

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.

They see Washington bouncing from one manufactured fiscal crisis to the next but never addressing the real and ongoing crisis of our disappearing middle class.

The truth is, while we hear a lot about the wide distance between Democrats and Republicans, the widest and most important distance in our political system is between the content of the debate in Washington and the concerns of hard-working people in places such as Wisconsin. That distance parallels the large and growing gaps between rich and poor, between rising costs and the stagnant incomes, between our Nation and our competitors when it comes to education and innovation—and it is truly hurting people.

When my grandparents were raising me, I learned that if you worked hard and played by the rules, one can get ahead. The Wisconsinites I talked to grew up learning that very same thing. They are working as hard as ever to get ahead, but many are finding they are hardly getting by. People are still working for that middle-class dream: a job that pays the bills, health coverage they can rely on, a home they can call their own, a chance to save for their kid's college education, and a secure retirement. But, instead, too many are finding that even two jobs are not enough to make ends meet, and those jobs are hard to find and hard to keep. They are finding the homes they worked so hard to own are not even worth what still remains on their mortgage. They are finding that the cost of college is going up, and they are worried they might never be able to retire comfortably.

That is the biggest gap of all, the gap between the economic security Wisconsinites worked so hard to achieve and the economic uncertainty they are asked to settle for.

If we cannot close that gap, we might someday talk about the middle class as something we used to have, not something each generation can aspire to. We all get it. We all see this happening. While Wisconsinites do not agree about what we should do, they want to see us working together to find a solution, even if it takes some spirited debate.

But when they look across that yawning divide to Washington, they see us advancing talking points and playing politics instead of putting our varying experiences and talents to work solving these problems.

But I am optimistic. I did not run for the Senate just because I agree with those complaints. I ran for the Senate because I think we can do better. I know I have a great example to follow in the people of Wisconsin. These are particularly tough times for my State. Even as the National economy is rebounding, businesses in Wisconsin and middle-class families in my State remain stuck in neutral.

The manufacturing sector that sustained our prosperity for generations has taken a lot of hits—some that could have been prevented and others

that are simply a factor of our changing economy and our changing world. But we do not see Wisconsin workers and business owners wallowing in crisis or looking for someone to blame. Our State motto is one word, "Forward." That is the only thing we know.

In the short time I have been here, I have made it my mission to fight to make sure Wisconsinites have the tools and skills they need to succeed in a "Made in Wisconsin" economy that revitalizes our manufacturing sector and rebuilds our prosperity—and this means respecting our labor.

It means investing in regional hubs of collaborative research and development, supporting the technical colleges that are working to provide a skilled workforce, and encouraging public and private partnerships to revitalize our manufacturing sector. But it all relies on the talent of individuals who are working hard to help our communities move forward.

Years ago John Miller, a disabled Marine Corps veteran who lives near Milwaukee, invented a new kind of motorcycle windshield that uses LED lights embedded in acrylic. For years he has been working hard to find investors to bring his idea to market. He has been testing different acrylics, showing off his work at trade shows, and spending months trying to get approvals from the Department of Transportation. Investors are lining up at John's door. Harley-Davidson even wanted to buy his patent. But he doesn't just want to make a profit, he wants to make a difference. He is holding out until he knows that everything in his product will be made and manufactured in the United States—hopefully by other disabled veterans, who often have a hard time finding work when they come home.

Wisconsin is full of John Millers—ordinary people with ingenuity, determination, and civic spirit to become not just successful but engines of economic opportunity for their whole communities, committed to the common good.

I am so proud of all the remarkable potential I have seen in Wisconsin: the Global Water Center in Milwaukee, which will open this summer as an incubator for water technology businesses; the partnership of Johnson Controls and UW-Milwaukee for the Innovation Campus research park in Wauwatosa; the advances in energy-efficiency technology being realized at Orion Energy Systems in Manitowoc, WI; the work on sustainable biofuels at the Great Lakes Bioenergy Research Center in Madison; and small business incubators at technical colleges across our State helping to build the dreams of entrepreneurs.

These stories of innovation and cooperation and these exciting opportunities to build an economy made to last are happening all over our country.

I am going to let people in on a little secret. We here in the Senate can be innovative too. We can cooperate. We can

get excited by these opportunities. It is true of Democrats and Republicans alike because none of us came here just to audition for cable news or to win our next election before the bumper stickers from the last one even come off the cars.

I have already had the great joy of working with colleagues from both parties, and I know neither party has a monopoly on compassion or common sense. There is nothing liberal or conservative about wanting to help our manufacturers compete and win on the world stage. There is not a Senator in this body whose heart has not broken when listening to a constituent who cannot seem to get ahead. We cannot fix all of those gaps in our economy with one bill. Not even "Fighting Bob" La Follette could close that divide in our political system with one speech.

I am using this speech, my first here on the Senate floor, to say that I am ready to work hard and work with anyone to make progress on these challenges and help move this great country forward.

I yield the floor.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, before the Senator from Wisconsin leaves the floor, I would like to indicate how thrilled I am to have another Great Lakes Senator with us in the Senate. Senator BALDWIN is an invaluable member of the Budget Committee. She is fighting hard for Wisconsin agriculture. Now that we are in the middle of the efforts on the farm bill, I know she is deeply involved and concerned about our men and women who provide the food we put on our tables every day.

We thank the Senator for her leadership. We are so pleased to have Senator BALDWIN in the Senate.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

AGRICULTURE REFORM, FOOD, AND JOBS ACT OF 2013

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 954, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 954) to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2018.

Pending:

Stabenow (for Leahy) amendment No. 998, to establish a pilot program for gigabit Internet projects in rural areas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

AMENDMENT NO. 960

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up Senate amendment No. 960 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to setting aside the pending amendment?