

[Rollcall Vote No. 180 Ex.]

YEAS—59

Alexander	Franken	Murphy
Ayotte	Gillibrand	Murray
Baldwin	Hagan	Nelson
Baucus	Harkin	Pryor
Begich	Heinrich	Reed
Bennet	Heitkamp	Reid
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rockefeller
Boxer	Johnson (SD)	Sanders
Brown	Kaine	Schatz
Cantwell	King	Schumer
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Carper	Landrieu	Stabenow
Casey	Leahy	Tester
Collins	Levin	Udall (CO)
Coons	Markey	Udall (NM)
Corker	McCain	Warner
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warren
Durbin	Menendez	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Merkley	Wyden
Flake	Mikulski	

NAYS—40

Barrasso	Graham	Murkowski
Blunt	Grassley	Paul
Boozman	Hatch	Portman
Burr	Heller	Risch
Chambliss	Hoehn	Roberts
Chiesa	Inhofe	Rubio
Coats	Isakson	Scott
Coburn	Johanns	Sessions
Cochran	Johnson (WI)	Shelby
Cornyn	Kirk	Thune
Crapo	Lee	Toomey
Cruz	Manchin	Vitter
Enzi	McConnell	
Fischer	Moran	

NOT VOTING—1

Wicker

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I am 95 percent certain there will be no more votes today. The question I am not as certain about is what happens on Monday. We will know before the day is out whether we will have to have a Monday vote or votes. We will keep that in mind. Everyone should keep it in mind.

I ask unanimous consent the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid on the table, there being no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; and that President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate resumes legislative session.

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, I ask to speak as in morning business.

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

COMMEMORATING THE AURORA TRAGEDY

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, on Saturday, July 20, Colorado will commemorate a solemn anniversary be-

cause a year ago, almost exactly to the day, in Aurora, CO, a theater full of people, who at that moment wanted nothing more than to escape the heat and enjoy a movie with their family and with friends, found themselves in the middle of a senseless and violent tragedy. A gunman opened fire and took 12 lives a year ago, innocent people, loved by family and by friends. He physically wounded scores of others.

Days later, as this photo shows, thousands of Coloradoans attended a vigil hosted by the city of Aurora. We shared tears and prayers. We also resolved to support each other, to heal, and to always remember those who lost their lives—which is what brings me here today.

Since that time, we have continued to see an outpouring of support all across Colorado and, for that matter, all across the United States of America for those we lost, their loved ones, and for the city of Aurora. The grace and courage of the families and survivors affected by this terrible tragedy serve as a powerful reminder to all of us of the resilience of the human spirit.

Today we remember the victims, victims such as Jessica, an aspiring young journalist; Rebecca, a mother of two who joined the Air Force after high school; and Veronica Moser Sullivan, age 6, who had just learned to swim and loved to play dressup.

We also remember the acts of heroism and the resolution demonstrated by so many Coloradoans in the aftermath of this tragedy, people such as Matt McQuinn, who threw himself in front of his girlfriend on the night of the shooting, saving her life; and the brave first responders and volunteers who helped save lives and comforted those in shock and heartbreak.

We remember the city of Aurora and the State of Colorado, which has once again come together to help one another through unspeakable loss and heartache.

At a recent service of over 3,000 people at the Potter's House, an Aurora-based church, Rev. Chris Hill told those in attendance that "We believe morning is coming to Aurora. Aurora means the dawn." I think that captures the spirit of resilience and toughness that characterized Aurora, my beautiful State of Colorado, and these United States of America.

Before I leave the floor, I want to read once again the names of the victims in Aurora: Jon Blunk, AJ Boik, Jesse Childress, Gordon Cowden, Jessica Ghawi, John Larimer, Matt McQuinn, Cayla Medek, Veronica Moser, Alex Sullivan, Alex Teves, and Rebecca Wingo.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

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

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

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

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

COAL IN AMERICA

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, weeks and months ahead and maybe even for years to come, we will be debating President Obama's latest global climate proposal. It is crucial that this debate be based on crystal clear facts and not clouded by political ideologies on either side.

So, starting today, I plan to deliver a series of speeches on energy, and I plan to start with coal, which I know is no surprise to the Presiding Officer. Coal is America's greatest energy resource. I think it is important to lay out the facts about coal for several reasons.

No. 1, coal is America's most abundant, most reliable, and most affordable source of energy, and it will be for decades to come.

No. 2, the coal industry and its supporters have been falsely portrayed by opponents as monsters who have done something wrong, that they value money over health and the environment.

No. 3, I think the American public has some basic misconceptions about coal and how important it is to keeping our economy growing and our Nation secure.

I think that because I was recently asked: If coal is so controversial, then why don't we as a nation just use more electricity? The question shows that, basically, people don't understand where their electricity comes from. When we turn the lights on, over 40 percent of the people depend on coal. Most of this industry and this country has been built on the back of coal and what coal has produced.

I didn't know how to respond to the person who asked that. It was one of those rare moments when I was at a loss for words. Just imagine standing there and being asked: Why would we continue to keep mining coal? Why wouldn't we just use more electricity?

I guess what I should have said was this: When we surf the Internet, watch TV or play video games, when we charge a cell phone or turn on an air-conditioner or plug in our hybrid car to charge it, we are using electricity, and there is a good chance that electricity came from coal.

Coal has a distinguished past. In fact, one can't tell the history of America without telling the history of coal. It fueled the industrialization of America in the 19th and early 20th centuries, making us what we are today: the richest and most powerful Nation in history.

Coal also has a distinguished present. It is responsible for 37.4 percent of all electricity generated in the United States today—more than any other source of energy.

Just as important, coal has a distinguished future ahead of it. The U.S. Department of Energy says it will remain

the dominant fuel for electricity generation in our country at least through 2040.

Despite so many attempts to kill it, coal is critical to meeting the future energy needs of America. In other words, we can't make it without coal.

Coal has the longest and perhaps the most varied history of all fuels. It has been used for heating since the cave-man. It was once prized as the best stone in Britain by Roman invaders who actually carved jewelry out of it. Native Americans used it long before the New World settlers to bake their pottery, and blacksmiths have used coal to forge tools and all kinds of metal objects at least since the Middle Ages. In fact, a deep, rich vein of coal runs through all of human history and not just American history. Given all the blame it gets for carbon pollution today, it is worth remembering that coal was universally regarded as a carbon treasure.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of coal to both the American and British economies in the 19th and 20th centuries. Coal was the fuel that fired the Industrial Revolution. In the popular imagination, the industrial revolution is cotton mills, railways, steamboats, engines, and factories. But at the core of the industrial revolution was our use of energy, and the energy that powered the mills, the railroads, the steam engines, and the factories was coal. In fact, when James Watt invented the steam engine, he used coal to make the steam to run his engine, making it possible for machinery to do work previously done by humans and animals.

But perhaps the most important role coal played in the industrial revolution was in the making of steel—the predominant building material of the time. In 1861, when the country was torn by Civil War, factories used coal to produce steel for the guns, the bullets, and the cannons that preserved this Union.

By 1875, coke, which is made from coal, replaced charcoal as the primary fuel for iron blast furnaces to make steel. With the rise of iron and steel, coal production increased by 300 percent during the 1870s and early 1880s. By the early 1900s, coal was supplying more than 100,000 coke ovens, mostly in western Pennsylvania and northwestern West Virginia.

In the 1880s, coal was first used to generate electricity for factories and homes. Long after homes were being lighted by electricity produced by coal, many of them continued to have furnaces for heating and stoves for cooking that were fueled by coal. I can remember as a young person at my grandparents' home, I would always stoke the fire at night and bank up the coal so it would be warm all night long.

Of course, political, economic, and intellectual conditions also contributed to the industrialization of America. Representative government, capitalism, and the free expression of new

ideas all played their part. But at the heart of this sweeping industrial revolution, a profound transition from hand production to machines, was because of coal.

The first coal miners in the American Colonies were likely farmers who dug coal from beds exposed on the surface and sold it by the bushel—by the bushel. In 1748, the first commercial coal production began from mines around Richmond, VA. By the late 1700s, coal was being mined on what was known as Coal Hill. Now it is known as Mount Washington in Pittsburgh, PA. The early settlers there used coal to heat their homes, but they also carried it in canoes across the Monongahela River to provide fuel for the military garrison at Fort Pitt.

Coal was first discovered in what is now West Virginia by German explorer John Peter Salling in 1742 in what is now Boone County. I have to wonder how hard it was to discover coal in West Virginia because coal occurs in 53 of West Virginia's 55 counties.

As early as 1810, the residents of Wheeling—once a part of Virginia and now a treasured part of West Virginia—used coal from nearby mines to heat their homes. By 1817, coal began to replace charcoal as a fuel for the numerous salt furnaces on the Kanawha River. But it was not until the mid-1800s that there was extensive mining in West Virginia.

The coalfields in southern West Virginia opened in the 1870s, and many of them owed their success to the coming of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway.

Of course, you cannot talk about coal without talking about coal miners—the bravest and most patriotic men and women I have ever met in my life. A lot of Americans only know the TV and movie stereotypes of coal miners, so they do not always give miners the respect they deserve. The fact is that they deserve the same respect as our military veterans because they go down into the mines for the same reasons our veterans took up arms—to protect this country. It is not just a job, it is a calling, it is a way of life, even an act of patriotism in the defense of this great country, and to tell you the truth most of the coal miners I meet in West Virginia are also military veterans.

Coal miners are vital to the security of this Nation. That was never so clear than in World War II when Franklin Roosevelt nationalized America's coal mines—it was that important to us.

In a fireside chat in 1943 explaining his actions, Franklin Delano Roosevelt said:

A stopping of the coal supply, even for a short time, would involve a gamble with the lives of American soldiers and sailors and the future security of our whole people.

That was the President of the United States in 1943.

A stopping of the coal supply is still a gamble with the future security of our country.

My own family first came to America to work in the mines back at the turn

of the 20th century. Growing up in the small coal-mining town of Farmington, I saw just how proud and courageous all these miners were. In 1968, after the horrific Farmington No. 9 mine disaster that claimed 78 victims, including my uncle, I experienced the healing strength of coal-mining families.

Working conditions and living conditions were difficult for miners in the early days, but they did their best to make a living and provide for their families. They fought and struggled for everything—first alone, then as union members led by the legendary John L. Lewis, the lion of labor. Lewis pleaded the case of the miners in what was once described as “the thundering voice of the captain of a mighty host, demanding the rights to which free men are entitled.”

If you ever have any doubt about the courage of coal miners, read the scribbled last words of one of the miners who died in the mining accident at Sago, WV, in 2006. I was Governor at that time. In the pitch black of the mine, the miner, Mr. Martin Toler, Jr., wrote:

Tell all I'll see them on the other side. I love you. It wasn't bad. Just went to sleep.

Can you imagine? They were all sitting in that area knowing what their fate would be.

From the very beginning coal mining was tough and demanding. It still is. But today it is also safe and efficient, and it is even high-tech. In the 1880s coal miners were learning how to use mules and donkeys to haul coal through the mines. Today they are training in robotics, automation, and positioning technologies. And the pay is good—starting out around \$60,000 a year, sometimes even starting at as much as \$80,000 a year.

Coal mining provides more than 20,000 direct jobs in West Virginia at an average wage above \$79,000 per person, generating more than \$1.6 billion in income, but it also accounts for another 25,500 indirect jobs in West Virginia. The most recent available data show that the economic impact of the coal industry in West Virginia equals nearly \$20 billion a year—\$20 billion a year in my little State.

To the miner, coal is the energy business, so they are mystified when they hear talk out of Washington about getting rid of coal, even as we continue to try to achieve energy independence. They cannot understand why their own government tries to kill the good well-paying jobs that support their families and provide the energy this country needs. And I cannot understand it either. I really cannot. It does not make any sense.

Coal is America's most significant source of electricity, and it will continue to be for decades to come. The United States holds the largest estimated recoverable reserves of coal in the world—enough to last nearly 300 years. Coal currently generates almost 40 percent of the electricity in America, and our own Energy Department

reports that our country will get 37 percent of its energy from coal at least through 2040. So it is obvious that removing it from our energy mix will have disastrous consequences for our economy, which is still trying to get back on both feet. We need an “all of the above” energy policy that uses every energy source we have—hydroelectric, nuclear, biomass, renewables, and fossil fuels, including coal. You cannot tell the history of America without telling the history of coal, and you cannot plan an energy future for America without coal.

To put it in a nutshell, there are 8 billion tons of coal being burned in the world today. One billion tons of coal are being burned in America. For those who are saying we are destroying the global climate because of the coal we are burning, we burn it better and cleaner than most any nation on Earth.

I am not a climate scientist, but I do know that the ocean currents and the wind currents do not start and stop in North America. I do know that. And I know that if you stop burning every ton of coal in America, thinking you are going to save the climate of the world, when there are 7 billion other tons of coal being burned—and it is growing faster than any time in history—we have oceanfront property in West Virginia at a bargain for you. That is what we are dealing with today. It does not make any sense at all.

I know I have my good friend Senator HOEVEN here from the good State of North Dakota, which is the leading energy producer in the country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my distinguished colleague from West Virginia in this discussion of an energy source that is vital to our Nation, and that is coal. North Dakota, like the great State of West Virginia, is a major coal-producing State and a major energy-producing State.

I think my distinguished colleague from West Virginia hit the nail on the head when he said we need a comprehensive energy plan in this country that is truly “all of the above.” We need to use all of our energy resources. And different States have different types of energy, and every type of energy has different strengths and weaknesses. The kind of energy we produce in one part of the country or the source of producing that energy is different than in another part of the country.

But the point is that if we take an “all of the above” approach, we can be truly energy independent in this country, but also think of the jobs and the economic growth that come with it. My colleague just went through how coal, for example, creates tremendous jobs, and he is right—good-paying jobs. So when we talk about an “all of the above” energy approach, we are talking not just about national security in terms of energy independence—not de-

pending on the Middle East or Venezuela or these other places for our energy; that is national security—but it is also about economic growth and jobs and opportunity, a great living for families, a great way to earn and generate income for families across this Nation. That is what a real “all of the above” energy approach is about.

So when the administration talks about an “all of the above” energy plan, they have to not just talk about it, they have to do it. It is not just talking about it; it is making it happen. The way you make it happen is you have a clear legal, regulatory, and tax climate that encourages investment, does not hold it up, encourages investment, does not tie it up in red-tape and regulation that prevents that investment. When you make that investment, what happens is you not only produce more energy, but you deploy these new technologies that do it with better environmental stewardship.

So let’s go back to the issue of coal. My distinguished colleague is talking about coal in his State. Well, coal in North Dakota—we are a major producer of coal, and we are a powerhouse for energy in this country—not just coal but oil and gas. We do renewables, solar, biodiesel, ethanol. We do wind. We do all of them. But in the area of coal, we are one of the leaders in deploying these new technologies, and as a result we are one of 14 States in the Nation that meet all ambient air quality requirements nationally. Think about that. Here we are, we are a major coal-producing State, we are a major electricity-producing State, yet we are one of 14 States in the country that meet all ambient air quality requirements.

What am I saying? What I am saying is that when you empower that investment that gets that capital invested in these new technologies, you deploy that technology, you produce more energy, you create great jobs, you grow our economy, and you get better environmental stewardship.

Mr. MANCHIN. Will the Senator yield for a question.

Mr. HOEVEN. I will.

Mr. MANCHIN. If I may ask the Senator this, the Senator and I know the facts of what we do in our States and how we do it and how much energy we produce. Both of our States are energy-producing States. We are net exporters of energy, correct?

Mr. HOEVEN. Correct.

Mr. MANCHIN. Here in Washington, in the atmosphere that you are looked upon, let’s say, in the atmosphere you enter into, do they believe we just throw caution to the wind and we do not care about the environment because we come from an energy State? Is that what the Senator is finding when he talks to other colleagues who might not know what an energy-producing State is about, but they sure like what we do?

Mr. HOEVEN. I would respond to my colleague, that is exactly what I am

saying. Here we are, a major coal-producing State. We are one of 14 States that meet all ambient air quality requirements. We are No. 1 in surface reclamation, land reclamation—No. 1 in the country. We are rated right at the top in terms of our water and saving our lakes and protecting our water programs.

That is the point the Senator is making. That is the point I try to make all the time. With a States-first approach, States are the ones that can not only encourage that investment but take tremendous pains to make sure they are protecting the environment, growing the economy, and taking care of people who live in those States as well. That is why what we need to do to truly have an “all of the above” energy plan for this country is to empower States and empower that investment that we are talking about for all types of energy. Do not say “all of the above” as a Federal Government and then come up with regulations that prevent, block, preclude the very investment we need to deploy these technologies and produce energy from coal and other sources.

Mr. MANCHIN. Let me ask another question. If the plan the President has put forward makes it almost impossible to build another coal plant—and maybe shut down many in this country—is there still going to be a demand for our coal overseas? Will we be exporting that coal? It will be burned somewhere in the world.

Mr. HOEVEN. Again, my colleague makes a great point and a factual point; that is, what we are seeing happening as a result of the redtape and the regulations the administration is continuing to put forward and is proposing again to add to in its most recent policy pronouncement on energy—the net effect of that is to preclude investment, is to preclude not only developing new plants with the latest, greatest technologies that will help us take steps forward, exciting steps forward in clean coal technology, but it is forcing existing plants to shut down because the requirements are not feasible, they cannot be met with the current technology. As you shut those plants down, you not only lose the energy, lose the jobs, lose the economic growth here at home, but the coal then is still mined and now exported to other countries, where it is consumed in those other countries that have lower standards than we do.

And think—and think—if, instead, you empower the kind of investment in technology I am talking about in this country, other countries would follow us, so that then when they use their coal, they use these new technologies as well, and on a global basis you start to actually reduce emissions and produce better environmental stewardship.

Again, I would turn back to my colleague for his thoughts.

Mr. MANCHIN. Let me just say this to the Senator. I found out today—the

information I received today was most disturbing from this standpoint: We all know that if we could develop and have a partnership with our government—with the EPA, with the Department of Energy—of finding the latest, greatest of technology that helped us still be able to use the most abundant resource—and the resource that is in the most demand for the whole world, correct—if we could do that, then we could truly make a difference in the global climate—we truly could—worldwide.

I found out today—I am going to make sure these figures are accurate—that there is \$8 billion. So the administration can tell me and you: Senators, guess what. We still have \$8 billion for clean coal technology in a line item for the Department of Energy.

Guess what. That \$8 billion has been line-itemed since 2008. Not one project has been approved for which to use the money. I do not know if you found that. We have not had the technology perfected on a commercial basis for carbon capture sequestration. You have a coal-to-liquid plant, I believe. It has worked well for how many years?

Mr. HOEVEN. I would say to my colleague, he is exactly right. He hit the nail on the head. We are talking about clean coal technology and encouraging development in clean coal technology. But to do it, we have to have regulations that are attainable and feasible that encourage the kind of investment we are talking about.

The project the Senator is referring to is the Dakota Gasification Company, which has been operating now in our State successfully for years. It actually takes coal and converts it to synthetic natural gas—natural gas. That natural gas then goes into a pipeline, goes for all different uses, and meets the CO<sub>2</sub> requirements the administration is talking about attaining right now because it is natural gas.

So it meets that natural gas standard. The coal, we burn. Then we capture the CO<sub>2</sub>, we compress it, put it in a pipeline, and it goes into the oilfields for a tertiary or secondary recovery. So we are also producing more oil for mature oilfields. That is an example of the technology and the capital investment and kind of regulatory environment that encourages technology development to not only produce more energy, more jobs, and growing the economy, but as my colleague is pointing out, better environmental stewardship.

That is how to get it done, not just in this country but globally. So the Senator is exactly right.

Mr. MANCHIN. I want to ask my friend this question: Does he believe he could have built that plant in North Dakota today under the regulations that the EPA and this administration were to put in front of him?

Mr. HOEVEN. This is exactly the point. We need these kinds of projects. Work with us as States to empower that kind of development, not shut it off. The Senator is exactly right.

Mr. MANCHIN. What we are saying is how many people would think in West Virginia we have one of the largest wind farms east of the Mississippi? How many do you think really understand that? They think we are all just a one-horse show. We have wind, we have gas, we have coal. We have hydro and biofuel. We are all in. We are trying to use every resource we have the best we can.

All we are asking for is a partnership. It is so hard to find. The people cannot understand. There is an old saying back home: You cannot live with me, and you cannot live without me. I guarantee you will live a lot better with me than you will without me.

This country cannot live with us today and cannot live without us, but they have lived pretty darn good and will live a lot better if they will work with us than against us. I think that is what we are seeing. Our little States are doing the heavy lifting. Our little States have done the heavy lifting. We are providing the energy this country needs. We are providing the economic opportunities to compete globally. If they continue to overregulate to the point they strangle us, they are strangling the economics of this country.

I am just praying to the Good Lord they will listen to us.

Mr. HOEVEN. I would say to my distinguished colleague, I have been to West Virginia. It is an absolutely beautiful State. It is breathtaking, with its hills and valleys and bridges over rivers. It is just a gorgeous, beautiful State.

As my distinguished colleague was saying, what we are talking about is an opportunity. We have a real opportunity to do this and do it right, but we have to get the Federal Government to work with us, whether it is the great State of West Virginia, the great State of North Dakota, or across this country. And it is not just in coal. It is in all of these different types of energy. But you have to work with the States. You have to take a States-first approach that empowers them, that unleashes the entrepreneurial spirit of this country. That is what we need, not a big regulatory maze that nobody can get through. We are talking about common sense that empowers us to do things that can make a big difference for this country.

Mr. MANCHIN. The only thing I would say to my good friend is, we are a Democrat and a Republican from two energy States. It is not bipartisan. Energy should have no partisanship. Energy basically is something we all need and we all use. When you open that refrigerator, you need that energy to keep it cool. When you go into a house out of 100-degree weather, you need to be cool and comfortable. You need energy as a basic quality of life. That has basically made us different from most every Nation.

Every developing nation today is trying everything they can to deliver what we take for granted. All we are

asking for is for our President—he is my President, he is your President, he is all of our President. We want to work with him. We want him to be our partner. Do not be my adversary; be my ally. Work with me. We can do it. But we have to be serious about it.

If there is \$8 billion sitting on the sideline at the Department of Energy, and you are telling me you are going to use that for clean coal technology, let's start using it. Let's be a leader of the whole world and show the other 7 billion tons of coal that is being consumed in the world how you can do it and do it better. I think that is really what we are saying.

To my good friend from North Dakota, I appreciate so much the approach he has been taking, a most commonsense, a most reasonable, responsible approach. We have been friends for a long time. We were both Governors of our respective States. We worked together. We tried to solve problems. It is exactly what we are still doing here in the Senate. I thank the Senator.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I would like to thank my distinguished colleague not only for his work on energy—he is already recognized as an energy leader in this body—but also most recently for student loans. He has taken a bipartisan lead on student loans that I believe has produced a great product, which I am pleased and proud to cosponsor, and on which I believe this body will come together next week and pass.

I think if we pass it, the House will take it up and pass it right away. It is so important for students, so important for our students and their families. It is just such a great example of what we can do working together. I think the good Senator from West Virginia does this so well. I thank him. Whether it is energy or student loans or just a lot of other issues, I want to express my deep appreciation and my fondness for working with him on these important issues.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 5 minutes on another very important issue.

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

#### THE FARM BILL

Mr. HOEVEN. I rise today to speak on an issue of great importance to our country, and one that we need to act on and we need to act on now. That is the farm bill. We in the Senate have passed a strong farm bill. It saves \$24 billion to help reduce our debt and our deficit. It streamlines our farm programs to make them more efficient and more usable for our farmers and our ranchers. It ensures that our farmers and ranchers continue to have good risk management tools that they need to manage their operations, particularly enhanced crop insurance which is so important for our farmers and ranchers.

Now the House has also passed a farm bill and sent it over to us in the Senate. So we have it. I rise today to urge

my colleagues to join with me and form a conference committee with the House now to get this farm bill done for our farmers and ranchers—not just for our farmers and ranchers but for the American people. This really is about serving the American people, and it is about making sure that we continue to have the highest quality, lowest cost food supply in the world.

That means every single American benefits from good farm policy. We need to move on this bill. We need to act. The current farm bill expires September 30. We are already operating under a 1-year extension. It is time. We need to get going. We need to get this done. We need a long-term farm bill in place for our farmers and for our ranchers.

As I said right now, all Americans benefit from the highest quality, lowest cost food supply in the world. But the farm bill is more than just a food bill, it is a jobs bill as well. Right now in our country there is something on the order of 16 million jobs on a direct and indirect basis—more than 16 million jobs that depend on agriculture. So businesses large and small across this great Nation depend on agriculture.

In addition, agriculture has a favorable balance of trade for our country. Let me just give you a few of the statistics. This year it is estimated that we will export almost \$140 billion worth of ag products. Think of all the dollars, the revenue that comes back to our country, the job creation, the economic growth, the employment, at a time when we need to create more jobs in this country, \$140 billion that we export in food products all over the world supporting jobs and economic activity in this country.

A favorable balance of trade helps us in terms of our financial situation—a favorable balance of trade of almost \$30 billion. In 2012, exports, more than \$135 billion; in 2011, more than \$137 billion in ag products from this country supporting jobs and economic activity in this country, and a favorable balance of trade of more than \$40 billion.

Finally, agriculture is about more than just food. It is about fuel and fiber, and it is about national security. We do not have to depend on other countries for our food supply because our farmers and ranchers take care of it right here at home. So it is even a national security issue as well, making sure that we have the food supply that is dependable, nutritious, the highest quality, lowest cost in the world right here available to us at all times.

One other point I will make before I conclude; that is, our farmers and ranchers are stepping forward at a time when we have a deficit and a debt, and they are doing their part to help address this deficit and debt—\$24 billion in savings, when the actual portion of the farm bill that actually deals with farmers is actually less than 20 percent of the whole bill.

Our farmers are stepping forward and helping the deficit with \$24 billion in

reduction. Just think for a minute. If we can do that across government, think of the impact it would have in terms of helping us to reduce this deficit and get our deficit and debt under control in this country.

It is time to move forward with the farm bill. The next step is to go to a conference committee with the House. We need to get that done. We need to get that done now and get a long-term farm bill in place for our farmers, for our ranchers, and for this great Nation.

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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### STUDENT LOAN PROGRAM

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, it has been 18 days since the interest rate on new direct student loans doubled from 3.4 percent to nearly 7 percent. Students will head off to college in a few weeks and Congress still has not found a way to keep their interest rates low. In Massachusetts, our kids, our parents, our schools are worried.

I want to go over the history so we are all clear about how we got here. For months Democrats have argued we need to keep interest rates low. We have made at least three attempts to do this. For example, I introduced a bill that would have dropped interest rates on direct loans for 1 year to the same level at which banks borrow from the Federal Government, which is currently less than 1 percent. I introduced that proposal because I believe the Federal Government should invest in our students, not just in our biggest banks.

We also proposed to extend the current interest rates at 3.4 percent for 2 years, paid for by closing tax loopholes, and Senator REED and Senator HAGAN offered a bill to keep rates low for 1 year. All three proposals had two features in common: They cut costs for students, and they gave us some short-term breathing room to take on bigger problems, including how to refinance \$1 trillion in outstanding student loan debt, and how to reduce the overall costs of college for all our students.

When we brought the last two proposals to a vote, they won by a majority, but they didn't pass because the Republicans filibustered both bills. We could have kept rates low, but the Republicans, every single one of them, voted to block that. Instead, Republicans put together their own long-term plan. It was an amazing plan. According to official government accounting, it would have generated \$184 billion in profit that the government is already projected to make by doubling interest rates on student loans over the next 10 years; and then the Republicans

would have added another \$16 billion in new profits.

That is billions in pure profit—profit after we have accounted for the cost of money, after the cost of administering the loan, and after the cost for bad debt losses. All those profits would be made off the backs of our kids who are trying to get an education.

So here we are, 18 days past the July 1 deadline, and students are being hurt because Republicans filibustered these reasonable plans, even though the plans had support from a majority of Senators.

Chairman HARKIN, who has been a leader on this issue from the very start, has been doing his absolute best to find a solution that Republicans would not filibuster so when students start taking out loans in a few weeks they won't be the ones to pay for Republican obstruction. Others, such as Senator JACK REED, Senator STABENOW, and the majority leader, have also worked very hard to find a solution. But here is the problem: From the very beginning, Republicans have dug in their heels and insisted that any new student loan proposal maintain the same \$184 billion in profit the government will make on new student loans over the next 10 years. They insist that whatever we do, the government must make the same profits off the students they will make now by doubling the interest rate to 6.8 percent. They say: Whatever you do, make sure the government makes \$184 billion off our students.

Many Senators who care deeply about this issue, such as Chairman HARKIN, Senator DURBIN, Senator MANCHIN, and Senator KING, have been doing their best under these circumstances to help the students, and I applaud their commitment to our students. They have succeeded in getting at least some Republicans to support a proposal that will result in lower interest rates for some students for a couple of years. But in the end, this is a simple math problem. If Republicans insist we continue to make the same amount of profit in the student loan program, that means students in future years will have to pay even higher rates to make up the difference. In other words, kids who are sophomores in high school right now will end up paying even more so students who are sophomores in college today can pay a little less. I don't believe in pitting our kids against each other. I don't think high school sophomores should pay more so college sophomores can get a little break. In fact, I think this whole system stinks.

We should not go along with any plan that demands our students continue to produce huge profits for the government. This is wrong. Making billions and billions in profits off the backs of our students is obscene. The Republican position is that they refuse to give up a single dime of these profits. In fact, the latest proposal adds another \$715 million in additional profits. The Republican position is we don't

need to close tax loopholes or to ask wealthy Americans to pay their fair share because we have a ready-made profit center for funding the Federal Government—middle-class families who are struggling to pay for college.

I have the deepest respect for the Senators who have tried so hard to come up with a deal for our students under these Republican conditions, and I have no doubt their intentions are honorable. But I can't support this proposal. I have fought hard for working families and middle-class families for nearly all of my grownup life. I fought back against credit card companies that put out zero-interest cards planning to make all their profits in the fine print. I fought back against teaser-rate mortgages that promised low rates in the first 2 years but then shot up to rates that pushed millions of people into foreclosure. And now the Senate is offering its own teaser-rate loan program? A great deal for students this year and next, but every kid who borrows after that gets slammed. That is not the business the U.S. Government should be in.

I understand compromise isn't always pretty, but there is no compromise in this bill. With the student loan rates now at 6.8 percent, if Congress does nothing, the government will make \$184 billion in profits. Under the new proposal, the government will make the same \$184 billion in profits plus another \$715 million in additional profits. And that all comes directly off the backs of our students.

I want to see these profits go down. I know we may not be able to do it all at once, but we need to take a step now to lower the profits we make off the backs of our kids, not lock them in for the next 10 years. At a minimum, I urge my colleagues to support the amendment of Senator JACK REED to cap the interest rate under this plan at current law. That amendment is the only way to ensure no student ever ends up paying more than they would if Congress did nothing.

Long term, we need to do three things: First, eliminate government profits from new student loan programs, period. Second, refinance existing student loan debt to reduce the profits that are crushing our people. And third, reduce college costs so that American families can pay for college without burying themselves in debt. That is what we need to do. And no matter what happens with this current proposal, that is exactly for what I am going to keep fighting.

I appreciate the hard work my colleagues have done to try to defeat the Republican filibuster on keeping student loan rates low, but our students are drowning under \$1 trillion in student loan debt, and I cannot support a compromise proposal that squeezes even more profits off our kids.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant majority leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I wanted to come to the floor while the

Senator from Massachusetts was giving her remarks and was still here to say a few things about the bipartisan student loan proposal.

There are a couple of things I want to point out for the RECORD. She has made a point about our student loan programs and how much they cost students, and she is right about the basic \$184 billion the government is going to generate over 10 years in this program. I would support a proposal to change that, but the fact is it doesn't have the votes to pass.

Here is the reality. We are talking about this issue with a divided Congress. We are talking about this issue where the House of Representatives is controlled by the other party and doesn't see this issue at all the same way the Senator from Massachusetts and I do. Secondly, we are up against the filibuster rule in the Senate requiring 60 votes. We have 54 Democrats. So this global change she has spoken of and referred to is one she and I could probably agree on in a hurry but it is not going to happen. The question is: What can we do now to help students?

On July 1, because we did nothing, the student loan interest rate on subsidized loans went from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. Students are now facing 6.8-percent interest rates on subsidized loans. I think that is just plain wrong. What can we do about it? One version says nothing, do nothing. Don't change anything. Let the students right now continue to pay 6.8 percent. What is wrong with that?

It is obvious. Basic interest rates in this country are dramatically lower than that. You can get mortgage interest on a home for 3 or 4 percent, maybe even lower in some places. In addition to that, we have students who have to make some life decisions pretty quickly. They need some certainty about what is going to happen here. So I have set out to bring that interest rate down as quickly as possible, as low as possible. That is the bipartisan proposal before us. Those who vote against the bipartisan proposal are voting to keep interest rates now at 6.8 percent—the interest rates that have doubled from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent. And the Senator from Massachusetts can tell you that will generate many billions of dollars to the Treasury at the expense of these students. So a vote against any change, a vote for the status quo, is a vote to charge students \$37 billion in interest over the next 5 years.

I don't think that is right. I think it is far better for us to bring these student interest rates down as quickly as we can and hold out the possibility we will revisit this again and bring them down even further in the future. Maybe things will change politically. But to step away from this whole conversation and say that because we can't change the global problem of student loans, because we can't bring them down to the level we want, we will leave them at 6.8 percent, I don't think is a good outcome. I don't think that is

in the best interests of the students and their families. They are going to be facing more debt for the next 5 years with that approach than they would under the bipartisan bill. And that is the one thing I would like to correct for the RECORD. I believe the Senator mentioned that students would be paying more than 6.8 percent in 2 or 3 years. Under the proposal before us, based on projections on interest rates, the same projections everyone is using here, it isn't until after the fifth year that students would pay anything near 6.8 percent. It would be 6.29, 6.3 percent that fourth year, and then 7.0 percent the fifth year.

So doing nothing means students who would be protected with lower interest rates, for 4 out of the next 5 years by this projection, are going to pay more. How is that a victory for students? How do they come out ahead in that deal? They didn't. They are paying higher interest rates.

There are some who want to hold out for something different. I would like to join them, but I have watched the votes. The Senator from Massachusetts and I have both voted the same way. We voted with Senator JACK REED: Let's keep that rate at 3.4 percent—and we lost. Then he came back and said: Let's try it again—and we lost. Now he is going to propose a 6.8-percent cap—which I can vote for—and we will lose again.

Then you face the reality, are you going to say at that point: I don't want to talk about this anymore. I just want to go home. That is the end of the story. Students pay 6.8 percent. Sorry, we couldn't solve it—or do you accept this bipartisan compromise, which brings the interest rates down for the next 4 years below 6.8 percent? I think that is a pretty easy choice. I think it is one that may not be what I want to see, but I am dealing with the reality of Congress as it currently exists and what we are currently faced with.

In terms of the cost of education, though, the Senator from Massachusetts and I do agree on this part of it: Kids pay too much for college today virtually every place they go, and the interest rates are too high. But it is a dual problem. Simply addressing student loan interest rates, even for 4 years, still leaves the overall arching issue of the cost of higher education.

I have had several conversations with the President over the last several days. I know he is going to come back quickly with a proposal from this administration to deal with the cost of higher education. I am going to support him too. I don't know the particulars. Maybe I will disagree with one thing or another, but I will sure support his effort to bring down the overall cost of higher education. That is an important part of this conversation.

I just was on the phone with him a few minutes ago talking about the student loan program and what we are faced with. He doesn't like the choices we are faced with, but he wants to keep

interest rates below 6.8 percent, if we can. The bipartisan approach keeps them below 6.8 percent. Voting against it means that students for the next 4 years will pay higher interest rates on their student loans than they have to.

So I would encourage my colleagues, don't dismiss the bipartisan plan. Vote for the alternatives. JACK REED may offer one, BERNIE SANDERS of Vermont may offer one. Vote for those. We know what will happen. We will not get enough votes. But then make the hard choice: Do you want students to face 6.8 percent this year, next year, and the 2 following years or a lower interest rate, which is what this bipartisan plan will produce.

We went through a lot of negotiations on this. Many Republicans have a much different view than we do on this whole subject. I was lucky. I am old enough to have benefited from the first student loan program. It was a student loan program that came about because the Soviets launched a Sputnik satellite that scared the world out of the United States. We didn't have one. They sent a rocket to space and launched a Sputnik satellite and we thought: Oh, my goodness. They have the bomb and now a satellite and we are doomed. Congress, in a bit of a panic, created the National Defense Education Act. The Presiding Officer remembers that and maybe she benefited from it. I did and so did the Senator from Massachusetts.

I borrowed money to go to college and law school and 3 percent was the interest rate. I think it was a fixed interest rate, if I am not mistaken. One year after I finally graduated from school, I started paying it back in 10 installments, paying 3 percent—a pretty good deal. I paid my money back, thinking now the next generation can benefit from it.

My personal point of view is that education is worth a subsidy. So when JACK REED comes to the floor and says a 6.8-percent cap and will pay for it by closing a tax loophole, he has my vote. But he will not have 60 votes on the floor.

So if that fails, what do we do next? Nothing? If we do nothing, the 6.8-percent interest rate stays in place, and students pay it, even though under the alternative they wouldn't have to face it for the next 4 years. I think in 4 years we can do better. I think, within that 4-year period, protecting them from 6.8 percent, we have a chance to do even better, and I would like to work to achieve that goal.

Congress may change. Maybe it will change with a more positive viewpoint toward student loans. But at the moment, we have to make a choice, and the choice involves buy-in on the Republican side.

What they are looking for—not unreasonable but different—is to have a long-term approach rather than a short-term approach. I would rather have a short-term approach. They prefer a long-term approach. They want it

based on some basic interest rate we can calculate, a 10-year Treasury rate, as applied to virtually every option we have considered, save one. All the others have had a 10-year Treasury rate as a basis. They say you can add to that 10-year Treasury rate what it costs for defaults on loans and administration of loans, and we have tried to do that. We have said to them, at the end of the day, we don't want to add more money from the students and their families to pay off the deficit. It shouldn't be viewed as a tax on students.

Here is where I would disagree with the Senator from Massachusetts: \$715 million over 10 years is a lot of money. It is a huge amount of money. Let's put it in context, and here is the context: Each year, student loans amount to about \$140 billion; over 10 years, \$1.4 trillion. What percentage of \$140 billion is \$71 million? That is 715 divided by 10. I did the calculation, and it is something like .0005 percent. It is decimal dust: \$71 million a year out of \$140 billion in loans. I would like to get it down to nothing.

But here is the bottom line. This tiny fraction of decimal dust, \$71 million a year, is no reason not to protect these students from 6.8 percent interest.

By my calculation, if you accept the notion we are going to go to 6.8 percent interest and stay there as our solution, for the time being, students are going to pay about \$100 more a month, as I understand it, on the basic loans they are faced with. That, to me, is an unacceptable alternative.

For \$71 million a year, for \$140 billion in loans, this tiny fraction of a percentage is no reason to walk away from a loan package that is much more generous to students and their families. If we can get it down to zero, let's get it down to zero. But please, walking away from that just doesn't make sense.

Here is what students will face. If this bipartisan proposal goes through, the interest rates students pay now on their student loans, subsidized and unsubsidized, will go down from 6.8 percent to 3.8 percent. That is the immediate savings this year for students who are enrolling in college, 6.8 to 3.8. For students who are borrowing money, it is a lot. To walk away from that and say: I am sorry. If I can't get a better deal, then students are just going to have to pay that extra 3 percent interest, I don't think that is a good outcome.

It is better for us to give this relief to the students and their families and work to improve it. I will work with the Senators from Massachusetts and Hawaii to do that. But simply saying 6.8 percent forever is a victory is not. It is a penalty. It is a penalty on a lot of hard-working families and the students who come from those families. Let's avoid that if we can.

Let me add one particular footnote and chapter to this. The worst offenders when it comes to student loans and student loan defaults are the for-profit colleges.

I always ask people to remember three basic numbers about the for-profit students: What are the for-profit schools? Let me give you the big names. The University of Phoenix is the biggest one, with more than the combined enrollment of all the big 10 schools. The University of Phoenix, Kaplan University, which is owned by the Washington Post Company, DeVry University out of Chicago, those are the three big ones.

As a category, for-profit colleges educate 12 to 13 percent of all the high school graduates in this country. So stick with the number, 12 percent of high school grads go to for-profit schools. For-profit schools receive 25 percent of all the Federal aid to education. They are soaking up the dollars for students by a margin of 2 to 1 over the students they are taking. Here is the kicker: 47 percent of all student loan defaults come from students in for-profit schools.

What does that tell you? They are being charged too much for their education, they can't get a job to pay it back, and they default on the loan. The bottom line on student loans is they are not dischargeable in bankruptcy. A student who can't pay that loan still has that debt and burden for a lifetime. The parent who cosigned? They are on the hook as well—not dischargeable in bankruptcy. It is a lifetime debt.

So we have a lot to do to clean up higher education, and I hope we go after for-profit schools as part of it. They need to be held accountable.

I will close by saying this. I accept the premise of the statement made earlier by the Senator from Massachusetts: We can do better on student loans. I am for it.

We don't have the votes to achieve it. We don't have them in the Senate. We don't have them in the House. So the question is, will we do nothing? Doing nothing means that students and their families will pay 6.8 percent interest on their loans for the foreseeable future, 1 year, 2, 3 or 4 years. Taking the bipartisan compromise reduces the interest rate on student loans for both subsidized and unsubsidized loans from 6.8 percent to 3.8 percent immediately—a 3-percent savings right now for students and families—and it doesn't reach 6.8 percent until the fifth year from now. Between now and then we can do better.

Walking away from this bipartisan approach is going to mean more debt for today's students and higher interest payments, and I don't think that is fair.

So let's do the best we can to change the system, accept the political reality, and come out with the best outcome for students and families.

I hope that at the end of the day we can see some change in the composition of Congress and move closer to a model we all accept.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I thank my friend from Illinois for all the work he has done on this issue and so many other issues. He knows I disagree with him on this and do not intend to vote for this bipartisan agreement.

He makes a good point in saying we don't have the votes. We don't. We don't have the votes because we have a political party here that could care less about the needs of working families and about college affordability.

I would say to my friend from Illinois that if we are going to win this fight and protect college students, we have to take the fight to the American people. When we work with Republicans to make college unaffordable, then the American people are going to say: What is the alternative?

So from a political strategy, I would say to my friend from Illinois we have the people on our side. We have parents on our side and we have young people on our side. Our job is to bring forth a proposal that they can demand be accepted. If we collapse on this issue, then they are going to be looking out and saying: What is the alternative?

The Senator from Illinois makes a valid point; that in the next few years, in fact, it is not a bad deal. It is not as good as I would like, but it is not a bad deal. That is why, as I mentioned to the Senator a few moments ago, I will be bringing forth an amendment to say: Let us sunset this agreement in 2 years. We are bringing up the higher education authorization bill. It will give us an opportunity to deal with this issue of student loans and the higher cost of college in general. Why do we need a permanent bill right now when we are going to be working in the fairly near future on the higher education bill?

So my view is a 2-year sunset to this bill. It is not everything I want, but it will protect students. If we are going to talk about variable interest rates, let them at least take advantage of lower interest rates.

What CBO is projecting is that in years to come interest rates are going to go up. According to the CBO, under this legislation, the good news is that interest rates would only be, for Stafford subsidized, 3.86; in 2014, it will be 4.6, not so good; 2015, 5.4, really not good; 2016, 6.29, worse; 2017, 7 percent; 2018, 7.25; and, by the time we get to 2023, it would also be at 7.25.

We have a crisis right now in terms of student indebtedness. Why would we want to make that crisis even worse?

The second point I would make is that right now it is estimated that the Federal Government will earn about \$180 billion in profits over the next 10 years on student loans. I suggest that while I have no problem with the Federal Government making profits on this or that endeavor, this is not a particularly good area to be making profits because they are making profits off of low- and moderate-income people who want to send their kids to college.

I can think of a lot better ways to make money, to help us with the deficit, than by forcing low- and moderate-income parents and students to pay more than they should be paying. If we want to do deficit reduction, maybe we can ask the one out of four corporations in America that pays nothing in taxes to start paying their fair share of taxes. Maybe we can address growing wealth and income inequality in a way that brings us in more revenue. But it is almost a form of regressive taxation to say to low- and moderate-income students and families: You want to go to college, you want to make something of yourself, you want to make it into the middle class, you want to help make our Nation more competitive—and in a 10-year period we are going to make \$180 billion in profits off of your desire to go to college. I think that is wrong.

If we look around the world, in an increasingly competitive global economy what we find is that we are at the very bottom in terms of the kind of support we give our young people and their families to go to college. Right now in Vermont, which is a little bit higher than the national average, our young people are graduating from a 4-year school \$28,000 in debt. That is on average, meaning lower income young people will graduate deeper in debt.

What does it mean in a difficult economy, a challenging economy, to start off your adult life \$40,000 or \$50,000 in debt? If you go to graduate school, that number goes way up. I talked to a couple of young dentists in Vermont last year. They had over \$200,000 in debt starting off their professional careers—dentists, doctors, people in graduate school.

A couple of months ago I had the Ambassador from Denmark come to the State of Vermont to do some town meetings with me. Do you know how much debt young people who graduate college, graduate school, medical school, in Denmark have? They have zero because that country and many other countries have made what I think is the rational conclusion that it is important to invest in our young people. We need their intellectual capital, we need the best educated workforce that we can get, and we want to encourage people to go to college, not discourage them by high college costs.

I think we can do a lot better than this bipartisan bill. The danger with the bipartisan bill is that the CBO and virtually all economists tell us interest rates are going up. If you peg your student loan to a variable interest rate, and those interest rates are going up, then the proof is in the pudding, according to the CBO, that in a number of years students are going to be paying very high interest rates.

Given the fact we are going to be dealing with higher education reauthorization within a year, which needs to tackle a whole lot of issues within the issue of higher education, including student loans, my suggestion will be,

and my amendment will be to say: Let's sunset this legislation at the end of 2 years. Let's take advantage of the low-interest loans and give us the time to come up with a long-term plan.

I look forward to my colleagues supporting that amendment.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### FEDERAL AGRICULTURE REFORM AND RISK MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2013

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, it is my pleasure to ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 136, H.R. 2642; that all after the enacting clause be stricken and the text of S. 954, as passed by the Senate, be printed in lieu thereof; that H.R. 2642, as amended, be read a third time and passed; the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the Senate insist upon its amendment, request a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses; and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees with the ratio of 7 to 5 on the part of the Senate, all with no intervening action or debate.

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

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill (H.R. 2642), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, let me just take a moment to thank my ranking member Senator COCHRAN and to indicate we are in fact now officially sending back our Senate bill to the House and requesting a conference on the farm bill. This is a very important step this evening.

I thank the senior Senator from North Dakota Mr. HOEVEN, who has done yeoman work this evening and today, and the senior Senator from Georgia Mr. CHAMBLISS, who has been very involved, as well as other members of the committee, for working hard to bring us to this point.

As everyone knows, we have been working very hard on a bipartisan basis in the Senate. We have produced a product that is comprehensive, bipartisan, balanced; that addresses the agricultural needs and concerns of our country in a 5-year farm bill; that addresses food security and conservation of our soil and land and water; bio-energy, rural development—we could go on and on with all of the pieces of the farm bill that are so important.

We also do this on behalf of the 16 million men and women in America