

from Hawaii, including the one presiding, and Senator HIRONO, who is about, I believe, to ask for the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Hawaii.

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in support of S. 1243, the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for 2014. I wish to thank Senators MURRAY and COLLINS as well as Senators MIKULSKI and SHELBY for their hard work. The bill before us reflects the bipartisan agreement that funding our Nation's transportation and housing infrastructure is vital to creating jobs and supporting strong communities.

I wish to thank the committee for funding programs that support projects that are especially crucial for my home State of Hawaii.

First, the committee's bill provides nearly \$2 billion for capital improvement grants which support transit projects across the country. Especially important for Hawaii is Honolulu's rail transit project which, when completed, will provide much needed relief for Oahu's commuters. Studies have shown that during the morning peak period, the average travel time from East Kapolei to Honolulu is 89 minutes—89 minutes for a 17-mile drive. The rail will turn that into a 40-minute ride above traffic. The project is estimated to remove roughly 40,000 cars from Oahu's congested roadways, providing relief for buses and other surface public transportation services.

While the rail project is a crucial step forward for developing Hawaii's most populous island, it is the committee's support for Hawaii's indigenous people for which I especially extend my thanks. The committee's funding of both the Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant and the 184A Loan Guarantee Program will help our Nation continue fulfilling its trust obligations to Native Hawaiians.

In 2010, the American Community Survey reported that 27.2 percent of Native Hawaiians in Hawaii live in overcrowded conditions, compared to 8.5 percent of Hawaii's total population. In addition, the overall cost of living in Hawaii is almost 50 percent higher than the United States average, and housing costs are almost 150 percent higher. Coupled with these costs is the fact that 18 percent of Native Hawaiians live in poverty.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time of the majority has expired.

Ms. HIRONO. I ask unanimous consent for an additional 5 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. President.

Congress created the Hawaiian Home Lands trust to provide housing and settlement opportunities for Native Hawaiians. However, as the statistics I just laid out show, this indigenous population continues to struggle with finding affordable quality housing in their place of origin.

That is why the Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant, or NHHBG, is so important. These funds can be used for a variety of initiatives. For example, the current wait list for access to housing on homestead land is long and continues to grow. Funding the NHHBG helps the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands to continue developing lands to meet the housing needs of those on the wait list as well as future beneficiaries, allowing the Department to effectively administer this trust responsibly.

The 184A Program is another important tool for assisting Native Hawaiians in securing homes on homesteads—lands they cannot own. As I have mentioned, the cost of living—especially housing—in Hawaii is among the highest in the country. On top of saving up the cost of a downpayment for a mortgage, there is the tricky task of securing a mortgage for a home without ownership of the land beneath it. This has proved problematic not only for Native Hawaiians but also Native Americans and Alaska Natives. The 184A Loan Guarantee Program helps get Hawaiians onto homesteads by providing a guarantee for lenders who are unfamiliar with the Hawaiian homes program.

I also wish to thank the committee for supporting the Essential Air Services Program. Being an island State, Hawaii is uniquely affected by any changes to air transportation policy. For us, driving between counties is not an option. So air service is, for all intents and purposes, the only way to get from one island to another.

There is a population in Hawaii that uniquely demonstrates the reason for the Essential Air Service Program: the residents of Kalaupapa. Kalaupapa is an isolated peninsula on the island of Molokai. Beginning in 1966, this area was used as an exile for Hansen's disease patients. This practice continued until a quarantine of the area was finally lifted in 1969. It was precisely because of Kalaupapa's remoteness and isolation that it was selected to serve this function for Hansen's disease patients.

There are Hansen's disease patients who still reside in Kalaupapa. Their only option for getting in and out of the area for medical treatment, or to visit family and friends, is flying. Maintaining proper funding for the Essential Air Service Program directly translates into assuring continued access for the people of Kalaupapa to other communities and the services they need.

The committee's bill also provides appropriate levels of funding for larger national programs such as the Commu-

nity Development Block Grant, or CDBG. Certainly, Hawaii has been able to put CDBG funds to good use, and agencies across the country rely on this essential block grant funding to continue meeting the needs of their most vulnerable populations.

The HOME Investment Partnerships Program is yet another example where the funding level in the Senate's bill is warranted. If Hawaii is any indication, HOME funds move out the door so quickly that many subgrantees with equally worthwhile projects are left waiting for the next fiscal cycle to compete.

The support for CDBG, HOME, and other programs in the bill provides communities across the country with the means to provide safe, affordable housing for the least fortunate, the elderly, and others. However, as the wide support for these programs demonstrates, there is more need in our communities than there are resources. Since the sequester has taken effect, things have only gotten harder for those who are struggling the most. Every day it seems we hear about housing vouchers being frozen or rescinded or about how elderly or support services are being cut back or about how the lines for limited public housing grow as people who have been out of work for too long exhaust their savings. For many of the people who rely on these programs, there is nowhere else to turn.

This bill doesn't fix all of the problems caused by the sequester, nor does it fully address the critical needs to create jobs. However, it is a bipartisan step forward that makes positive progress in all of these areas. Perhaps it will give us some momentum in tackling those big challenges our Nation faces in a more comprehensive way.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we now know, the IRS targeting scandal implicates senior officials at the very highest levels of the Internal Revenue Service. Indeed, we know the Office of the Chief Counsel of the IRS, headed by an administration appointee, was aware of the abuses, according to sworn testimony in the House of Representatives. We know that former IRS Commissioner Douglas Shulman categorically denied those abuses in March of 2012, even though senior IRS officials learned about them as early as June 2011. We know the IRS official who first revealed the abuses to the American people decided to take the Fifth Amendment, invoking her right not to incriminate herself, rather than testify before Congress. Finally, we know IRS officials improperly targeted not only conservative organizations but also political candidates and donors.

Still, yesterday the White House Press Secretary called the various

scandals involving this administration phony scandals. Well, I don't know anyone who actually believes that is true. When an institution such as the Internal Revenue Service, with its power to literally tax and destroy, is abusing that power, it deserves the investigation of Congress and we need to get to the bottom of it. The idea, as initially floated out, that this scandal was the work of a few rogue staffers in the Cincinnati office is no longer plausible, even if it was at one point.

This scandal clearly represents a serious breach of the public trust and has created a major credibility problem for this agency that is supposed to be objective and nonpartisan. It is bad enough that America's tax collection authority has behaved like a thuggish political machine, indeed, policing political speech and rights guaranteed under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

To make matters worse, the Internal Revenue Service will soon be responsible for administering some of the most important provisions of the Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as ObamaCare, including the individual mandate. In other words, the Internal Revenue Service will be responsible for administering a law that affects one-sixth of the U.S. economy, and it will be collecting even more information about individual American citizens.

Are we comfortable with dramatically expanding the power of an agency that has proven so abusive and so untrustworthy? I know I am not, which is why 2 months ago I introduced a piece of legislation that would prevent the Internal Revenue Service from participating in its current role of implementing ObamaCare. Yesterday I submitted this legislation as an amendment to the appropriations bill we are currently considering.

Rather than give more power to the Internal Revenue Service, we should be giving more power to patients and their doctors. Remember, even before ObamaCare became law, the IRS had enough power to destroy the lives of American citizens. In the famous words, I believe, of a Supreme Court Justice, the power to tax is the power to destroy. He had it right. Now is the worst possible time to give this agency such massive influence over the U.S. health care system, and this is past overdue action on our part. Instead, we should be curtailing the power of the Internal Revenue Service, replacing ObamaCare with sensible, patient-centered alternatives, and my amendment would do that.

Before I conclude, I wish to mention another amendment we will be filing to the appropriations bill—one I cosponsored with my friend from South Carolina Senator GRAHAM. Our amendment would prevent any funds in this bill from being used to bail out Detroit or any American city that mismanages its public finances. We have a Federal bankruptcy code—chapter 9, specifically—that was designed to handle

these problems, and Detroit has filed for bankruptcy. There is no good reason why Detroit or any other American city ought to receive a taxpayer-funded bailout from Washington. I hope that the normal bankruptcy process will be allowed to go forward, and I hope that the bankruptcy follows the rule of law and that the Obama administration resists any temptation to meddle in the process and play politics.

My colleagues might recall that during the 2009 government-run Chrysler bankruptcy process, the company's secured bondholders received much less for their loans than the United Auto Workers pension funds. My colleagues might also recall that during the runup to the 2011 Solyndra bankruptcy, the Obama administration actually made taxpayers subordinate to private lenders, in violation of the law.

Detroit's financial woes offer a warning to all cities and States that are struggling with pension obligations and unfunded liabilities. And speaking of unfunded liabilities, the Federal Government currently owes more than \$100 trillion worth of unfunded liabilities ourselves for Medicare and Social Security—something that urgently needs our attention. It is time for government officials at all levels—State, Federal, and local—to make the hard fiscal choices we have been postponing for way too long.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

OBAMACARE

Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, last summer the Supreme Court narrowly upheld as a tax the massive government takeover of health care in America, known more commonly as ObamaCare. Since then, as the law's provisions have slowly been implemented, the size and scope of this colossal monstrosity have become clear.

I opposed the ObamaCare bill from the very beginning as a Member of the House of Representatives serving on the Ways and Means Committee. Back then Americans were told that Congress needed to pass the bill before they could know all that was in it, but the more the American people learn about it, the less popular it becomes. In fact, news reports tell us the administration is now looking for help from Hollywood celebrities to push a bill that many Americans clearly do not support. That tactic has been used before. In the 1950s and the 1960s, Hollywood and some athletes were used to sell and glamorize tobacco products. Today, Hollywood and some athletes

are being asked to peddle the Affordable Care Act, perhaps to make up for past sins.

While the American people grow more uncomfortable with this law, the administration has allowed \$54 million to be spent on "navigators" to help push people toward this program. Reports have suggested that there will be 175,000 of these so-called navigators, whose job it is to facilitate this law. Add that to the 16,000 new IRS agents who are being hired to implement ObamaCare, and it has become even clearer now just how flawed this law is. It is being widely circulated that the administration is willing to spend nearly \$1 billion on advertisements to entice the American people into buying something they do not want.

The President's recent decision to delay for another year the law's mandate on employers and small businesses is more compelling evidence that the ObamaCare approach to health care reform is not working and is only going to make matters worse. It is remarkable that the same administration that pushed so hard for this health care takeover is now hesitant to put in place the very measures contained in the law, but I think the administration has a very good reason to be hesitant.

Since ObamaCare's inception, middle-class families have seen their premiums skyrocket by an average of \$2,500. Nearly 75 percent of small businesses in this country have been forced to fire their employees or cut their hours and turn full-time employees into part-time workers. In fact, just last month 322,000 workers were forced into part-time employment. So the administration has created quite the balancing act for middle-class families: At the same time they are dealing with increased health care costs and higher premiums, they are confronted with reduced work hours and the threat of being forced into part-time positions. I say that is an unacceptable situation in which to put the American people.

Clearly, at a time when we are approaching 5 straight years with an unemployment rate over 7.5 percent, ObamaCare's job-crushing provisions are only making things worse for our economy, and that is why the administration is having second thoughts.

No one argues that the health care system in this country is perfect. There are absolutely steps we can take to increase access to high-quality, affordable health care. But ObamaCare's massive expansion of the Federal Government's role in the health care industry is not turning out to be the solution its supporters said it would be. That is why the architects of the legislation are cherry-picking which parts of the law to enforce, delaying some of its key provisions. It is obvious this legislation is well on its way to collapsing under its own weight, and that will only further hurt the American people and cause even greater damage to our economy.

I have a three-part test that I have told my constituents about countless