery costs. Our bipartisan amendment can help achieve this goal. It is called Strengthening the Resiliency of Our Nation on the Ground—the STRONG Act—to give the Federal Government a real plan to strengthen our resiliency.

First, the bill would investigate effective resiliency policies, identify the gaps, and identify the conflicting policies. Knowing what resources we have, what works, what does not, we can write and implement a national resiliency strategy to support the local efforts.

This would include a one-stop shop to gather and share data to develop

smarter resiliency policies, incorporating existing databases and ongoing efforts across a range of sectors, from weather and climate to transportation and energy. It also eliminates redundancies, ensuring all levels of government are coordinating effectively and efficiently, sharing their expertise, their data, and information.

This national resource will work hand in glove with local efforts, providing the most recent scientific information and best practices to help our communities plan for and survive the worst. As we learn the lessons of Superstorm Sandy and other natural disasters, we need to ensure that our communities are thinking broadly about resiliency across all sectors of society. The STRONG Act is the foundation to build smarter and stronger cities, States and a nation. Only with communities built for the 21st century can we withstand the extreme weather of our time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

OBAMACARE

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I wish to talk a bit about the health care bill. Every time I am home, I hear more and more concerns from more and more families and more and more individuals and more and more employers. In 2009, the President repeatedly said that if you like your health care plan, you can keep it. Notice nobody is saying that anymore.

Maybe that is not what the measure should be because that is certainly not going to happen. I think the question is, are you going to have health care and can you afford it. During the Presidential campaign, the President said he liked the term "ObamaCare." So I feel a little more free to use that than I did previously. I do not mean it to be disparaging in any way. I just happen to think it is a plan that will not work.

In the 3 years since the Affordable Care Act became law, it has become increasingly clear that this plan will only deliver more broken promises and bad news. Opponents have long warned this overhaul is bad for the economy. There are now over 20,000 pages of new regulations. In talking to the people I work for, they say they were concerned when people did not read the 2,000-page bill. Since the election, there have been 20,000 pages of regulations. There will be at least 159 new bureaucracies, boards, and programs.

A number of recent reports have reinforced everybody's concerns, noting that the health care bill will burden Americans with \$1 trillion of new taxes over 10 years and penalties. It will stifle job creation.

Investors Business Daily noted that retailers are cutting worker hours at a rate not seen in more than three decades, a sudden shift, according to them,

that can only be explained by the onset of ObamaCare's employer mandates—only explained by the onset of ObamaCare's employer mandates. In the April job figures, 288,000 people moved from full-time work to part-time work.

Almost all of us in the Senate, as we talk to people in the States we represent, have talked to somebody who is figuring out how they can replace full-time employees—when they leave or maybe earlier than they wanted to leave—with part-time employees. The Congressional Budget Office warned that the President's health care plan will slash approximately 800,000 jobs, increase government spending by \$1.2 trillion, and force 7 million Americans to lose their employer-sponsored coverage.

On that last one, I think that is optimistic. I think it will be more than 7 million people who 2 years from now do not have health insurance, who had some kind of health insurance 2 years ago or even up until today. I think setting the standard that they have to meet that, and if they cannot meet that standard, just pay the penalty and do not provide anything is going to put people in a position they are going to find themselves very troubled to be in.

A leading health care advocacy group recently noted that millions of people will be priced out of the health insurance market under ObamaCare thanks to a glitch in the law that hurts people with modest incomes who cannot afford family coverage offered by their employers. Of course, the only thing the employer gets any credit for offering in the new world we are about to move into is individual coverage.

In fact, if someone has a family member who is covered in their family policy, the person they work for appears to get no credit for that coverage. An independent study by the Society of Actuaries—these are people who try to calculate benefits and life expectancy and all of that—estimates that insurance companies will have to pay out an average of 32 percent more for medical claims on individual health policies by 2017.

Why would that be? Remember, these are health policies that there is a small penalty for not having but the insurance company has to issue to you whenever you decide you want it.

I have talked to more than one hospital group that said we will just put the insurance forms in the ambulance.

Under the law, as I have read the law, you can fill out the insurance form on the way to the hospital in the ambulance, and the insurance company still has to give the so-called guaranteed issue no matter what your health is.

For Missourians, this study shows that medical claims costs could increase by almost 60 percent—the exact amount is 58.8 percent—per person. This actuarial study in my State says insurance claims costs could increase by 58.8 percent, making my State's projected cost increase the eighth highest in the country.

At a time when millions of Americans are still searching for jobs, the last thing we should be doing is discouraging job growth, but every single person here has heard somebody that they work for in the State they represent say: We are not going to grow above 50 people or we are not going to hire full-time employees.

Next year job creators will be forced to start complying with the law or pay a penalty. This will lead employers to reduce hours for full-time employees to avoid paying those penalties or providing health care—either one.

State governments, such as the State of Virginia right across the river from where we are working in the Nation's Capital, said that after July 1 none of their part-time employees will be allowed to work—that is the beginning of their spending year—that after July 1 none of their part-time employees will be able to work more than 29 hours. Why would the entire State of Virginia be saying that? Because the Federal Government says 30 hours is the time when you have to provide a benefit.

Once we start saying something as a government that you have to do something, suddenly it seems to be OK to meet the exceptions. Companies that for five decades after World War II have done everything they could to provide benefits for health care at whatever level they thought they could because they thought it was either the competitive thing to do or the right thing to do or both, those same companies are now saying: Well, the exception in the law says I don't really have an obligation to provide you health care, and so I am not going to.

As we see people move toward the part-time workforce, I believe we are going to see people having more than one job, but none of those jobs will have benefits. The person who served your breakfast or sells you your coffee in the morning may be the same person you see at a meal later that same day at another place because they are working two jobs, not one, and neither of those has benefits.

For those employers who decide it is cost-effective to pay the penalty rather than comply with the law, those people who worked for them obviously will see their plans change or lose their plans altogether. Maybe that is why my friends across the aisle are beginning to say the things they have said about this.

Everybody has heard the Senator BAUCUS comment that warned that implementing this bill will be a "huge train wreck coming down."

Senator WYDEN said:

There is reason to be very concerned about what's going to happen with young people. If their premiums shoot up, I can tell you, that is going to wash up on the Senate in a hurry.

The New York Times reported that Senator Ben Cardin told White House officials that he was concerned about big rate increases being sought by insurers in his State, one of the first States to report what the new rates would be.

Senator JEANNE SHAHEEN noted that she is "hearing from a lot of small

businesses in New Hampshire that do not know how to comply with the law."

Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER said that he is of the belief that the health care act "is probably the most complex piece of legislation ever passed by the United States Congress." He noted, "It worries me, because it is so complicated. And if it isn't done right the first time, it'll just simply get worse."

The Secretary of HHS said, "There may be a higher cost associated with getting into that market."

As I said, even the top health care official in the country, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, said that there might be a higher cost associated with getting into this market where folks will be moving into a really fully insured product for the first time—or not. What she did say was that this insurance may cost more than what your employer used to think they could afford to provide to you, and now maybe they are not providing anything at all. Maybe they are providing something that meets new standards—not what the person paying the bill thought they could afford but what was the only option available.

This isn't like, if you can do some of this, fine, you will just pay part of the penalty. It is not like that at all. In fact, what this really is, if you don't meet the standards that the Federal Government has decided should be the standards for employees of yours whom they have never seen, whom you pay \$100 a day if you try to offer insurance that doesn't meet the insurance, per employee—that is, \$36,500 a year is the penalty if you don't offer the insurance exactly as the government says it has to be offered at a minimum. If you decide not to offer any insurance at all, it is \$2,000 a year.

So now we have gotten to the point where the government is so right that it is a \$36,500 penalty if you don't offer exactly the insurance they say you have to offer and it is a \$2,000 penalty if you don't offer any insurance at all. What kind of parallel universe is this that this has taken us into that we have that kind of ridiculous situation develop?

Last week President Obama said there may be "glitches and bumps" in the rollout of his massive government overhaul. The Chicago Tribune, one of his hometown newspapers, after he said that, said in an editorial: Give us the choice of "train wreck" or "glitches and bumps," we are betting on train wreck.

This is his hometown paper that is saying that. This is certainly not what the President and congressional leaders promised us when this became the law.

We can all agree that we must fix our health care system. I think the path we are on is the wrong path to take. There are a number of things we could do: medical liability reform, more vigorous competition, buying across State lines, more individual ownership of policies set up, high-risk pools that work. The

choice should never have been “you can do this or we can do nothing at all.” There were things in the great health care system we had that could have been improved and still had the benefits of that great system. It appears that none of these are being allowed to happen until we see for sure that the new system either will work or won’t work.

I recently voted for the amendment to defund the program. Let’s go back to the drawing board and see what we can do to get started again. I think this is a flawed concept. I think we have to replace this concept with commonsense reforms that put patients and doctors in control of health care, not new bureaucracies in Washington.

I thank the Chair.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I would like to lay out what we are going to do, and it will take me about 6 minutes maximum.

The good news for the Senate—I am glad you don’t object to good news because it is not always good news. What we have seen on this WRDA bill is that we have handled a number of amendments both through the managers’ package that we substituted for the original text and in individual amendments. What we have seen is that the Boxer-Vitter substitute strengthened participation of environmental agencies in project delivery. We have addressed challenges in every part of the country. We reached agreement with appropriators on future harbor maintenance trust fund expenditures. We authorized additional regional programs. We accelerate investment in the Inland Waterways Trust Fund.

Here on the floor, we adapted amendments to set up an oceans trust fund and a new program to address Asian carp. We have made sure that agencies are treated fairly in the WIFIA Program. We require performance measures for levee safety grants. These are good amendments offered by both sides of the aisle.

We are about to, as soon as we do this little technical change to an amendment number—and it looks as though it has been done—we are about to adopt Senator BLUNT’s very important amendment that has so much support on both sides of the aisle for resilient construction, meaning we are going to make sure that as we enter a phase of extreme weather situations, we use the best materials on these projects. That is the Blunt amendment.

Then we go to the Sessions amendment, which is land transfer to help his local communities—uncontroversial.

There is a Coburn amendment to deauthorize projects that have been inactive for a very long time. This saves us money.

Also, there is a Warner amendment that makes technical corrections for Four Mile Run.

We will set aside the Inhofe amendment and that number, amendment No. 797, that would be pending.

I ask unanimous consent that in addition to the Blunt amendment No. 800

in the previous order, the following amendments be the next amendments in order to the bill: Sessions No. 811, as modified with the changes that are at the desk, Coburn No. 823, Warner No. 873, and Inhofe No. 797; further, that no second-degree amendments be in order to any of these amendments or the Blunt amendment prior to the votes in relation to the amendments.

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

AMENDMENTS NOS. 800, 811, AS MODIFIED, 823, AND 873, EN BLOC

Mrs. BOXER. I ask unanimous consent that the following amendments, which have been cleared by both sides, be considered and agreed to en bloc: Blunt amendment No. 800; Sessions amendment No. 811, as modified; Coburn amendment No. 823; and Warner amendment No. 873.

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

The amendments were agreed to, as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 800

(Purpose: To provide for the consideration of resilient construction techniques in certain studies relating to extreme weather events)

Redesignate sections 11001, 11002, and 11003 as sections 11002, 11003, and 11004, respectively.

At the beginning of title XI, insert the following:

SEC. 11001. DEFINITION OF RESILIENT CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE.

In this title, the term “resilient construction technique” means a construction method that—

- (1) allows a property—
 - (A) to resist hazards brought on by a major disaster; and
 - (B) to continue to provide the primary functions of the property after a major disaster;
- (2) reduces the magnitude or duration of a disruptive event to a property; and
- (3) has the absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity, and recoverability to withstand a potentially disruptive event.

In section 11002(b) (as redesignated), strike paragraph (2) and insert the following:

- (2) an analysis of—
 - (A) historical extreme weather events;
 - (B) the ability of existing infrastructure to mitigate risks associated with extreme weather events; and
 - (C) the reduction in long-term costs and vulnerability to infrastructure through the use of resilient construction techniques.

In section 11003(b)(5) (as redesignated), strike the “and” at the end.

In section 11003(b) (as redesignated) redesignate paragraph (6) as paragraph (7).

In section 1003(b) (as redesignated), insert after paragraph (5) the following:

- (6) any recommendations on the use of resilient construction techniques to reduce future vulnerability from flood, storm, and drought conditions; and

AMENDMENT NO. 811, AS MODIFIED

(Purpose: To require the Tennessee Valley Authority to grant certain use restrictions)

At the end of title V, add the following:

SEC. 5011. RELEASE OF USE RESTRICTIONS.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Tennessee Valley Authority shall, without monetary consideration, grant releases from real estate restrictions estab-

lished pursuant to section 4(k)(b) of the Tennessee Valley Authority Act of 1933 (16 U.S.C. 831c(k)(b)) with respect to tracts of land identified in section 4(k)(b) of that Act, provided that such releases shall be granted in a manner consistent with applicable TVA policies.

AMENDMENT NO. 823

(Purpose: To ensure environmental infrastructure activities are not exempt from review by the Infrastructure Deauthorization Commission)

Section 2049(b) is amended by adding at the end the following:

- (6) APPLICATION.—For purposes of this subsection, water resources projects shall include environmental infrastructure assistance projects and programs of the Corps of Engineers.

AMENDMENT NO. 873

(Purpose: To include a provision relating to Four Mile Run, city of Alexandria and Arlington County, Virginia)

On page 216, between lines 3 and 4, insert the following:

SEC. 3019. FOUR MILE RUN, CITY OF ALEXANDRIA AND ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA.

Section 84(a)(1) of the Water Resources Development Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-251; 88 Stat. 35) is amended by striking “twenty-seven thousand cubic feet per second” and inserting “18,000 cubic feet per second”.

Mrs. BOXER. I move to reconsider and lay those motions on the table.

The motions to lay on the table were agreed to.

Mrs. BOXER. I wish to thank everybody. We have made great progress on this bill. We will still be working very hard tomorrow, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. We urge you, if you have amendments, we are just saying let them be relevant and not controversial. We can’t solve every problem in America on this water bill, but we are trying our best to get a really good bill through the Senate.

I understand from the House that they intend to look at our bill, work off our bill, and make their changes. Then we will go to conference and hopefully have a very good result.

It is 3 o’clock on a Thursday, and we have disposed of numerous amendments. We are still looking at more. We are trying to resolve all of those. One way or the other, it is our plan to finish this bill next week. It is very rare to have a bill that is so bipartisan, that will, in fact, support over 500,000 jobs, and that has the support of business, labor, and all kinds of community groups. With that, I thank my colleagues for working with us.

I have talked to the majority leader. There will be no further votes today. Next week we will finish this bill. I thank you very much.

I thank my friend from Missouri. It has been a pleasure working with him and staff on his excellent amendment with Senator NELSON. We are very pleased we were able to clear this.

I also thank Senator LANDRIEU and Senator DURBIN. They had some issues, but they stepped back and let us move forward with these amendments.

People are working together, and they are working very hard, and I am very pleased about where we are. I thank my colleague from Missouri.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the chairwoman for her work.

As this bill progresses, I will remind my friends on the floor that one of the major bills we passed last year was the highway bill in the last Congress that she and Senator INHOFE worked on. Now she and Senator VITTER are bringing another important bill to the floor that is significant.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

THE ECONOMY

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I recently had a great conversation with an individual, August Busch, III, the longtime president and CEO of Anheuser-Busch. We talked about the state of the economy. We talked about the desire to get jobs created and the country back on solid fiscal footing.

That conversation reminded me of the opportunities we have here in the Senate and the Congress to work together to see that we enact policies here in the Nation's Capital that would make a real difference in the everyday lives of Americans by creating jobs, by making certain our business climate is beneficial to large and small businesses. In that climate, they then would have the opportunity to add additional employment opportunities for all Americans.

In this overly partisan climate of Washington, DC, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that we should all be working toward that same goal of getting our economy back on track.

I think the No. 1 issue standing in the way of robust economic growth is the uncertainty that continues to be there—as described, in part, by my colleague from Missouri in regard to the Affordable Care Act—with Americans in general and people making family as well as business and investment decisions about where we are headed with our national debt and our deficit spending.

As elected officials, Americans expect us to confront our Nation's fiscal challenges and not push them off into the future. But last year's budget shortfall—just to remind us of the facts—reached \$1.1 trillion, the fourth straight year of trillion-dollar deficits. This out-of-control too much spending we have in our government has increased our national debt to a record \$16 trillion, which is more than the entire U.S. economy produced in goods and services in 2012.

The fact is our current fiscal state is the responsibility of many Congresses and several Presidents from both political parties. It is not always the opportunity we sometimes take to point fingers, but it is that over a long period of time we have allowed ourselves to live way beyond our means, and it has gone on far too long.

When I was elected to the Senate, just about 3 years ago, I was invited to the White House to have a conversation with my colleagues and President Obama. The conversation was all about deficit spending, the national debt, and the upcoming vote to raise the debt ceiling. Unfortunately, since that time, it has been pretty much business as usual in Washington, DC, and almost no progress has been made. It is time for us to get beyond the conversations and the rhetoric that too often is pretty empty around here and get down to the business of making real changes in the way we conduct our business.

First and foremost, we must reduce the government drag on the private sector. Startups in small businesses—the real job creators in this country—are being held down under the weight of a 74,000-page convoluted Tax Code and \$1.75 trillion worth of redtape.

Every single job creator I meet, whether it is at a townhall meeting back home in Kansas or here in Washington, DC, tells me their story and asks for our help. What they tell me is we have to reduce the massive regulatory burden. The overwhelming cost of compliance prevents many small business owners and entrepreneurs from hiring new employees, expanding their facilities, and growing the economy.

Second, in addition to the regulatory environment, we have to say no to spending and yes to probab measures. This will help reduce the uncertainty in the marketplace, encourage business investment, help us become more competitive in the global economy and, most important, create jobs.

The President's solution is to raise revenues to balance the budget. But the President's tax increase proposals would only cover the deficit for just a few weeks. I would be pleased to be convinced that if we increase taxes, the money would be used to pay down the debt. I don't think I am overly cynical, but my view of history, my review of the facts suggests that every time there is more revenue—more money sent to Washington, DC—more money is spent. History shows money raised in Washington, DC, only results in more spending in Washington, DC.

The revenues we need to balance our books are not from increasing taxes but revenues that come from a strong and growing economy. We are not immune from the laws of economics that face every nation. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that government spending on health care entitlements, Social Security, and interest on the national debt will consume 100 percent of the total revenues by 2025. What that means is that money the government spends on national defense, transportation, veterans, health care, and other government programs will have to be borrowed money. That drives us further and further into debt.

So regulations, getting the deficit under control and on the right path toward a more balanced budget, and

then, third, we must take serious action to address the \$48 trillion in unfunded obligations found in Social Security and Medicare.

These programs represent promises that were made to Americans and, in my view, are promises that must be kept. Because of my family's circumstance—my parents—I pretty much know what life is like for people who utilize Social Security and Medicare and the benefits they provide for their lives at that stage in life we all aspire to reach. When Social Security was signed into law by President Franklin Roosevelt, the average life expectancy was 64 years of age and the earliest retirement age to collect the benefits was 65. Today, Americans live 14 years longer, retire 3 years earlier, and spend two decades in retirement.

So we have gone from a time in which Social Security was envisioned to be used for a short period of one's remaining life expectancy to a Social Security System that now is a source of income and support for people through a couple decades of retirement. That means we have to change the way we support Social Security in order to fit today's demographics: more people retiring, more people living longer with insufficient revenues to meet those programmed needs.

When this year's kindergarten class enters college, spending on Social Security and Medicare, plus Medicaid and interest on the debt will devour all tax revenues. Congress can and should begin today—and should have started a long time ago—to address these questions concerning the sustainability of these very important programs.

Lastly, to get our country's fiscal house back in order, Congress should consider adopting many of the bipartisan recommendations put forth by the President's own deficit reduction commission. The cochairs of the Commission have warned—this is the Simpson-Bowles Commission—if we fail to take swift action and serious action, the United States faces “the most predictable economic crisis in history.”

In other words, we know it is coming. One would expect that people who know something bad is on its way—an economic crisis is coming—would take evasive action to avoid the consequences. Yet the President and Senate leadership have ignored the recommendations contained in the Simpson-Bowles report and generally continue to spend borrowed money without regard for those consequences—without regard for what we know is coming.

I don't want Americans to experience the day when our creditors decide we are no longer creditworthy and we have to suffer the same consequences as those countries that ignored their financial crisis. One needs to look no further than places in Europe—Greece, Italy, Spain—to see what high levels of national debt will do to a country's economy. Out-of-control spending is slowing America's economic growth

and threatening the prosperity of future generations that will have to pay for our irresponsibility.

Thousands and thousands of young Americans will be graduating this month. Typically, I would guess many of my colleagues will be giving graduation addresses and encouraging our graduates to go forth and pursue a great life. We ought to also be telling ourselves that for our college graduates to go forth and pursue that wonderful life, we need to make changes in the way we do business and get our country's economic condition and fiscal state to a place where the American dream can be expected to be pursued and, in many cases, achieved.

I am fearful that while my parents' generation handed off a country where the expectations were high—we all felt we could live the American dream—my generation is failing to do the same for the generation that follows ours. We must not fail to take action now and leave it for another Congress, another year, another session, another election. If we fail to take the action we need to take today because we believe it is too difficult; that we can't afford the political consequences of making what some people describe as very difficult decisions, we clearly will reduce the opportunity of the next generation to experience the country we know and love, and we will diminish the chances they can pursue and achieve the American dream.

I had someone in my office recently who travels the globe, and he indicated to me that every place he goes, people around the world know what the phrase "the American dream" means, and they all want to pursue the American dream. But the reminder was that more and more the American dream is pursued outside of America because of the inability of this Congress, the failure of past Congresses and Presidents to come together and do the things that are responsible for today but, more important, responsible for the well-being of Americans in the future.

Not one of us was elected to ignore problems. People tell us, each one of us, all the time of some circumstance or condition that is a challenge to them. I have no doubt that each one of us in the Senate tries to figure out how we can help. The American people are experiencing a problem. Our country faces a challenge, and we ought to respond in the same way we respond individually to our own constituents when we say: How can we help? What can we do? We know the answer to those questions. We just need to have the will, the courage, and the desire to work together to address the issues and make certain America is a place we are proud to pass on to the next generation and that no American, because of our inability to act, is unable to pursue that beautiful American dream.

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

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, may I be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I rise to speak in support of the Water Resources Development Act. I congratulate Senator BOXER and Senator VITTER for showing how two Senators of opposite parties can work together, which is something that is sorely needed around here. I thank them for clearing the amendment Senator BLUNT and I offered on resilient construction, to study the need to improve our infrastructure in order to withstand extreme weather conditions and events such as hurricanes.

The last time we passed a water bill was back in 2007. The gridlock the American people are seeing so much of now is part of what has delayed us passing a new water bill—and the controversy over earmarks. But all of this inaction since 2007 puts our ports, beaches, and environmental restoration projects such as the Everglades restoration in jeopardy.

This water bill is going to authorize new flood protection, navigation, and specific restoration projects which are so important to our State of Florida, such as Everglades restoration. Also this bill is going to authorize important updates to our Nation's ports. Our ports obviously are a main part of the economic engine of this country. All of these projects are now in this bill and will be able to proceed.

This Senate water bill means good news for Florida's beaches, waterways, ports, and the Everglades. Rather than talk about the specific projects, I want to say Congress made a promise 13 years ago to restore the Everglades and this bill puts us on the path to finally fulfilling that promise and restoring as much of that extraordinary ecosystem known as the Everglades as it could be in the way Mother Nature designed it.

I also want to talk about another part of this bill that is extremely important to the State of Florida. People think California has the biggest coastline. Not so; Florida's coastline is much larger. Actually, Alaska's coastline is the longest, but when it comes to a coastline with beaches, almost all of Florida's coastline is beaches. So beach renourishment is exceptionally important to us. It is important to our economy, with all of our tourism that comes to Florida. It is important to our environment. Beach restoration saves lives, mitigates property damage, and it keeps the recovery costs down.

Beach renourishment is one of the reasons I support the bill. I come from a State that has more beaches than any other State, so naturally our beaches are of critical importance to

us. It is important not only from an environmental standpoint but also from an economic and tourism standpoint.

There is something known as the lateral drift, which is from north to south. It takes sand off the beach and pushes it south. When we have a cut in the beach—such as an inlet—that goes into a port, it all the more aggravates beach erosion. When the storm comes, watch out, because the beach can completely disappear.

So I strongly oppose any efforts to cut the funding of beach renourishment. This is about protecting our communities from natural disasters. These investments save lives, mitigate property damage, and keep recovery costs down.

For every \$1 that is spent on shoreline protection, we see a return of \$4. In Florida, we have several coastal communities anxiously waiting for the reauthorization of beach renourishment programs because they are so vulnerable to erosion caused by hurricanes and the rise of the sea level. This is pretty simple for us. We have to protect coastal communities from flooding and storms by adding sand to the beach.

I will continue to try to prevent any kind of cut that we seek. As a matter of fact, we are going to see a Coburn amendment that is going to try to take money out of the beach renourishment. I will urge my colleagues to vote no on that Coburn amendment.

SUSPICIOUS ARRESTS

Before I conclude, I wish to talk about a very disturbing circumstance which occurred about a week ago in the Turks and Caicos.

There was an arrest and jailing of two older American tourists on ammunition charges at the Turks and Caicos Islands Airport. These two Americans were arrested on back-to-back days.

The first person arrested was a 60-year-old businesswoman from Texas, and that was on April 25. The second person arrested was an 80-year-old retired neurosurgeon from Florida, and that was the next day. Both were on vacation in the Turks and Caicos and arrested at the airport. The reason they spent days in jail is because after their luggage was checked—and supposedly examined by the authorities—they found a single bullet in the luggage.

Does that sound suspicious? I found it to be even more suspicious when I heard that both of the American tourists—who were on vacation—have said adamantly that they had no ammunition and, therefore, had no way of putting a bullet in their luggage.

It sounded even more suspicious when I was told that after they were arrested and hauled off to jail, they had to pay \$4,000 cash for bail in order to get out of jail and to return home.

The Senator from Texas, Mr. CRUZ, and I sent a letter to the Charge d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in the Bahamas—which includes the Turks and Caicos—to ask them to investigate this

matter. We want to know if there have been similar cases this year to make American tourists a target under a similar kind of scheme. We are asking him to examine this so he knows we are very concerned on behalf of our constituents.

In essence, we want to know whether this was a shakedown operation or legitimate. The fact that this happened on two successive days with a single bullet found in the luggage of American tourists gets to be awfully suspicious.

I ask unanimous consent that our letter be printed in the RECORD.

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

MAY 9, 2013.

JOHN DINKELMAN, *Chargé d'Affaires,*
American Embassy
Nassau, The Bahamas.

DEAR MR. DINKELMAN: We are very concerned over the recent arrests of two older U.S. tourists at Providenciales International Airport in the Turks and Caicos Islands, both on charges of carrying ammunition a single bullet.

These two Americans are our constituents. One of them is 80-year-old Horace Norrell of Sarasota, Florida, a retired neurosurgeon who was forced to spend three nights in jail, and then pay \$4,000 cash bail to return home.

The other is a Texas businesswoman, Cathy Sulledge Davis, who also had to post \$4,000 cash bail.

We understand appropriate local officials have begun an investigation stemming from these arrests.

While we do not seek to interfere in the judicial matter, we ask that you convey to the proper authorities that the investigation needs to be expeditious, thorough, transparent and independent.

We also want to know whether any other Americans have been arrested there on similar charges since January.

Your immediate attention to this matter is greatly appreciated, as is keeping our offices fully apprised of any developments as they occur.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE
SESSION

Mr. REID. Madam President, this is important. I have a unanimous consent request that we have been working on for a long time.

I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by me, in consultation with Senator MCCONNELL, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 92; that there be 1 hour of debate equally divided in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on the nomination; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD; that President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Madam President, I am reserving my right to object.

I say to the leader, through the Chair, I am on the floor, as is Senator NELSON, to speak to the WRDA bill and to offer two amendments. I ask that I be allowed to do that before we move to executive session so the amendments can be offered.

Mr. REID. Madam President, through the Chair to my friend from New Mexico, I am not managing the bill. However, it is my understanding that there have been objections raised to offering more amendments.

We could get the chair back here or somebody to manage this bill, but that is where we are.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Madam President, I totally respect the leader and the discussion he has had with the chairman. I have tried today to contact the chairman. I have called her. I wanted to talk to her about this issue, and I want to get these amendments in.

I know Leader REID has been encouraging us throughout this debate to wrap this up and try to get amendments in. So I am here to offer my amendments, and I would like to do that.

Mr. REID. I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Madam President, as you may have noticed a minute or so ago, I had a discussion with the leader, and he was moving to executive session. I have been down here—along with Senator NELSON and other Senators—to try to move the WRDA bill forward. Leader REID said that was the business of the day. We are trying to move this forward, and we are trying to get our amendments in. I hope we can do that and do it in an efficient order.

I am going to speak to both of my amendments. Senator BENNET is here, and I know he has a statement he wants to make on immigration. I ask that the Presiding Officer give me notice when I am in the 5-minute range so I can wrap up and get everything in at that point.

My message is simple on the NEPA and WRDA process. Despite what we hear, environmental reviews protect people, taxpayers, and the environment.

On average, it takes the corps just 2 to 3 years to complete a feasibility study once funding is available. Studies of complex and highly controversial projects may take longer, but these are exactly the projects that require more in-depth review.

The administration has warned that the streamlining provisions in S. 601 “may actually slow project develop-

ment and do not adequately protect communities, taxpayers, or the environment.”

The real causes of project delays are, No. 1, limited funding; No. 2, poor project planning that does not focus on national priorities or identifying the least possible damaging solution to a water resource problem.

Project studies take the longest when the project developers insist on pushing outdated, damaging, and extremely costly projects instead of adopting low-impact modern solutions that could quickly gain broad-based support.

I have two amendments that go to the heart of making sure we have a good WRDA bill. The first is Udall amendment No. 581. Streamlining is an empty promise if the backlog is not addressed. The corps currently has an estimated backlog of more than 1,000 authorized activities, costing an estimated \$60 billion to construct. WRDA 2013 will add to this backlog. It authorizes more than 20 new projects and increases costs by \$3.4 billion over the next 5 years.

The plate is full. Cutting corners on environmental reviews will not change that. It will just hurt communities. The plate has been full for over 25 years. Project authorizations far exceed the money to pay for them.

According to the Congressional Research Service, between 1986 and 2010 Congress authorized new corps projects at a rate that significantly exceeded appropriations. In 2010 dollars, the annual rate of authorizations was roughly \$3.0 billion and the rate of appropriations for new construction was roughly \$1.8 billion.

Completing project studies is not the problem. A newly authorized project will still have to wait. It has to compete for funding with 1,000 other projects already on the books.

This amendment would go directly to that process and solve it.

Udall amendment No. 853 talks about the value of a pilot project. The current environmental review process has been used successfully for decades resulting in better and less damaging projects. It saves taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

There is no evidence that the process proposed in S. 601 would actually speed up project planning, there is no evidence that the process will speed up project construction, and there is absolutely no evidence that the process would produce better projects. It is quite the opposite.

The evidence shows that the streamlining provision will lead to more damaging and more costly projects and will hurt communities, taxpayers, and the environment. The corps does not want Congress to enact these changes. The resource agencies don't want these changes, the environmental community does not want these changes, the legal community does not want these changes, and the public does not want these changes.

Once again, I wish the floor managers were here on this bill. I am here, as Leader REID has requested us to be, to put in amendments. As soon as we get back, I want to bring up these amendments, make them pending, and continue with this procession. I am very discouraged that we can't move forward as our leader has said. This is a bill that is on the floor. The managers need to be here to manage this process. I am here to meet with the leaders and try to move this along.

Thank you.

I will yield to the Senator from Colorado, Mr. BENNET, but I want to say one thing. He has done such great work on immigration. He has been a marvelous Senator ever since he has been here. This Gang of 8 has contributed something that is very important to this country. So I hope everybody listens very carefully to his words because he is giving us very wise advice as to how to proceed.

I yield for the Senator from Colorado, Mr. BENNET.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

Mr. BENNET. I wish to thank, through the Chair, the Senator from New Mexico for his kind remarks and for keeping it brief today. I know it is an issue of great importance to him and to his State.

This morning the Senate Judiciary Committee began working on the Border Security Economic Opportunity and Modernization Act, otherwise known as a bill to fix our broken immigration system. As we are here today, they are continuing to work on that bill and I think will work into the night.

Working with this group of 8—I call it a group of 8, not a gang, because Senator MCCAIN doesn't like the term "Gang of 8," so in deference to him I call it the group of 8—has been one of the most rewarding experiences during my time in the Senate. My Senate colleagues in this group include Senators SCHUMER, MCCAIN, DURBIN, GRAHAM, MENENDEZ, RUBIO, and FLAKE. I come to the floor today first to thank them for their leadership and courage to move past the talking points on this issue and to produce this bipartisan product the committee is now considering today.

This is a bill that has been applauded by editorial boards from the Wall Street Journal to the New York Times—two editorial pages that seldom agree on anything. In Colorado, editorial boards from across the State, including the Denver Post, the Colorado Springs Gazette, and Durango Herald, have all praised this bill. It has the support of a wide-ranging and extremely diverse coalition from the left and the right, from business and from labor, rural and urban all across the United States.

All of this is to say the pieces are in place today to actually get something done in this town, in Washington, DC, and in Congress. That is not a small feat for a place where stalemate has become standard operating procedure. I would say we have a golden opportunity to rise above politics as usual, to do something big and something real—something that lasts and endures. We have the chance to pass commonsense, bipartisan legislation that will strengthen our economy and our families, better protect our borders and our communities, and offer a tough but fair path to citizenship for those currently here without any legal status at all. In this way we have the chance to act together to do something great for our Nation and for its future.

It is a cliché—uttered many times in this Chamber, including by me—that America is a Nation of immigrants, and, of course, that is true. But we are so used to saying and hearing that phrase we rarely take the time to act or to think: What does that even mean? There is literally no other country in the world, on this planet, for which immigration is so central to its history and to its identity as the United States of America. All of us in this Chamber—and, more importantly, every family back home we are privileged to represent—can tell us when and how their family came to this country. Did they come in a boat in the 17th century? Did they come by plane in the 20th century? Did they come by foot or by bus, with papers or without? Every one of us has a story.

My family has one of its own that won't surprise my colleagues to know I find pretty interesting. It is also utterly ordinary for this country. When I was in the second grade, my class was given an assignment. We were asked to research whose family had been in America the shortest time and the longest time. So we interviewed our parents and grandparents, we traced our genealogies, and we came up with our answer as a class. The answer was me. My family was the answer to both of these questions—the longest time and the shortest time.

My father's family came over on one of those 17th century boats. For nearly 400 years, the Bennets, in nearly one form or another, have lived in this country. Then there is my mother. She was born in Poland in 1928, while Nazi tanks were massing on the border. She and her parents endured that war in and around Warsaw. They and an aunt were the only members of their family to survive. Everybody else in their family perished at the hands of the Nazis.

They lived in Poland for a couple of years after that, but then by way of Stockholm and Mexico City, my mother and her grandparents arrived in New York City in 1950. She was 12 years old in 1950. As is the case with so many children of immigrants, she was the only one in the family who could speak any English at all. But the three of

them were alive, they were free, and they had made it to America.

My mother and grandparents were able to rebuild their lives and succeed here because America welcomed them. It greeted them not with prejudice but with opportunity. They worked hard—extremely hard—to be worthy of that great gift. It was a gift my grandmother, Halina Klejman, who loved this country as deeply as anyone I have ever known, taught me and my brother and my sister never to take for granted.

So my family's history happens to run through both Plymouth and Poland, but it is not so different from the ones millions of Americans tell. Stories such as the town of San Luis, CO. San Luis is Colorado's oldest town, founded in 1851. The town was established by Latino settlers from New Mexico who migrated under a land grant issued by the Mexican Governor in Santa Fe. These immigrants were the pioneers of the Colorado settlement 25 years—25 years—before Colorado officially became a State.

The narratives of how we come here matter because they tell us who we are and where we have been. But they matter just as much for where we are going as a Nation. The future of this country will be determined not just by those of us who are in this Chamber or in this city, or even in this country today. It is going to be written by people who have yet to step foot in the United States of America. Because over our history, it is the refugees fleeing persecution—the parents seeking opportunity for their children—who make America the America we love. They are the ones who keep us fresh and free-thinking and free. They are all of us. They are every single one of us—a nation of immigrants.

Unfortunately, today's immigration policies do not reflect the history or the values that shaped it. Neither do they reflect our 21st century economic needs. Instead, our system is a hodgepodge of outdated, impractical, and convoluted laws. It is a mess of unintended consequences that hurts our businesses and families and keeps America at a competitive disadvantage in an ever-shrinking world.

There is an old Visa slogan—I mean capital V, Visa slogan—that says something like "Life Takes Visa." Well, in the United States, work takes a visa—and our visa system is working against us today. It is stifling growth and making us less competitive. Travel around my home State of Colorado, as I do, and people will see what that looks like. People will meet vegetable growers in Brighton and peach farmers such as Bruce Talbott from Palisade who fear they will not have enough labor to harvest their crops season after season. They are part of Colorado's \$40 billion agricultural industry—the lifeblood of our State and so vital to our Nation—yet they have no confidence—and for good reason—that a legal, reliable, and competent workforce will be available for their farms and ranches.

Fifty-seven million tourists visited Colorado in 2011. I don't know whether the Presiding Officer was among them, but we would love to have her back. If people were to talk to our ski resort operators and restaurant owners, they will hear loudly and clearly that we need a program for low-skill workers to come into this country and fill jobs Americans don't want. In cities such as Denver and Boulder a person will find high-skilled immigrants with graduate degrees in science and engineering—the kind who are 3 times more likely to file patents and 30 percent more likely to create new businesses.

In fact, more than 40 percent of the 2010 Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants and their children. Forty percent of the largest companies in the United States of America, which once were small companies and grew to become large companies, were created by immigrants. These companies employ more than 3.6 million people in this country and generate more than \$4.2 trillion in revenue every single year.

You will also see thousands of foreign students with these highly technical advanced degrees who are being turned away. You will hear them say they have no choice but to go back to India, go back to China, and use whatever they have learned at American universities to compete down the line with American workers.

Students such as Wolfgang Pauli, a German psychology and neuroscience Ph.D. student who had attended the University of Colorado-Boulder—Wolfgang was studying under a temporary visa sponsored by his adviser at the University of Colorado, but because of the inflexible nature of our visa system, his adviser wasn't able to keep him for an advanced research project despite his advanced skills and unique experience. The position went unfilled. It is a loss for the project, for innovation, and for Wolfgang.

I have been to India. I have been to Hyderabad. I have seen people sitting in front of computer screens in a room with a clock on the wall that said underneath it "East Hartford, CT." I said to the guy who ran the show there: Why does that clock say East Hartford, CT, on it? He said: Because they are redesigning the engines for Pratt & Whitney in East Hartford. Two shifts a day, by the way, 24 hours a day. They are up when people in East Hartford, CT, are up. I asked: Where were the people sitting at those computers educated? He said: Half were educated in my country, in India, and half were educated in your country. What we know is if they were given the opportunity to stay here and contribute, to build their business, to apply their intellect here, many of them would, but today we are sending them away. This is crazy.

It doesn't end there. Go into our schools all across America, as I did when I was superintendent of the Denver public schools, and you will see kids, meet kids—great kids, hard-work-

ing students—enter their junior and senior years, their peers making college visits and considering careers, and you will see what it looks like when those students fully realize, in the starkest and most heart-breaking terms imaginable, what it means to live in a country without legal status; what it means to live in a place they got to through no fault of their own, without legal status.

Many of these young people—inspiring young people such as Octavio Morgan, who graduated third in his class from Bruce Randolph High School in 2011—managed to carve out a future against all odds. But I don't know how we as a Nation can continue to look them in the eye and preach opportunity and social mobility without dealing with their legal status.

You will hear about dangerous border crossings. You will hear about separated families and disrupted dreams. Yes, if we are being honest, you will also hear about jobs that went to new neighbors, and gang violence, and overcrowded schools. You will see, as we study this, and hear and feel a system that hardly qualifies as one. But that is the system we are living in unless we do something about it.

For years, even though Congress has done nothing, immigration has become a poster child for the kind of dysfunctional politics the American people have rejected, but we keep on practicing it. We keep on practicing this dysfunctional set of policies. That is the way it has been in Congress. I hope it is now changing. But thankfully, for a lot of us who are here, that is not what we see back home—not even close.

(Mr. COONS assumed the chair.)

A few years ago, a small group of us in Colorado began working on a set of principles to begin a more pragmatic and productive immigration discussion. Utah launched a similar effort in 2010, so I would like to recognize the leadership of our friends to the west for paving the way.

I was very pleased to take part in my State's effort, along with former Senator Hank Brown—no stranger to some of the people in this Chamber. Senator Brown, a Republican, is one of Colorado's greatest statesmen, with a long record of working across the aisle to get things done.

Over the course of 18 months, we traveled over 6,300 miles in Colorado—which is, by the way, not a hardship; a lot of people fly over oceans to get there to have their vacations, but still, 6,300 miles—and held about 230 meetings in the State. We talked to farmers and business owners, law enforcement officials and educators, faith leaders and Latino leaders, and all are struggling with different broken pieces of our immigration system. But we found far more agreement on what immigration reform should mean and what it ought to look like than you would ever think was possible if you listened to the politicians here in Washington or the pundits on TV.

Together, we developed a common-sense blueprint called the Colorado Compact. It puts its emphasis on a strong economy and strong national security; it cares for families while keeping our citizens safe. I am glad we developed these principles, and I am glad it was done in such a bipartisan way, in rural parts of the State as well as urban and suburban parts of the State, and that we had such a broad coalition of people, including my former opponent for this very seat, whom we assembled in support of it.

One of the things we all agreed on was that, as promising as efforts like this are—the effort in Colorado, the effort in Utah—this issue needs more than piecemeal reforms. No State's effort can be a substitute for a smart, sensible, national strategy to overhaul our immigration system, and with this new Senate proposal, that is exactly what we have.

The bipartisan Senate bill we have introduced addresses each of the issues we mentioned in the compact, and it does so in a way that is reasonable, that is compassionate and respects the rule of law. It recognizes that we must take concrete steps to further secure our borders.

We are building on steps already taken. Since 2004, the United States has doubled the border patrol. We have tripled the number of intelligence analysts working at the border. We are seizing a higher volume of contraband weapons, currency, and drugs, and net migration from Mexico is at its lowest level in decades.

Our bill would make substantial further investments at the border, including new fencing and technologies—motion sensors, virtual monitoring systems, inexpensive surveillance, and other innovative approaches—that enable us to secure the border more cheaply, more effectively, and with a smaller footprint.

However, there is still more we can do. With 40 percent of illegal immigration due to visa overstays, we need to ensure a better system for tracking people who come to our shores, who enter and exit our borders, which is why our bill provides for a stronger and more comprehensive entry/exit system.

This is a very interesting point that a lot of people do not know. Forty percent of the 11 million people who are here who are undocumented entered the country lawfully on a visa. We have a system to check them on the way in, but we do not have a system today to check whether they ever left. This is one of the ways, by the way, that the bill will prevent our finding ourselves back where we are today to begin with.

We need to secure opportunity, also, for those who are already in this country. Our bill provides a fair but tough pathway for many of the Nation's 11 million undocumented immigrants, especially young people whose parents brought them here as children, just like my mother was, in search of a better life. Those here without status

today would be required to undergo a background check, pay a \$2,000 fine, pay all of their back taxes. They would have to go to the back of the line, which is what both parties have said for years, behind those who have gone through the proper process to immigrate. That is only fair and it is only right.

This is not just a humane thing to do, but it is sound economic policy. Conservative economist Doug Holtz-Eakin estimates that immigration reform will generate \$2.7 trillion in deficit reduction and help grow the economy. Some estimates have said this bill would grow the economy by more than a percentage point of GDP. It is \$1 trillion or so over a 10-year period. A path to citizenship would lead to higher wages in this country, more consumption of goods, and increased revenue.

Our bill proposes a more coordinated effort across Federal, State, and local governments, in partnership with private organizations, to help new immigrants and refugees integrate into their communities. Our immigration title, which was influenced by cities such as Littleton and Greeley, CO, would help provide immigrants with greater access to English language classes and civics education and help us cultivate stronger citizens with a greater appreciation for our Nation and her history.

With a broken immigration system hurting our businesses and workers as well, we propose an efficient, sensible, and flexible visa system that would be more aligned with our changing 21st-century economy.

As I mentioned earlier, roughly 40 percent of Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants. We want an immigration system that harnesses the world's innovation and talent here in the United States of America.

There is no place where this is truer than the State of Colorado, where 1 in 10 entrepreneurs is an immigrant. Colorado has a high-tech sector that includes more than 10,000 companies and 150,000 workers who produce almost \$3 billion worth of exports each year—\$3 billion worth of exports each year—as well as a new patent office opening soon.

We want the next Facebook or iPhone or clean energy technology and breakthrough medical device to be built in our State or at least in America. That is why we create a new INVEST visa for foreign entrepreneurs who want to start new businesses here in the United States. A new category of visas proposed in our bill provides this investment opportunity. Immigrant entrepreneurs who have launched successful startups could stay or come and continue to create jobs and fuel our economy if they can show they have been backed financially.

We make it easier for foreign students who graduate with advanced degrees in STEM fields to get a green card—I know this has been of great in-

terest to the Presiding Officer—and increase the number of H-1B visas. This will help us attract and retain highly skilled and educated talent to fill labor shortages in some of our fastest growing industries, including bioscience and computer engineering.

Our bill also creates a new—this is a lot to take in, I know, Mr. President, and I hope people will have the chance to study this. This is why I am so glad we took the time we did to negotiate this bill with the eight of us, but now it is going through the committee on which the Presiding Officer serves, the Judiciary Committee, to have hearings, to have a markup, to have everybody have their chance to offer—I think when I last heard, there were more than 300 amendments to the bill—to offer those amendments and then to get it to the floor where we can debate it. There is going to be time to do all this work, and this requires time to understand it.

Our bill creates a new W visa, a program for lesser skilled workers to come into the country. This, in addition to several other reforms that are made throughout our bill, will ensure that we can continue to fill our labor needs in sectors such as hospitality and our vibrant ski industry, which hosts 56.5 million visitors every year.

There was complete agreement among Democrats and Republicans who were meeting in this group that our visa system must protect American workers and prevent exploitation, such as requiring efforts, first, to recruit American workers. It also must be paired with a reliable, cost-effective employment verification system that prevents identity fraud, protects our civil liberties, and is critical to stopping future illegal immigration.

That is one of the key objectives of this legislation. We do not want to end up right where we are today, with 11 million undocumented people, and we have put the systems in place—including, very importantly, this employment verification system—to deal with that. We have had broad bipartisan support on this part for many years in this Congress, and it is now part of our legislation.

This all has to come with a determination to crack down on employers who knowingly hire illegal workers. Simply put, if we want to reduce illegal immigration, we need to make legal immigration a much more straightforward process in this country. That is one of the reasons I was glad to take part in the agriculture negotiations around this bill under the leadership of Senator FEINSTEIN and with Senator RUBIO and Senator HATCH. This bill alone is going to stabilize our agricultural workforce for years to come and is critical to protecting and growing our agricultural economy, which has a \$40 billion economic impact in Colorado.

This bill provides a faster path to citizenship for agricultural workers to be able to do the important work of

producing our Nation's food and fiber and, increasingly, our energy. It also creates a new streamlined program for agricultural guest workers that is more usable for employers while maintaining critical worker protections.

It is the first time we have had an ag jobs title of this bill that is endorsed by both the farm workers and the Farm Bureau. I thank them for taking part in these negotiations and for the willingness of both sides to give a little up for the greater good. Their example is one we should embrace as we go forward on this bill.

As I said earlier, I feel the same way about the bipartisan colleagues who worked on this bill. In crafting this bill, we all had to give a little—just a little—to get a lot. Each of us had to come to the table with our diverse perspective, representing different constituencies. We each would have written certain pieces differently were we left to our own devices, but this type of compromise needs to happen if you are crafting a bipartisan and complex bill to fix the immigration system in a country of 300 million people.

Every single member of the group was committed to working together to accomplish that goal. In particular, I wish to again thank Senators SCHUMER and MCCAIN especially for driving this process forward. As the committee begins its important work, I would like to acknowledge the work and leadership of Chairman LEAHY to see it through.

In the spirit of our partnership, I think it is important to remind ourselves, on an issue where emotions can run so high and so hot, that all of us are trying to do right by the American people, as each one of us sees it.

Every proposed path to citizenship is not amnesty, and this proposed path to citizenship is not amnesty. And every opponent of these reforms is not anti-immigrant. We need to do more to secure our borders, but we do not need to treat people trapped in a failed system as criminals.

These changes will be difficult. It is understandable that people worry about what this is going to mean for their jobs, their schools, their businesses. But if we just apply a very basic test—is it smart and it is right—then I am confident we can find common ground and move forward.

I would like to close with one last reflection on my own grandparents' experience. On my first birthday, which was November 28, 1965, my grandparents gave me a birthday card and sent me a gift. In that card, they wrote:

The ancient Greeks gave the world the high ideals of democracy in search of which your dear Mother and we came—

They wrote this in English, by the way. Remember, when they came to this country, they spoke none.

The ancient Greeks gave the world the high ideals of democracy in search of which your dear Mother and we came to the hospitable shores of beautiful America in 1950. We have been happy here ever since, beyond

our greatest dreams and expectations, with Democracy, Freedom and Love and humanity's greatest treasures.

They continued:

We hope that when you grow up, you will [have a chance to help] to develop in other parts of the world a greater understanding of these American values.

Democracy and freedom and love, in my grandparents' view: humanity's greatest treasures, and they called them American values.

This is a lesson my wife Susan and I are now trying to teach our three little girls. Opportunity is indeed a precious gift this country will give each generation, asking only that they in turn not squander that inheritance but increase it and pass it along to the next. That is our responsibility as we consider this piece of legislation, and for that matter any other.

If history is any guide, someone waiting in line for a visa at this moment or someone waiting to enter what my grandparents called "beautiful America" will go on to become a brilliant artist or a talented surgeon or a path-breaking businessperson. Someone whose father picked grapes will grow up to found the next Apple. Someone operating a ski lift at Vail is going to be the parent or grandparent of a President or, God help us, of a Senator. That person will stand in our shoes a generation from now, and they will know whether we had the courage to do what was smart and what was right and what was hard.

Now is not the time to pat each other on the back. We have a long way to go, as the Presiding Officer knows. But what we do have is some momentum—I think a lot of momentum—and a balanced reasonable piece of legislation. There are going to be some difficult discussions and challenges ahead. There is no doubt about that. But what I know is if we use the efforts and insights of the Colorado Compact as a guide, we will arrive at that shared, sensible middle ground. We will pass legislation that is worthy of the great hope of my grandparents and the future generations in this country.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING.) The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

POSTAL REFORM

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I rise today to say a few words about an issue I think does not get enough discussion in the Senate but is of great concern to the American people in general; that is, the need for Congress to pass comprehensive Postal Service reform as soon as possible.

The Postal Service is of enormous importance to tens of millions of people, people in rural States like Maine

or Vermont, to businesses all over this country, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of employees who serve us so well in the Postal Service.

About 2 years ago, the Postmaster General of the United States came up with a plan for the Postal Service that would have—let me just tell you and the American people what it would have done. It would have eliminated about 220,000 Postal Service jobs, including the jobs of many American veterans. It would have closed about 15,000 post offices throughout the country, many of them in rural areas like the State of Vermont. It would have eliminated half of the mail processing plants in this country. It would have substantially slowed down the delivery of mail by eliminating overnight delivery for first class mail. It would have ended Saturday mail delivery.

Many of us in the Senate and in the House thought that plan was a disaster for our country, for our economy, and for American workers. We all organized and fought back against that plan. The goal was to convince the Postmaster General to substantially revise the ideas that he had brought forth.

Instead of closing down 15,000 post offices, the Postal Service, in fact, came up with a plan to reduce the hours of service at about 13,000 post offices throughout the country, and many in the State of Vermont. Was I happy with that? No, to be frank with you. Was it better to see a reduction of 2 hours or 4 hours than seeing the entire rural post office shut down? It was.

Instead of closing down half of the mail processing plants in this country, the Postal Service decided they would keep about 100 of the mail sorting centers that were originally on the chopping block open. In other words, they did shut down some but not nearly as many as they had intended to shut down.

Instead of ending overnight delivery standards, the Postal Service has adopted a plan to keep overnight delivery going, although not as strong as it previously was. Although it took an act of Congress through the appropriations process, the Postal Service, for the time being at least, has decided to obey the law of the land and not eliminate Saturday mail delivery.

Last year, the Senate passed a comprehensive postal reform bill. That did not go as far as I would have liked, but it was certainly a substantial improvement over what the Postmaster General had proposed. We won that vote with 62 or 63 votes. There was bipartisan support for it.

Unfortunately, the House of Representatives failed to even schedule a vote on the floor of the House for any postal reform bill. As a result nothing was signed into law last Congress, forcing us to start this process all over again.

What I fear the most is that all of the work the Senate did last Congress—and the committee of jurisdiction worked hard on it. Some of us put together an

ad hoc committee of 15, 16 Members of the Senate who worked hard on that issue. But I fear very much that all of that work to save the Postal Service will go for naught if Congress does not get its act together and pass a comprehensive postal reform bill as soon as possible.

In my view the time has come to send a very loud and clear message to the leadership of the House, the leadership of the Senate, the Postmaster General of the United States, and the President of the United States; that is, in the midst of this terrible recession which has significantly impacted the middle class and working families of our country, it is imperative that we do not destroy thousands and thousands of decent-paying, middle-class jobs, including the jobs of many veterans. That is what happens when you make the kinds of cuts the Postmaster General has been talking about. In the midst of this terrible recession, it is important that we do not harm small businesses that depend upon the Postal Service to sell their products.

Just yesterday I met with some businesses in the State of Vermont for whom it is enormously important that they know there is a strong Postal Service that can provide rapid delivery of the packages they produce. It is terribly important that as we talk about postal reform, we understand many senior citizens depend upon the post office for their prescription drugs.

It is also important, again, for the economy, that we not slow down the delivery of mail, that we do not close half of the mail processing plants in this country.

Here is the important point: There is no question that the Postal Service has financial problems. Nobody disagrees with that. I think many people do not understand the basic causes of the Postal Service's financial problems; that is, the Postal Service today is in terrible financial shape because of a congressional mandate signed into law by President Bush in December 2006, forcing the Postal Service to prefund 75 years of future retiree health benefits over a 10-year period.

Let me repeat that. The Postal Service, as a result of a decision in 2006, is forced to prefund 75 years—75 years—of future retiree health benefits over a 10-year period. Clearly, no other government agency at the Federal level, State level, or local level comes anywhere close to that kind of onerous burden. In fact, to the best of my knowledge, no private sector corporation in this country is burdened with a mandate anywhere near that extreme.

This prefunding mandate is responsible for about 80 percent of the Postal Service's financial losses since 2007. Let me repeat that. You are going to read often, and we read often, the Postal Service is facing severe financial problems. Let me repeat: This prefunding mandate is responsible for about 80 percent of the Postal Service's financial losses since 2007.

Before this prefunding mandate was signed into law, the Postal Service was making a profit. In fact, from 2003 to 2006, the Postal Service made a combined profit of more than \$9 billion. That is a significant profit.

I should also note that despite what we read in the media, the Postal Service actually made a profit of \$100 million during the last quarter sorting, processing, and delivering the mail. If we are serious about dealing with the financial problems facing the Postal Service, the first thing we have to do is end this prefunding mandate once and for all and allow the Postal Service to use the \$48 billion sitting in that future retiree health fund to keep the Postal Service healthy and thriving for years to come.

When we talk about the financial problems facing the Postal Service, we have to understand that to a very significant degree some 80 percent of the problem was caused by the Congress as a result of a decision made in 2006. It is clear to me, and I think to all Americans, that we live in the year 2013. The world is changing. We are becoming more and more a digital economy, but it is also clear to me that the Postal Service does not survive by cutting back on its services to the American people and to the business community.

In order to save and strengthen the Postal Service, I have introduced the Postal Service Protection Act, S. 316. I am very proud to say that bill now has 23 cosponsors.

Let me thank all of the Senators who are cosponsoring this bill: Senators BAUCUS, BLUMENTHAL, BROWN, CASEY, COWAN, FRANKEN, GILLIBRAND, HARKIN, HEINRICH, LAUTENBERG, LEAHY, LEVIN, MANCHIN, MENENDEZ, MERKLEY, SCHATZ, STABENOW, TESTER, TOM UDALL, WARREN, and WYDEN.

Mr. President, I would ask that Senator CARDIN be added as a cosponsor to S. 316.

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

Mr. SANDERS. I am delighted that we are making progress on real postal reform not only in the Senate but in the House as well. I thank Congressman PETER DEFazio from Oregon for his leadership efforts in cosponsoring the exact same bill in the House as we have in the Senate, and that now has 139 cosponsors.

We have 24 cosponsors now in the Senate, and in the House that bill has 139 cosponsors, which tells me the American people and their representatives in Washington understand how terribly important it is that we pass serious postal reform.

Let me very briefly talk about what is in that legislation, what the legislation, if passed, would accomplish. That bill would reestablish strong overnight delivery standards to ensure the timely delivery of mail. When people put a letter or a package in a mailbox or go to the post office, they want to know that letter or package is going to be delivered in a timely manner, and we do that.

In order to make sure we do have timely mail delivery, this legislation would prevent the closure of hundreds of mail processing plants throughout this country and save the jobs of tens of thousands of workers. This legislation would end, once and for all, as I just mentioned, the disastrous prefunding mandate that is the major problem facing the Postal Service.

This legislation would allow the Postal Service to recoup over \$50 billion it has overpaid into the Civil Service Retirement System. This legislation would prevent the Postal Service from ending Saturday mail delivery. Further, and significantly, our bill would give the Postal Service the tools it needs to compete in the 21st century.

I understand, we all understand, the world has changed. It is not simply a question of finances, it is a question of giving the Postal Service the ability to compete in today's market and to allow it to sell innovative new products, new services, and, as a result, raise more revenue. We need a new vision for the Postal Service. This legislation would provide that vision.

Many Americans don't notice, but right now Federal law is tying the hands of the Postal Service in terms of the products and services it can provide. We say to the Postal Service that we are upset they are not making enough revenue, and yet we tie their hands and prevent them from going forth in producing new products and services to raise the revenue that would help their bottom line.

This legislation unties the hands of the Postal Service and would develop a process to allow the Postal Service to explore offering the best products and services that would raise the most revenue.

Let me just give an example of some of the absurdities under which the Postal Service is now operating.

If you were to go into a post office in Maine with a document and say to the clerk who is waiting on you: Listen, I need you to notarize this letter, the clerk would tell you: Sorry, it is against the law for me to notarize that letter. Now, that is pretty absurd.

If you were to walk into a post office, as I am sure everyday people do, and say: Listen, I need you to give me 10 copies of this document because I have to send it out to 10 different people, they would say: Sorry, it is against the law of the United States of America for me to make 10 copies, 3 copies, or 1 copy of your document.

Furthermore, it is against the law for post offices to sell fishing or hunting licenses. Well, in my State, we are a rural State. People might, in certain parts of the State or other parts of America, like to be able to walk into a post office and say: Hey, how do I get a fishing license? How do I pick up a hunting license?

It is against the law right now. If somebody has a check that needs to be cashed, it is very difficult to cash that check in a post office.

What you see, by the way, all over America are payday lenders who are charging outrageous rates to low-income people to cash a check, a service I suspect the Postal Service could do to make some money and also save people a whole lot of money by not having to pay these outrageous rates.

If you were to pick up a case of beer or a case of wine and you wanted to send it to a relative in California, it is against the law for the Postal Service to deliver wine or beer. Currently, it is against the law for the United States Postal Service to engage in e-commerce activities.

We say to the Postal Service: We want you to go out and we want you to be competitive. By the way, you can't do this and you can't do that. On top of that, we are going to cause a massive financial problem for you demanding that you prefund 75 years of retiree health care in a 10-year period. Good luck. Well, that has a lot to do with why the Postal Service is facing the serious financial problems it is today.

We have to give the Postal Service a lot more flexibility, and we have to give them the opportunity and the ability to develop a very different business model than it currently has. In my view, we need to give the Postal Service the authority to do what other countries throughout the world are doing to respond to the shift toward electronic mail and away from hard copy mail. Fewer and fewer people are using first class mail. We understand that. They are using e-mail. That is the reality and we have to respond to that.

Let me give a few of them, really just a few, of what other postal services around the world are doing.

In Sweden, the post office will physically deliver e-mail correspondence to people who are not online or don't have access to a computer. Could that work here? I don't know. It is an interesting idea.

In Switzerland, people can have their physical mail received, scanned, and delivered into their e-mail boxes by the postal service.

In Germany, the post office will allow customers to communicate through secure service.

I think people are increasingly and legitimately concerned about who is going to get into their e-mail. In Germany they provide secure services. Could that work here in the United States? I don't know. Is it worth exploring, worth looking into? I think it is.

The point is that the Postal Service must be given the opportunity to innovate and implement an expanded business strategy for a changing world. We can't keep doing the same old-same old in a world that is changing.

For over 230 years, and enshrined in our Constitution, the Postal Service has played an enormously important role for the people of our country and, in fact, for our entire economy. A strong Postal Service, a Postal Service

that delivers mail and packages in a timely manner, is extremely important for our economy.

That mission remains as important as it has ever been. Let's stand together and fight to save the Postal Service, not destroy it. Let's stand together in the midst of this recession to fight and save hundreds of thousands of jobs.

I again want to thank the 23 cosponsors on my legislation. I look forward to having more, but let's go forward together to save the Postal Service.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceed to call the roll.

Mr. REID. 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. REID. Mr. President, this afternoon we have been trying to move forward on the WRDA bill—the Water Resources Development Act—and significant progress has been made. One of the issues we are trying to work out is an issue dealing with Senator LANDRIEU. She has been, more than anyone else in the Senate, concerned about what happens when places flood, and she has every reason to feel this way because of what happens in Louisiana with flooding. She is concerned about flood insurance.

I have worked with Senator BOXER, Senator BOXER's staff, I have worked with the Republicans, and it appears to me this is something that has made great progress today. The staff is going to work on this over the weekend. We will be here on Monday. I will file cloture in a few minutes, but if, in fact, cloture doesn't need to be voted on, we can always move forward without doing that. We can vitiate the cloture vote.

So I hope the good work done by Senator LANDRIEU, her staff, and other staff members here—and Senator LANDRIEU has been here, as she is now. I don't mean this in a negative sense, but she is like a bulldog. Whenever she gets hold of something, it is hard to get her to loosen that jaw. She has been here all afternoon working on this, so I hope something can be worked out during the next 48 hours on this matter.

CLOTURE MOTION

I have a cloture motion at the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

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 S. 601, a bill to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to au-

thorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Barbara Boxer, Tom Udall, Richard Blumenthal, Max Baucus, Bill Nelson, Jeanne Shaheen, Tom Harkin, Al Franken, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Brian Schatz, Thomas R. Carper, Jeff Merkley, Jon Tester, Patty Murray, Sherrod Brown, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Ron Wyden.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum required under rule XXII be waived and that the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on S. 601 occur at 12 noon on Tuesday, May 14.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

REMEMBERING FALLEN FIREFIGHTER GENE M. KIRCHNER

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today with sadness in my heart to pay tribute to a very special individual, Gene M. Kirchner, a Baltimore County volunteer firefighter who died in the line of duty. Gene was just 25 and a volunteer firefighter for the Reisterstown Volunteer Fire Department. He rushed to the second floor of a house fire on April 24 in a vain attempt to save the resident. Gene was found unconscious and was rushed to Maryland's Shock Trauma Center, but succumbed to his injuries on May 2.

Gene joined the company's ranks when he was just 14 and served as a junior firefighter for 2 years before becoming a volunteer firefighter. He came from a family of firefighters. His twin brother Will is also a firefighter and so is his sister Shelly Brezicki. Craig Hewitt, assistant chief of the fire company, said that Gene "was selfless, well-liked, funny; got along with everybody. He liked helping people."

Gene was laid to rest this past Sunday and the entire Baltimore community is mourning the death of this kind, gentle young man who laid down his life in an attempt to save another's life. His brother and sister firefighters came from as far away as New York and North Carolina to pay special tribute to this young man who understood the risks he faced, but dedicated himself to helping ensure the safety of others. Gene was posthumously awarded the Fire Department's Medal of Honor because he embodied what we, as a Nation, come to look for in our first responders—courage, selflessness, and dedication to duty.

I know my U.S. Senate colleagues will want to join me in thanking

Gene's family for giving our community such a special young man and in sending condolences to his family, friends, and fellow firefighters on the tragic loss of such a hero.

TRIBUTE TO MAYOR JOHN A. SPRING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to take a moment today to thank a friend and a remarkable public servant. John Spring ended his second term as mayor of Quincy, IL, earlier this week.

Mayor Spring led Quincy through some of its most difficult times in recent memory. Under his leadership, Quincy weathered record floods and the Great Recession. Not only did Quincy survive these crises, the city actually came out stronger than before.

Any elected official would be proud of that record. It is even more impressive in Mayor Spring's case because he was a political rookie. He had never won public office before the people of Quincy elected him mayor in 2005. His only previous public service experience was a stint as the appointed chairman of Quincy's Police and Fire Commission.

For many of us, it takes a few tries before we actually win a race. But John is a natural. He won his first election.

Quincy, IL, is a river town. It sits right on the banks of the Mississippi River. At one point this past winter the river was so low that barge traffic was in danger of being halted.

During Mayor Spring's final weeks in office, however, heavy rains swelled the river to flood stage. When flooding threatened the city's water and wastewater treatment facilities, Mayor Spring and his team immediately put into place emergency procedures they had honed during previous floods. With leadership, hard work and a lot of sandbags, Quincy weathered the storm.

In 2008, during an earlier flood, then-Senator Barack Obama and I visited Quincy to lend support. We were inspired to see how the entire city came together to protect their homes and their neighbors' homes and businesses.

In 2010, Mayor Spring was able to welcome President Obama back to Quincy and show him how Quincy had weathered not only rainstorms, but the economic storm caused by the Great Recession.

Mr. President, the unemployment rate today in Quincy and Adams County is 6.6 percent. That rate is among the lowest in the State of Illinois, and that is no accident. Under Mayor John Spring's leadership, Quincy has continued to be the economic engine of the Tri-State area.

John Spring led the effort to lay a solid foundation for economic growth. He balanced the city's budget every year and didn't raise taxes—not even once. In fact, Quincy reduced its property tax rate in 7 out of Mayor Spring's 8 years in office.

He made tough, smart decisions that enabled Quincy to maintain adequate