

who still have their jobs—learned of these abuses 2 years ago and never corrected the record.

In short, if we ever needed another reason to get rid of ObamaCare and replace it with market-driven, patient-centered reform, the IRS has provided us with one.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I remember—and I am sure the Presiding Officer does too—an early morning in March when we completed our budget deliberations. That was a couple of months ago. I remember the outcry about the Senate not following regular order in passing a budget. On that March morning, we followed regular order. We passed a budget. We took up lots of amendments. We spent hours on debate. We voted on many amendments, and the Senate worked its will. Of course, the House has also worked its will. It passed a budget that is different from the Senate budget.

The next step in regular order is for the House and Senate to meet in what is called a conference to work out the differences between the House and the Senate so we can then have a budget for the country. That is how the regular process works.

I know for the last couple of years we have had budgets. We have had budgets because of grand bargains that have been agreed to on debt extensions and things such as that, but there is now a cry to follow regular order. That is what we should do: Follow regular order. So the next step is to go into a conference.

I must tell my colleagues, I don't quite understand why the Republican leader is objecting to going to conference. He is trying to say, We will go to conference if the Senate agrees with the House. No, we don't go to conference because we agree with one body; we go to conference to work out our differences. So I am extremely disappointed that those who are yelling the loudest about following regular order are now preventing us from using regular order.

We need to get to conference, and one of the reasons is so we can get rid of sequestration. Sequestration means across-the-board mindless cuts. It treats every priority in government the same. That is mindless. That is not what we should be doing. It is having a major impact on the mission of many agencies in this country. They can't do what the public wants them to do because they don't have the budget sup-

port to do it. For an agency that is affected by sequestration, it amounts to almost 10 percent of their budget, because they have to cram in savings over a short number of months. Also, it only affects some agencies, not all. Not all of the programs are affected by sequestration. But those discretionary programs that are affected are across the board, without any discretion.

If the Presiding Officer ran into a tough economic time or someone we represent does and they lose some income, they look at their family budget. They may have money put aside for rent or mortgage payments, maybe some money put aside for a food budget for their family, and maybe there is some money put aside to go to an Orioles-Red Sox game.

They are going to have to make some tough choices, but they are going to make choices based upon what is most important to their family. They certainly are going to pay their rent payment or their mortgage payment to keep the roof over their family home.

So that is what we should be doing. We have to make decisions, and we cannot do these across-the-board cuts. It is hurting agencies. These are cuts on top of cuts on top of cuts.

Let me mention one group that will be particularly affected by that, and that is our Federal workforce. These are the people who are at NIH, the talented scientists doing the research that is keeping us healthy. They are finding the answers to the dread diseases in our society. These are people who are standing guard on our border, keeping us safe. These are people who do food inspections to make sure we have a healthy food supply. These are people who help our seniors, to make sure they get the checks they need for their dignity in their older years. These are people who are working for the public.

What have we done to them? Three straight years of freezes, no increase in their salaries. We are now looking at what we are going to do with their benefit structure. On top of that, we have freezes on the number of employees; therefore, they are being asked to do more with less. And now we have furloughs, which is basically cuts—cuts in their salary.

It is not the Federal payroll that causes the deficits we have today. As the Presiding Officer and I know, it is the fact that we went to war in two countries, we cut taxes, we went through a recession. We have to answer the way of getting out of this problem in a balanced approach. We have already done the discretionary cuts to those agencies, and we are now affecting their ability to do their mission.

I want to mention some of the effects of sequestration on the citizens of Maryland, whom I have the opportunity to represent in the Senate.

Maryland will lose approximately \$14.4 million in funding for primary and secondary education. Twelve thousand fewer students will be served and ap-

proximately 30 fewer schools will receive funding. In Maryland, we believe education is a top priority. That is how we compete. That is how we invest in our future. We invest in our children.

Maryland will lose approximately \$10 million in funds for about 120 teachers, aides, and staff who help our children with disabilities.

Around 770 fewer low-income students in Maryland will receive aid to help them finance the cost of college, and around 440 fewer students will get work-study jobs that help them pay for college. These are programs that Democrats and Republicans have fought for over the years to make sure they are funded. Now, in Maryland, we are going to have to cut back.

Head Start and Early Head Start services would be eliminated for approximately 800 children in Maryland, reducing access to critical early education.

The list goes on and on and on.

Maryland would lose about \$3 million in environmental funding to ensure clean water and air quality, as well as prevent pollution from pesticides and hazardous waste. We have worked hard to clean up the Chesapeake Bay and provide a safe environment for our families. That is in jeopardy as a result of sequestration. In addition, Maryland could lose another \$467,000 in grants for fish and wildlife protection.

In Maryland, there will be 46,000—tens of thousands—of civilians in the Department of Defense who will be furloughed, reducing gross payroll by around \$353.7 million in total in our State.

Maryland will lose about \$317,000 in justice assistance grants. These grants support law enforcement. We all talk about supporting law enforcement. These grants also support prosecution and courts, crime prevention and education, corrections and community corrections, drug treatment and enforcement, and crime victim and witness initiatives.

Maryland will lose about \$66,000 in funding for job search assistance, referral, and placement, meaning around 9,270 fewer people will get the help and skills they need to find employment.

Madam President, 2,050 fewer children in Maryland will receive vaccines for diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, whooping cough, influenza, and hepatitis B.

Maryland will lose approximately \$551,000 in funds to help upgrade its ability to respond to public health threats, including infectious diseases, natural disasters, and biological, chemical, nuclear, and radiological events.

Maryland will lose about \$1.6 million in grants to help prevent and treat substance abuse, resulting in around 2,500 fewer admissions to substance abuse programs.

Maryland health departments will lose about \$595,000, resulting in around 14,900 fewer HIV tests.

Maryland could lose up to \$124,000 in funds that provide services to victims of domestic violence.

My point is these are cuts that I do not think the public wants us to do. In Congress, each of us says: Oh, we did not mean that. Well, it is time for us to act. Democrats and Republicans, coming together in a bipartisan way, compromise. That is what our Founding Fathers envisioned we would do—working together—so we have a balanced approach.

Just look at compulsory spending, mandatory spending. We can organize our health care delivery system in a more cost-effective way. Dealing with individuals with high-cost interventions—we can save money there—reduce hospital readmission rates. There are ways we can bring down costs in a sensible way. Our troops are coming home from Afghanistan. We can reduce our military spending. We can certainly look at the \$1.2 trillion we spend every year through the Tax Code—that is on a yearly basis—tax expenditures. We can certainly close some of those loopholes and get the badly needed revenues so we can deal with our budget in a balanced, responsible way.

Let's work together in a bipartisan fashion, Democrats and Republicans.

One more thing it will do: Solving problems gives predictability, and people will know what the rules are. They will know what our budget is, they will know what our Tax Code is, and that unleashes our economy and creates jobs, which helps the economy and helps balance our budget.

I urge my colleagues, let's take the next step. The next step is to go to conference on the budget. Let's work out the differences between the House and the Senate. Let's do what we are supposed to do in regular order.

I urge my Republican colleagues to remove their objections, and let's get to a conference on the budget as soon as possible.

With that, I see my distinguished friend from Utah who is on the floor. I always learn a lot when he speaks, so I am going to yield the floor for my colleague from Utah.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I thank my dear friend and colleague from Maryland. He is a wonderful person and a very good Senator. I enjoy him on the Senate Finance Committee. He is one of the brighter people on that committee, among a whole bunch of very bright people.

THE IRS

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I rise today to speak on a matter that deserves the attention of everyone in this Chamber.

By now we all know about what is going on at the Internal Revenue Service. We have seen the report from the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, TIGTA, indicating that between 2010 and 2012 the IRS was targeting conservative groups applying for tax-exempt status for increased levels of scrutiny.

We have read the accounts of conservative groups that were asked improper questions about their donors while some of their applications were delayed for more than 3 years, even as applications for groups friendly to the President and liberal causes were promptly approved.

We have heard the apologies from senior IRS officials and the condemnations from the White House itself. While we know for a certainty that this unacceptable behavior was going on at the IRS, there is still much more we do not know.

For example, we still do not know why the targeting began or why only conservative groups were targeted by the IRS examiners.

We do not know the full extent to which senior officials at the IRS and Department of Treasury became aware of these practices, when they found out, and what they did or did not do to put a stop to these practices.

Perhaps most importantly, we do not know why, when Members of Congress asked questions about these issues last year, and after senior officials certainly knew of the problem—or problems—we were led to believe that no groups were being targeted.

Indeed, neither Congress nor the American people learned anything about these activities from the responsible officials until they were trapped and their hands were forced.

There are not words to describe what has gone on here. Some of us have tried. Words such as “unconscionable,” “unbelievable,” and “Nixonian” have been thrown around, rightfully, in my opinion.

But regardless of the words we use to describe it, this is easily the most shocking and outrageous turn of events we have seen in Washington in some time—and that is saying something.

One thing I am glad to see is that these actions have, for the most part, been condemned by Members of both parties. In the end, I hope both Republicans and Democrats will work together to address these issues.

I have said from the outset that it does not matter if a tax-exempt group is liberal, conservative, or moderate. It is an outrage that the IRS would single out any group based on its political beliefs. On that point there is bipartisan agreement in Congress and throughout the country.

On the Senate Finance Committee, Chairman BAUCUS and I are undertaking a bipartisan investigation into this matter to find out exactly what happened and make sure this type of thing never happens again.

I am happy to be working with Chairman BAUCUS on this effort, and I want to assure my colleagues that we are going to get to the bottom of this. We are going to find out just how far down the rabbit hole the IRS went in singling out groups based on their political beliefs. We are going to find out why the IRS ignored a bedrock rule of tax administration: Treat similarly sit-

uated taxpayers similarly—always. We are going to find out exactly who was responsible, and we are going to hold them accountable for their actions.

The IRS needs to come clean about what went on here. Chairman BAUCUS and I intend to make sure they do.

Sadly, while the targeting of conservative groups in the review process has gotten most of the attention thus far, there are other issues involving the IRS that are every bit as disconcerting.

There are news reports indicating that in 2012, the same IRS office improperly disclosed confidential information about certain conservative groups to media organizations.

Last November, the journalist group ProPublica requested 501(c)(4) applications for 67 different nonprofits. Less than 2 weeks later, the IRS produced application documents submitted by 31 of the organizations. Included in this group of documents were the applications from nine conservative organizations that were still under consideration by the IRS. ProPublica subsequently posted six of those applications in redacted form on the Internet and published articles analyzing the information they obtained.

This is disturbing for at least three reasons. First and foremost, under section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code, the IRS is prohibited from disclosing applications for tax-exempt status that are still under review. While the IRS is authorized, under section 6104, to release application materials of groups that have already been granted tax-exempt status, pending applications are required by law to remain confidential. This appears to be a pretty cut-and-dried violation of the Internal Revenue Code, meaning that civil and criminal penalties may apply.

Second, the IRS responded to ProPublica's request in just 13 days. That seems extraordinarily swift, and it raises the question of how long the IRS normally takes to respond to such document requests. I do not want to prejudge anything, but I suspect it usually takes longer than 13 days to hear back from the IRS. It certainly takes longer than that for the IRS to respond to requests from Congress.

Finally, this revelation comes not too long after other allegations that the IRS disclosed confidential information submitted by conservative nonprofits.

In the spring of 2012, activist groups and media outlets began posting confidential donor information regarding the National Organization for Marriage, a nonprofit 501(c)(4) organization, on the Internet. Such information is also required by law to be kept confidential.

Although the IRS is authorized to release yearly forms filed by tax-exempt organizations, the law prohibits donor information from being disclosed, and that is whether it is a conservative, moderate, or liberal organization. Yet National Organization for Marriage's documents that found their way online