

Agreement or NAFTA, Mexico currently is the only country without a quota for sugar importation, and that is true whether we pass this amendment or not. That is true under the current system.

So even if we don't pass reforms, the argument that Mexico is coming in and bringing sugar into the country is true, there is sugar coming in from Mexico, but the fact is that is the way it is under the current program. Currently, sugar is the only—let me repeat, the only—commodity program that was not reformed in the committee-passed farm bill that is under consideration now.

Let me be clear: I think the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry—Senator STABENOW and the committee—did a great job on that bill in most areas because they provided savings and they reformed the program. So it is particularly puzzling to me why they totally left the sugar subsidies out of the bill, that they did nothing to reform the Sugar Program.

I don't think any program the Federal Government operates should be immune from updates and improvements. We need to act, and we need to act now, to reform the Sugar Program and to protect those workers who are in the food industry that use sugar, and protect consumers who are spending more money than they should for the cost of sugar.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Maine Ms. COLLINS, and I be permitted to engage in a colloquy for up to 10 minutes.

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

SEQUESTRATION

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam President, Senator COLLINS and I are here today to underscore the timeliness of a bipartisan solution we have been pushing since March. While I firmly believe we should replace the sequester with a balanced and comprehensive plan that delivers the same deficit-reducing punch, it appears to me, and to all of us, the sequester is here to stay for at least the remainder of the fiscal year ending September 30 of this year.

We need deficit reduction, but the way in which we are doing it under the sequester is terrible policy and it is time to fix it. Just after the fiscal year 2013 sequester was triggered, with Senator COLLINS' leadership, she and I introduced a commonsense plan that would empower Federal departments and agencies to replace the indiscriminate cuts of sequestration with more strategic cuts.

One only has to look at the way in which sequestration has endangered critical programs for working families, our senior citizens, and the middle

class to know we have to do more than we are doing today. Throwing up our hands and doing nothing is poor governing. Senator COLLINS and I believe we have a responsibility here as leaders to inject some measure of common sense into the process.

With that, Madam President, I wish to turn to my colleague Senator COLLINS for her thoughts on the necessity of the Collins-Udall legislative proposal.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, of course my friend and colleague from Colorado is exactly right, and I want to thank him for his leadership on this issue and for working with me to develop a bipartisan, commonsense plan that would help to mitigate the harmful effects of the automatic spending cuts known as sequestration that took effect on March 1.

I want to emphasize that under our proposal, budget targets would still have to be met. We understand the need to confront our enormous Federal debt, which is approaching \$17 trillion. But our plan does so in a sensible way. It recognizes that rather than imposing meat-ax cuts, we should be setting priorities. Our bill would give the heads of Federal agencies and departments affected by sequestration the flexibility to implement the required cuts in a much more thoughtful way by preserving vital programs and reducing or eliminating lower priority programs.

Our bill also ensures appropriate congressional oversight of these decisions by requiring the agency heads to submit their spending plans to both the House and Senate appropriations committees 5 days before implementing these decisions. These committees and their subcommittees know the budgets of these agencies inside and out and will be able to effectively monitor their spending decisions, just as the committees now oversee reprogramming requests.

Congress has already demonstrated that providing flexibility to Federal agencies in a commonsense way to address the unprecedented problems caused by sequestration makes a great deal of sense. Recently Congress passed a bill we authored that gave the Department of Transportation the flexibility to end the furloughs of air traffic controllers and to, instead, reduce spending by transferring unused balances from a grant program. That is the kind of decisionmaking flexibility we are talking about. In this case the furloughs were causing terrible flight delays and had the potential to truly harm the economies of Maine, Colorado, and countless other States that count on tourists visiting our amazing scenery, sampling our extraordinary food, and being with our great people. Had we not come together to pass this bill, the impacts could have been devastating to Maine and to Colorado businesses and their employees.

In Maine it would have affected everyone from our wait staff and our inn-

keepers to our countless tourist attractions. It would have even affected Federal institutions such as the gem of Acadia National Park and our State parks as well. In our States, each season, but particularly during those key peak summer months, we welcome with open arms visitors from around the globe. If those visitors were going to have to sit on a tarmac for 3 hours awaiting a flight, they most likely were going to cancel their trips.

I am proud of the work Senator UDALL and I did to pass this bipartisan bill, but more can and should be done to give other agencies the same kind of flexibility to set wise spending priorities.

I would turn to the Senator from Colorado to ask him if he agrees that isn't a better approach than across-the-board cuts with no flexibility?

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. The Senator from Maine has it exactly right, and I commend her for her leadership.

I want to point out to those who were critical of what we did when it came to the FAA, it is not just elite business travelers or Members of Congress who use our air transportation. It is families, it is seniors, it is businesswomen, and every American possible using our air transportation system. We see the egalitarian nature of our air transportation system when we are in our airports.

Senator COLLINS brokered a sensible compromise that kept our airports running, flights on time, and commerce flowing smoothly. I remember Senator COLLINS standing here on the floor, somewhat late at night, appealing to both of our leaders. So Senator COLLINS led the way.

We also moved in the furloughs for meat inspectors. If we can deal with these small corners of sequestration, we can go all in. We have proven we can find consensus. It is time to finish that job.

I want to turn back to my colleague for any final thoughts she might have to make about our bill and the importance of this effort we have underway.

Ms. COLLINS. I want to thank my good friend and colleague. It wouldn't have happened without his support. We took a bipartisan approach, and that is the kind of approach we are taking today in urging our colleagues to look at our bill and our leaders to move it.

Many agencies face the same challenges that were encountered by the FAA, and many agencies know of better ways to meet the sequestration targets. I have long believed these across-the-board cuts where we don't prioritize simply do not make sense.

Last week, the Department of Defense announced that because the Navy was able to identify cost-effective ways to meet its budget targets, thousands of hardworking men and women at our Nation's naval shipyards, such as the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, ME, would not have to be furloughed. I had long argued the Department of Defense has the flexibility to minimize

the furloughs because we gave them that authority as part of the continuing resolution.

I would be remiss if I did not note, however, my disappointment that some of the workers at the shipyard, and others, such as those in the National Guard and at other facilities, such as the Defense Accounting Services Center in Limestone, ME, still face furloughs.

There are other important programs as well. Biomedical researchers and school superintendents are also in a quandary of having little or no flexibility to implement the sequestration targets.

Instead of enacting piecemeal fixes—whether it is the FAA or it is the meat inspectors—our bill would empower administrators to head off this problem and avoid indiscriminate spending cuts. We can mitigate the harmful effects of sequestration, protect jobs, and avoid mindless spending cuts while tackling the very real problem of excessive and unnecessary spending by simply allowing managers to distinguish between vital programs, to be creative, and to cut those that are of lesser importance.

I know my colleague from Colorado would agree that no business facing the need to cut expenses would ever treat every program and function and service of that business as if they were of equal worth. Instead, the business managers and executives and employees would evaluate all the programs and set priorities. That is all we are asking.

I thank the Senator from Colorado, my good friend Senator UDALL, for his strong partnership on our effort to protect the jobs of hard-working Americans, prevent arbitrary spending cuts, yet deal with an unsustainable \$16.8 trillion debt. We know our approach would go a long way toward allowing priorities to be set. After all, if we are not going to set priorities, to make the tough decisions and distinguish among absolutely vital programs and those that could be cut or eliminated, then we might as well go home and just have a computer apply a formula to the budget.

That is not why we are here and that is not what the American people expect. They expect us to exercise judgment and make good decisions.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam President, I believe our time has expired or is beginning to expire, but I wish to underline what Senator COLLINS has said. We are passionate about this. Some say a passionate problem solver is an oxymoron or a passionate moderate is an oxymoron. That is not the case here. We want to solve this. We both have private sector experience. This is not how you would run a concern in the private sector. We can do this. We have shown we can do this. Let's move forward and provide certainty, not just to the Federal agencies but to the people in this country. At a time of tough economic challenges with a fragile recovery underway, we

need to create more certainty and need to budget in a wiser, smarter way.

I thank the Senator from Maine for her leadership. I value our partnership, and I know we are going to see this to a successful conclusion.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, could the Presiding Officer inform me of whether there is an order to proceed right now or whether there is some additional time for morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 4 minutes remaining for the majority in morning business.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. I ask unanimous consent the Senator from Maine be recognized for 4 minutes.

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

IRAN

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I understand that Senator BALDWIN is on her way to make her maiden speech, and I promise I will stop talking the moment she enters the Chamber. I thank my colleague from Colorado.

Later today, the Senate will vote on a resolution that has been introduced by Senators MENENDEZ and GRAHAM. I am pleased to join my Senate colleagues in cosponsoring this resolution, which reaffirms our commitment to a strong U.S.-Israeli relationship and to preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear power.

At this time in our history, it is more important than ever that we demonstrate a firm commitment to our allies—even if the neighborhood they are in looks more like a tinderbox than it has in decades. This resolution reaffirms that the United States will be a reliable friend and a determined ally, even in dangerous times—indeed, especially in dangerous times.

We are at a critical juncture in our efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapons capability. During my time in the Senate, I have repeatedly supported legislation imposes sanctions on Iran and puts pressure on the regime to change course. I worked with my good friend former-Senator Lieberman to pass legislation which ensures that organizations that inspect commercial ships for the U.S. government are not also providing services to governments like Iran that sponsor terrorism.

This resolution reiterates the significance that we place on keeping the full force of sanctions on Iran.

In the face of an existential threat to our country, the American people would expect the U.S. to take action. This resolution says that we will support Israel's right to do the same.

Let me read the powerful language in the resolution. Congress "declares that the United States has a vital national interest in, and unbreakable commitment to, ensuring the existence, survival, and security of the State of Israel, and reaffirms United States support for Israel's right to self-defense."

Congress "urges that, if the Government of Israel is compelled to take

military action in legitimate self-defense against Iran's nuclear weapons program, the United States Government should stand with Israel and provide, in accordance with United States law and the constitutional responsibility of Congress to authorize the use of military force, diplomatic, military, and economic support to the Government of Israel in its defense of its territory, people, and existence."

I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues in the United States Senate as well as with President Obama to close the loopholes in current sanctions legislation and to ensure that the cooperation that has existed between the United States and the State of Israel for over 60 years remains steadfast and unshakeable.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin is recognized.

Ms. BALDWIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for as much time as I may consume.

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

MOVING FORWARD

Ms. BALDWIN. Madam President, as I make my first remarks on the Senate floor, I have the honor of occupying the same Senate seat, and in fact occupying the very Senate desk, once used by Senator Robert M. LaFollette, Sr. "Fighting Bob LaFollette," as he was known, was a Republican Senator from Wisconsin a century ago who is credited as the founder of the Progressive Party and progressive movement in this Nation. I admire Fighting Bob's legacy in many ways. But I wish to assure my colleagues who are present in the Chamber at this moment that I will not emulate his maiden speech, which went on for 3 successive days.

Bob LaFollette ran for this office because he was concerned that while corporate interests were being well served in Washington, ordinary people weren't even being heard. He traveled all around the State of Wisconsin, literally speaking from makeshift stages of soap boxes and hay wagons at county fairs. His message came to define my State's progressive tradition. The things he talked about in that day still ring true.

As I have traveled the State Wisconsinites have told me that the powerful and well-connected seem still to write their own rules while the concerns and struggles of middle-class families go unnoticed in Washington. They believe our economic system is tilted toward those at the top and that our political system exists to protect those unfair advantages instead of making sure everybody gets a fair shot.

They see Washington happy to let Wall Street write their own rules but unable to help students pull themselves out of debt. They see Washington working to protect big tax breaks for powerful corporations but unwilling to protect small manufacturers from getting ripped off by China's cheating.