

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—
H. CON. RES. 25

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, I rise to make a few brief remarks. I will leave most of those remarks until after I make another request for unanimous consent. I think I know where this unanimous consent request is headed. I am disappointed. I think we are on, I believe, day 51 at this point as to the request that many of us have made in this Chamber to go back to regular order. Part of that regular order is after a budget has passed for budget conferees to be appointed so we can resolve what I believe is the most important issue facing our Nation, the question of our debt and deficit, so we can try to take the actions needed to get this economy jump-started again. I will reserve most of my time for the remarks afterward.

In the meantime, let me make this request:

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to consideration of Calendar No. 33, H. Con. Res. 25; that the amendment which is at the desk, the text of S. Con. Res. 8, the budget resolution passed by the Senate, be inserted in lieu thereof; that H. Con. Res. 25, as amended, be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, the Senate insist on its amendment, request a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate, all with no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I ask consent the Senator modify his request so that it not be in order for the Senate to consider a conference report that includes tax increases or reconciliation instructions to increase taxes or raise the debt limit.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Does the Senator so modify?

Mr. WARNER. Reserving the right to object, simply as someone who has spent an awful lot of time on this issue, both sides need to be willing to compromise. We need to deal with both the revenue side of this challenge as well as the entitlement reforms that are needed to make sure we can get our close-to-\$17-trillion debt back under control. Recognizing the Senator's request would take part of the opportunity to reach that common ground off the table, I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Is there objection to the original request?

Mr. McCONNELL. I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, I simply want to again take a moment here, 52 days after we spent until 5 o'clock in the morning debating a budget—the budget that had over 100 amendments offered, a budget that had

amendments from both sides offered and rejected but also accepted. Amendments from both sides were accepted into this budget. It passed with a majority.

I know there are some of my colleagues on the other side who say we should go into the next step of this debate with certain things taken off the table. I do not understand how we are ever going to get to the point which every economist from left to right has all agreed upon, that we have to put this issue of lurching from one budget crisis to another behind us.

The fact is there is an awful lot of consensus about what we need to do. Starting back with the Simpson-Bowles report, then followed up by the Gang of Six and the Domenici-Rivlin report, everyone agrees we need to do at least \$4 trillion over the next 10 years. We don't have to solve the whole problem, we just have to take a good step forward.

The remarkable thing is even lurching from crisis to crisis we are over half the way there. Depending on how you want to count, we have done between \$2.2 and \$2.5 trillion of deficit reduction. That means we need about \$2 trillion more to be done for us to again not only provide the boost to the American economy, not only to no longer make Congress the object of more than late-night jokes about our inability to get things done, not only to be able to ensure we have driven our debt-to-GDP ratio back down, headed in the right direction, but, perhaps most important, demonstrate to the American people that when we have an issue of this importance we can actually find that common ground.

To do that is going to require, candidly, everyone in this body and our friends down the hall in the House to be willing to give a little bit. That means we are going to have to find ways to generate additional revenues. I believe, for one—I know sometimes many on my side disagree with me—we are going to have to find ways to reform our entitlement programs so the promise of Medicare and Social Security and Medicaid, some of the best initiatives ever put forward, are going to be here 30 years from now.

But if we are going to reach that kind of compromise, it means the regular order has to proceed. It means we have to have these two very different budgets, one passed by the House, one passed by the Senate, resolved through the regular order of a conference committee. If we do not do this—if we do not do this—my fear is we are going to continue to do the kind of actions we have been on over the last number of months where we continue to cut back on that relatively small piece of Federal spending which is discretionary spending.

We are already seeing, in States such as Massachusetts and Minnesota and Virginia, the effects of sequestration where we have put forward a policy that was viewed by everyone when it

was originally thought up as so stupid, so beyond the pale, that no rational group of folks would ever allow it to come to pass. We are now 3 or 4 months into allowing that to come to pass. While we have taken action on certain items such as relieving the challenge of our air traffic controllers, we have not taken action on making sure the funds have been replaced for the 70,000 to 80,000-plus kids who have lost their Head Start funding. We have not taken action to ensure the NIH cancer grants that are being cut, where we have done multigrant years—where the preceding years of research are now going to be flushed because we cannot do the final year of the grant, we cannot take action on that.

We have not taken action on the fact that now, as announced by the Secretary of Defense, while we have made some progress, where no longer are there 22 days of furloughs, we are now seeing 11 days of furloughs to our defense civilian employees. This is at a time that makes enormous challenges to their budgets but beyond that to the readiness of the men and women who defend our Nation.

We can continue this path on sequestration, frankly, retarding our ability to keep our military ready, holding back our ability to have the kind of economic recovery we would all like to see or we can allow the regular order, a regular order that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle called for, for the last couple of years, for us in this Senate to pass the budget.

We passed that budget. Now we need to take the next step in the process and appoint conferees and let us try to find that common ground between the House and Senate budget so we can address this issue of debt and deficit, so we can demonstrate to the American people that we can do our most basic responsibility, which is to make sure we pay our bills and operate the basic functions of government, and that we can do our job to restore the faith that this institution can work in a way the Founders set up.

Unfortunately, we are not going to take that step today because now, for the fifty-second day in a row, our Republican colleagues have objected to the next step in regular order. I am greatly disappointed, but I know I and other colleagues will come down on a regular basis and continue to make this request. My hope is that at some point in the not too distant future we can let the process continue, and we can get to the hard work of resolving the differences of the House and Senate so we can put this issue of lurching from budget crisis to budget crisis in the rearview mirror.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I thank the former Governor of Virginia. He knows how to balance a budget and how to have a strong budget for the good people of this country. I share his frustration that we are not able to bring this long-awaited budget that we finally passed in the Senate to conference with the House. I hope minds will change and we will be able to get this done.

Again, I thank the Senator for his leadership and for a balanced approach on reducing the debt.

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I come to the floor today to speak on the importance of passing the Water Resources Development Act or, as we know it around Washington, the WRDA bill.

In my State they know it as a bill that is good for our harbors, rivers, and the flood protection we need in the Fargo-Moorhead area or, as I like to call it in Minnesota, the Moorhead-Fargo area.

The bill advances a critical front to protect the Red River of the north to Moorhead, MN, and Fargo, ND. I visited this region twice over the last year, and I have been back literally every year I have been in the Senate because of flood threats—these years more than ever.

This is literally an every-year occurrence now to the point where people have major sandbag operations filled with volunteers, seniors, and people from the prisons. Everyone is working together, but there must be a better way to do this. Just because we do it so well in North Dakota and Minnesota and have such an incredible spirit of voluntarism doesn't mean there is going to be one year where the flood is too great or that we should continue on this path when, in fact, we have the opportunity to have long-term flood protection.

The river has been above major flood stage 6 out of the last 8 years. In 2009, the year of the record flood, the river rose to more than 40 feet.

I will remind the Presiding Officer of the Grand Forks flood and what happened there. It was literally just about an hour away from Fargo. So we were that close to that happening in Fargo and Moorhead.

In Minnesota and North Dakota, the Red River doesn't divide us, it unites us. It is in that spirit of solidarity that we drive our efforts to help the Red River Basin. This year we were fortunate that the flooding was not nearly as severe as it had been projected. A week before the crest went down, it was projected to be the second biggest flood in history with the late snow.

In 2009 and 2010 homes and farms with ring dikes around them looked like small islands floating in the floodwaters. If anyone thinks this lasts for a day or week, it literally lasts for months. Entire towns create ring

dikes, and they can only get out of them with boats. That is what is happening near the Canadian border in Minnesota and North Dakota. The town of Georgetown, MN, is threatened every time the Red River rises and the Buffalo River overflows.

The volunteer who was working at the emergency center—I went up to him and said: It is so nice that you are making lunches for people. He said he lost his entire home.

I said: And you are here?

He said: Yes, this is the only thing I could think of to do to help other people who had the same bad experience as me. That is the spirit of voluntarism in our States.

I think we can do better. The annual threat of flooding in the Fargo-Moorhead area underscores the need for permanent flood protection. We know about the devastating impact of floods. The flood diversion project, which is authorized in the WRDA bill, is critical to safety and economic development.

I have enjoyed working with Congressman PETERSON on flood diversion efforts, including retention, which he cares a lot about, and we did get some funding for that. I was able to get funding in the farm bill today to help with that. I have also worked with Senator HOEVEN, Senator HEITKAMP, and Senator FRANKEN on this long-term project to have actual permanent solutions to our flooding project in Fargo and Moorhead.

We have a problem, and the WRDA bill is the beginning of a solution. Also included in this bill is a Roseau River project, which is at a critical point. The WRDA bill helps address flood protection for Roseau, MN. Roseau has recovered from a flood in 2002 that caused widespread damage, but the area needs flood protection to reduce the flood stages in the city. The next phase of the plan will include a diversion channel, a restriction structure, and two storage areas designed to remove the city from the regular 100-year regulatory floodplain and reduce future flood damages by nearly 86 percent.

The WRDA bill also advances our Nation's water infrastructure, which is something the Presiding Officer knows a little bit about in Massachusetts. It is clear that our 21st-century economy demands 21st-century infrastructure, and we cannot afford to sit back any longer and allow it to crumble. No place knows this better than Minnesota.

I lived six blocks from that 35W bridge, which is an eight-lane highway. One day, in the middle of a summer day, the bridge fell down in the middle of the Mississippi River. As I said that day, a bridge just shouldn't fall down in the middle of America, but it did.

We are seeing the same crumbling infrastructure and problems with many of our ports across the country. Failure to take action will have consequences no one likes. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, inefficiencies in infrastructure are esti-

mated to drive up the cost of doing business by an estimated \$430 billion, and that is just in this decade.

The civil engineers' 2013 report card gives our Nation's infrastructure an overall D-plus grade. As someone who has taught students before, I think the Presiding Officer knows that is not a good grade. Our inland waterways infrastructure, which includes our locks and dams on the Mississippi River, gets a D-minus, and our ports received a C grade. We cannot be satisfied with those grades.

When people hear "ports" they think of places such as Massachusetts, South Carolina, Florida, and California. But, in fact, the Great Lakes—including Lake Superior, which we are so proud of in Minnesota—have very significant ports.

In fact, when I first came to the Senate, I was assigned to the Commerce Committee and somehow found myself on the oceans subcommittee. I remember sitting at my first meeting thinking: What am I doing here? I am on the oceans subcommittee. I wrote a note to the Senator from New Jersey, FRANK LAUTENBERG, that said: I am the only Senator on the subcommittee who doesn't have an ocean. I kept the note he wrote back to me. The note said: It is easy, next year just come back and ask for one.

Well, in fact, I found out since then that the oceans subcommittee included the Great Lakes so it gave me a platform to advocate for our Great Lakes. The Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, which is so important to our ocean-bordering States, also includes the Great Lakes. The Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund collects \$700 million each year more than it spends on dredging. In other words, it collects \$700 million more each year than it spends on dredging and maintenance.

Meanwhile, our ports and navigation channels wait for basic maintenance. We need to correct this disparity and ensure the funds are spent to address the needs of the shippers and ensure that the Great Lakes system does not fall into further disrepair.

I was just up at the Port of Duluth-Superior to highlight the need for dredging and maintenance on the Great Lakes. The Port of Duluth-Superior is ranked among the top 20 ports in the U.S. by cargo tonnage. It sees 40 million short tons of cargo and nearly 1,000 vessel visits every year. I think people would be surprised by that since Minnesota has lakes. In fact, we have 1 of the top 20 ports in the country.

We have 11,500 jobs that are dependent on cargo shipments in and out of the port. The port is critical to the economy of northeastern Minnesota where my dad was born and my grandpa worked as an iron ore miner. Guess what. That is how they got the iron ore out of Minnesota and out to the world.

It is critical that high-use ports like Duluth and Two Harbors get dredged so they can support the ships. It is vital