

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2014

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1243 which the clerk will report by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1243) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2014, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Murray (for Cardin) amendment No. 1760, to require the Secretary of Transportation to submit to Congress a report relating to the condition of lane miles and highway bridge deck.

Coburn amendment No. 1750, to prohibit funds from being directed to federal employees with unpaid Federal tax liability.

Coburn amendment No. 1751, to prohibit Federal funding of union activities by Federal employees.

Coburn amendment No. 1754, to prohibit Federal funds from being used to meet the matching requirements of other Federal programs.

AMENDMENT NO. 1760, AS MODIFIED

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I call for the regular order with respect to Amendment No. 1760 and to modify it with the changes which are at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment is so modified.

The amendment (No. 1760), as modified, is as follows:

On page 38, between lines 17 and 18, insert the following:

SEC. 127. Funding made available under the heading "FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION LIMITATION ON ADMINISTRATION EXPENSES" shall be made available to submit to Congress a report describing the percentages of lane miles and highway bridge deck in each State that are in good condition, fair condition, and poor condition, and the percentage of Federal amounts each State expends on the repair and maintenance of highway infrastructure and on new capacity construction.

Mrs. MURRAY. I understand my colleague is here to offer an amendment. I yield to him at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to call up amendment No. 1783.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Objection is heard.

Mrs. MURRAY. It is my understanding the Senator from Connecticut was going to call up an amendment. There was an objection?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mrs. MURRAY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AMENDMENT NO. 1783

Mr. MURPHY. I call up amendment No. 1783 and ask that it be pending.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows: The Senator from Connecticut [Mr. MURPHY] proposes an amendment numbered 1783.

Mr. MURPHY. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Transportation to assess the impact on domestic employment of a waiver of the Buy America requirement for Federal-aid highway projects prior to issuing the waiver)

On page 34, line 23, after "shall" insert "assess the impact on domestic employment if such a waiver were issued and".

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, there is a broad consensus among the people of this country that when we spend dollars through the Federal Treasury, when we spend taxpayer dollars, they should be used to fund American jobs. In fact, that has been a law on the books since the early part of this century. For a long time the Buy American Act has required that when we buy things, whether it be through the military or through the Department of Transportation, we buy things from American contractors. That makes more sense today than ever before because as we struggle to try to get our economy back up and running, one of the sectors that is hurting more than others is the construction sector. Every time we violate the Buy American provisions of our law, we lose the opportunity to try to alleviate great stress that is currently upon our construction industry.

Thankfully, the DOT has been one of the best agencies, actually, when it comes to making sure American-made material goes into construction projects. The \$41 billion the Highway Administration receives in this bill to be spent on roads and bridges is an important engine of job growth throughout the country. I have to say they generally do a pretty good job, as opposed to some other agencies—the Department of Defense at the top of the list—in making sure those dollars go to American companies.

There are circumstances in which the Buy American provisions are waived. There are a number of ways you can waive those provisions, but it is important for us to have full transparency and disclosure when the Department of Transportation and FHWA are considering awarding a major project funded by American taxpayers to a foreign company.

When the Buy American statute is waived, the requirement that American-made material be used is null and void. What this bill says is that when the FHWA provides public notice that they are considering waiving the Buy American clause for a particular project, they include in that public notice a consideration of the impact on American jobs. It is worth knowing whether a waiver is simply going to result in the loss of 10 American jobs or the loss of 500 American jobs.

This amendment very simply says that when a waiver to the Buy American law is pending, we should know from the Department of Transportation and from the FHWA how many American jobs are at risk. That gives us the opportunity to weigh in and try to make sure that waiver is not granted. This, frankly, gives American companies a little bit better information to use when they are trying to make the case that they can actually do the work that may be being considered for a foreign company.

We all know what is happening to jobs in the building trades. In some parts of the country unemployment is hitting 20 percent when it comes to carpenters, operating engineers, plumbers, and sheet metal workers.

I wish to applaud the DOT for being one of the models when it comes to trying to make sure taxpayer dollars are kept here at home. This amendment would make sure that in those limited cases where the DOT is sending work overseas, we get a chance to understand what the real impact will be.

We have a lot of work to do when it comes to tightening our Buy American laws. We are talking about the DOT, but the real problem is another agency we will hopefully have a chance to talk about later on the Senate floor; that is, the Department of Defense. Seventy percent of Federal purchasing comes through the Department of Defense. They have been expediting the offshoring of defense work at a rate that should make every single Senator on this floor shudder.

This is an important amendment that I hope will get bipartisan support. I thank Senator COLLINS for allowing it to become pending on the floor. I think it is just the beginning of a lot of work we have to do when it comes to enforcing a very simple principle. When our constituents send their hard-earned tax dollars to Washington, DC, and they are used to buy things or build things for the U.S. Government, we need to hire U.S. companies and American workers to do the job.

I ask unanimous consent that there be a period for debate only until 2:15 p.m. today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. 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. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to voice my concerns with the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill.

I do not take issue with the bill's specific spending provisions, and I believe my home State of Georgia needs a strong bill that recognizes the importance of ongoing infrastructure and housing and development projects. As some of my colleagues have already noted, this bill includes many taxpayer protection provisions, specifically that extravagant conferences will be curtailed, an issue many of our constituents as well as Members of Congress were shocked to learn about. But my concern is with the overall spending level and the decision of the majority to write this and other appropriations bills to levels that exceed the Budget Control Act.

In 2011, Congress passed the Budget Control Act which placed caps on what the Federal Government could spend. I voted against that bill in August of 2011. Over the years I have served in both the House and the Senate and there have been too many times when I have seen both bodies come together to bust spending caps. For us to have no checks and balances on the ability of either the House or the Senate to bust the spending caps that were set in 2011, I thought, was wrong because they were going to get busted. Well, guess what. Here we are, and this is not the first time since 2011 we have had a vote in the Senate that will ultimately bust those spending caps.

The THUD appropriations bill the Senate is now debating completely disregards the 2011 Budget Control Act. THUD is the first of 12 appropriations bills the Senate will consider on the Senate floor. So my question to my colleagues is, What kind of precedent are we setting for the remaining spending bills?

While all Americans deserve for Congress to pass appropriations bills, we simply cannot afford to pass bills that spend more than our government can fund. This Senate bill alone costs \$5 billion more than is allowed under the Budget Control Act. How can we demand a cure to our fiscal woes if we cannot take our own medicine of fiscal restraint? We should focus our efforts on legislation that can pass both Chambers of Congress and be signed into law by the President, not create another political nightmare that negatively affects the country as well as our constituencies.

Right now, the Senate can correct this mistake and allocate spending in a manner that is consistent with the law we passed. Shortly, my colleague from Pennsylvania, Senator PAT TOOMEY, will come to the floor and offer a motion that would require the Appropria-

tions Committee to change the spending levels of this bill to comply with the Budget Control Act or, in other words, to comply with current law. I urge my colleagues to follow Senator TOOMEY's lead and vote to recommit.

We should work toward a bill that adheres to the budget guidelines set by the Budget Control Act and provides the needed appropriations for the Department of Transportation, Department of Housing and Urban Development, as well as the independent agencies. While I would like to see the Senate pass a Transportation, Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill, the bill before us now does more harm than it does good.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

SEQUESTRATION

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the very real effects sequestration is having. I want to speak about the people of Virginia, but I am sure it is equally true of folks in New Mexico and for that matter folks all across the country. I remind folks, sequestration was set up so it would be so stupid, so draconian, so outside the realm of possibility that no rational people would ever let it happen. We are actually seeing now that we did not pass that bar. Sequestration is happening. It is actually stupidity on steroids.

Earlier this week a group of us heard from Dr. Francis Collins, the head of NIH. NIH, as we all know, is America's premier health research institution. Dr. Collins told us of the real world impacts of sequester cuts. He gave heart-breaking examples of lifesaving medical research that is being disrupted, perhaps irrevocably, due to budget cuts and employee furloughs.

Two days ago I had the opportunity to chair a Budget Committee hearing about the impact of sequestration on our Nation's security. We heard policymakers talk about what sequestration was doing to military readiness. But what drove home the point to me was Virginia business owner Mark Klett who had actually been named as the Small Businessman of the Year back in 2011, who said this start-and-stop environment, where you did not have any predictability of whether your funding was coming through, was completely wrecking his business model and it already had caused him to bench over a third of his 60 employees.

In the last 2 weeks alone, since sequestration has started, I have received over 500 letters, e-mails, phone calls from Virginians who are bearing the very real brunt of our failure to do our job, with real consequences on real peo-

ple with potentially devastating impacts on a dedicated, experienced Federal workforce. This is no way to run a business. It is no way to run an enterprise as large as the Federal Government.

One letter is from Virginia Beach. Hampton Roads and Virginia Beach are our most concentrated area of naval installations and Air Force and Army installations. This woman is from Virginia beach. Her husband is a retired Navy officer who is now furloughed once a week for the next 11 weeks. She writes that her husband came home with a letter about the furlough, that he felt his moral character and the oath he had taken to protect his Nation would not allow him to write, so she said she was going to write. She says:

It pains me to see what he has worked so hard to defend, you're working so hard to tear down. This country is deserving of good leadership and right now Congress is not providing it.

Another Navy employee from the Fredericksburg area writes:

Three years of pay freezes followed by a furlough seriously makes me question if this is where I want to spend the rest of my career.

Think about the hours and dollars that we as a public have invested in getting these individuals trained to provide these services. They are now saying they are not sure this is where they want to work.

A woman down at the Portsmouth Naval Hospital writes:

Both my husband and I are DOD employees and will be taking a 20 percent pay cut for 11 weeks.

She points out they may be able to get by but a lot of her coworkers do not know how they are going to make ends meet.

A Federal employee from Woodbridge, VA, down the road in Prince William County, says:

I want all my elected officials to know how disappointed I am that we have been abandoned and let down by our representatives in Congress.

I have three children in college, and I am paying for college loans of two children who have graduated. Eleven furlough days don't sound like much, but over the year a loss of over \$4,000 in income is crucial. If I ran my own budget like this, I would have to fire myself.

This employee I do not think is going to get a sequestration discount on repaying those student loans.

A West Point graduate and Iraq war veteran says:

The failure of Congress is having a tangible and real negative impact on people's lives and livelihood. I do not see leadership, I do not see accountability, and I do not see selfless service that rises above partisan politics.

Finally, a former Army officer who lives in Springfield, VA, says:

The morale in our agency is so poor that most workers who used to work 10 or 11 hours a day are planning to work their exact 8 hours [only].

So the 20 percent cut 1 day a week is actually cutting productivity in a much greater percentage.

I could stand here the rest of the afternoon and go through letter after letter that has the same theme. What strikes me about these letters—I am sure, again, the Presiding Officer is hearing from New Mexicans what we are hearing from Virginians—is that none of these letters talk about the red team or the blue team. None of these letters say this is all the Democrats' fault or Republicans' fault. None of these letters say this is a House problem; the Senate has the solution.

They are saying, regardless of party, regardless of whether you are in the House or the Senate, your job is to get this fixed. It is appropriately targeted at the entire Congress and, while our dismal performance recently may be great fodder for late night comedians, I think having a 90-percent-plus disapproval rating candidly undermines Americans' basic faith in our democratic institutions.

Let me try to respond. Here is what I have done and will continue to do. I will keep fighting for the significant Federal workforce that lives in the Commonwealth of Virginia. In the 4½ years I have been in the Senate, I have come down to the floor on a regular basis to celebrate the great work of individual Federal employees. I will continue to come down to the floor and appeal to my colleagues and provide real examples of the real impacts that this funny name—sequestration—is actually having on people's livelihoods.

On a personal basis I am giving up 20 percent of my salary through the end of this budget year. I am donating it to the Federal Employee Education & Assistance Fund, which provides emergency loans as well as childcare assistance, scholarships, and other financial help for the families of Federal and postal workers.

I will continue to work with any colleague, Democrat, Republican, Independent, libertarian, vegetarian—it doesn't matter—who is willing to try to, yes, replace sequestration in a more rational way and get our debt and deficit under control.

I am proud of the fact that the 3½ years—I guess 4½ years I have been here, there is no issue on which I have tried to work harder. I am proud of the fact I was one of the founders of the so-called Gang of 6 that built on the very good work of the Simpson-Bowles plan. And I remind my colleagues, anyone who thinks there is any solution that is not going to involve raising additional revenues and starting to reform our entitlement programs either can't read a balance sheet or has not grasped the magnitude of this issue.

I will continue to advocate for a balanced bipartisan blueprint that will work on these issues: Raise the revenues, not to grow the size of government but to pay our bills, make sure the promise of Medicare and a Medicaid and Social Security are here, not just for today's generation but for future generations, in a way that is responsible.

We are soon coming up on another series of important fiscal and budgetary deadlines. I know many of my colleagues and the American public probably got to budget fatigue after the end of the fiscal cliffs and supercommittees and debt ceilings and thought maybe we were past a little bit of that.

Well, the economy is recovering and the size of the deficit is decreasing but our challenge is still in front of us. We are soon set to come to the end of this fiscal year which will present these issues again at the end of September. The debt ceiling will be not far after that. I have heard there are only slightly more than 20 legislative days left before the new fiscal year starts. It is incumbent upon us to recognize, to reflect the voices of these Virginians who, again, don't call out red team, blue team or House or Senate, but say to us in Congress, implore us to do our jobs.

We have been joined by my colleague, the Senator from Maryland. I think we could debate whether Maryland or Virginia is more ground zero for the negative impacts of sequestration. But whether it is NIH workers in Bethesda or civilian Navy employees in Woodbridge, the stories are the same. This is not fair. It is not right. None of these folks are getting a 20-percent discount on daycare, rent or, as the one person said, repayment on their student loans.

It is incumbent upon us to get this problem fixed and that is going to require the kind of hard work on revenues and entitlement reform so many of us have tried to avoid; otherwise we will not see an America that will stay as competitive as it needs to be and we will disrespect the literally hundreds of thousands if not millions of workers who work directly or indirectly to protect our Nation and are trying to provide the services that are so essential to our people.

Let's not do any more harm. Let's not waste any more time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I have not been on the floor during the entire remarks of my friend from Virginia, but I did hear part of it. I first want to thank him for his extraordinary leadership on behalf of the people of Virginia and on behalf of a sensible way to resolve our budget problems. The Senator has been a leader in building bridges and recognizing how devastating sequestration is, not just to the Federal workers who live in his State, not just to the people who live in his State, but to our entire country.

This is dangerous, sequestration. The Senator has been a leader in pointing that out.

He has also made it very clear that sequestration is mindless across-the-board cuts and that we have a responsibility to make priority decisions. When we use sequestration we are on automatic pilot but it is an automatic pilot

that cannot carry out its current mission. It cannot safely navigate the air. That is where we are.

I applaud my colleague for taking on this issue of saying to our friends on both sides of the aisle: Let's listen to each other. We know we are divided. We have different views. But we need to sit down, work together, and come up with a sensible way to balance the Federal budget to give the predictability that is necessary and to eliminate these sequestration cuts.

It is particularly painful right now when we have so many Marylanders, so many Virginians, so many people in this country who are receiving paychecks with a 20-percent cut. Yet the work they have to do is the same.

Mr. WARNER. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. CARDIN. I will be glad to yield.

Mr. WARNER. I thank the Senator from Maryland for his comments. Let me say no Senator has served with more distinction, both here in the Senate and prior to that in the House, in being a constant advocate for Federal employees and being willing to step up to protect them and rebut what we too often hear from some of our colleagues who, across the board, without distinction, demean and denigrate the extraordinary good work that so many countless unnamed Federal employees do.

I thank the Senator from Maryland for that work. I thank him for his continued willingness in conversations with me and others to talk about: Hey, we all have to stretch a little way to get things done. I know he is hearing the same thing in Maryland. People are not distinguishing red shirt, blue shirt. They want us to get this done. I thank the Senator for his good work and I look forward to working with him and folks on both sides of the aisle on this issue.

Mr. CARDIN. I thank my colleague for his comments. I understand he already mentioned what has happened at the National Institutes of Health and the fact that, because of the sequestration cuts, the number of grants being given out this year, contracts with young scientists to do research, is going to be cut by the hundreds.

We don't know which one of these researchers would have come up with an advancement, a major breakthrough, but there would have been some. And they are going to be denied. They may get discouraged, the people who would have received these grants, and they may go into other fields. We may lose them forever. They may go to other professions. They may go to other countries. But we know they are not doing the work they are trained to do and we know they had a proposal that went through the most difficult vetting process and was selected for funding and should have been funded but is not being funded because of these sequestration cuts. That we know. That much we know for sure.

We also know it is not just that researcher who has been hurt by the sequestration cuts. It is the businesses that depend upon the basic research—many of which are small companies—in order to build upon that research to create the products that go into the marketplace and create the jobs that are necessary for our economy. There is a direct loss to the economy of our country as a result of these sequestration cuts. It is time we move forward and resolve the problems of our country.

I agree with my friend from Virginia that we have to find a way on both sides of the aisle to come together, but I must point out it has been extremely difficult, particularly with the climate in the other body. In the current issue of *New York* magazine, Jonathan Chait writes:

The chaos and dysfunction have set in so deeply that Washington now lurches from crisis to crisis, and once-dull, keep-the-lights-on rituals of government procedures are transformed into white-knuckle dramas that threaten national or even global catastrophe.

The Republican party has spent 30 years careering ever more deeply into ideological extremism, but one of the novel developments of the Obama years is its embrace of procedural extremism. The Republican fringe has evolved from being politically shrewd proponents of radical policy changes to a gang of saboteurs who would rather stop government from functioning at all.

This brinkmanship is preventing the economic recovery from gaining steam, it is preventing us from addressing urgent problems, and it is punishing all Americans, not just Federal workers.

If we come together on behalf of the American people, we can replace sequestration with a measured and balanced approach to deficit reduction. We can agree on a path forward to fiscal solvency that spreads the burden equitably. We can begin to solve our problems instead of compounding them, but I will tell you what we cannot do. We cannot balance the budget on the backs of Federal workers. It isn't feasible, and it isn't fair.

Increasingly, Federal workers are asked to do more with less. According to the Office of Management and Budget, the size of the civilian workforce relative to the country's population has declined dramatically over the last several decades, notwithstanding occasional upticks due to military conflicts or the taking of the census.

In the 1950s and 1960s, there were, on average, 92 Americans for every Federal worker. In the 1980s and 1990s, there were 106 Americans for every Federal worker. By 2011, the ratio had increased to 145 Americans for every Federal worker. Since the 1950s and 1960s, the U.S. population has increased by 76 percent, and the private sector workforce has risen by 133 percent, but the size of the Federal workforce has risen by just 11 percent.

Relative to the private sector, the Federal workforce is less than half the size it was back in the 1950s and 1960s.

The picture that emerges is one of a Federal civilian workforce whose size has significantly shrunk compared to the size of the U.S. population it serves, the private sector workforce, and the magnitude of Federal expenditures.

I previously talked about the adverse effect of sequestration on many of our domestic agencies. I have talked a little bit today about the circumstances at NIH. I have talked about the Food and Drug Administration, the Social Security Administration, and other domestic Federal agencies.

I will focus, if I might, for the next few minutes on the impacts of sequestration on a particular group of Federal workers: the Department of Defense civilian employees who are part of a Total Force team providing invaluable support to our men and women in uniform serving in harm's way. These proud individuals have in the past few weeks suffered unnecessary hardships due to sequestration.

The primary priority of our government is the defense of our Nation and sequestration adversely affects the civilian men and women who help provide that defense. DOD civilians serve our Nation by advancing scientific research, providing logistical support to our servicemembers while forward deployed, and ensuring institutional stability within DOD offices as servicemembers rotate to different duty stations.

Recently, some in the media have promoted the idea that the \$85 billion sequestration cut triggered on March 1 isn't causing drastic effects. CNN called the cuts "not as bad as advertised," and the *Washington Post* reported that the cuts are less "scary" than predicted. Tell that to the 46,000 DOD employees in Maryland and another 103,000 in the Capital region who are being furloughed, losing up to 20 percent of their weekly pay through the rest of this fiscal year.

Earlier this month, the Defense Department began furloughing 652,000 civilian employees nationwide, forcing them to take up to 11 unpaid days off through September. This is in addition to the furloughs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Internal Revenue Service. These furloughs disrupt our national and economic security and put hundreds of thousands of Federal workers and their families in financial hardship. Our government cannot continue to provide for the defense of our Nation by maintaining such a harmful policy toward our civilian workers.

I have visited installations throughout Maryland. I have heard about and have seen the impact of furloughs of Defense Department employees and other Federal employees and the impact it will have on their ability to carry out their mission. These cuts and furloughs are affecting the ability of the agency to carry out its legal mission.

For instance, at Indian Head Naval Surface Warfare Center in Charles County, over 1,870 civilian employees—about 97 percent of the total government civilian workforce—are being forced to take leave without pay 1 day per week. It puts base police and fire protection, safety programs, air operations, air quality programs, and facilities at risk.

At Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, furloughs will hit 2,400 Defense Department civilians—94 percent of the civilian staff. Walter Reed is the country's top facility for wounded combat soldiers. Its Department of Orthopedics and Rehabilitation is the largest within the Department of Defense. Its seven specialty service clinics include one for traumatic brain injuries. Soldiers needing expert care might have to wait longer for appointments or be forced to nonmilitary facilities, both of which will drive up costs and compromise the quality of care.

I cannot say how many of us have taken the floor to talk about our commitment to make sure our service people—our wounded warriors—get the type of treatment they deserve. Many of us have visited the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, and we are proud of the services that are being provided. Sequestration is hurting our ability to meet the mission we promised to the heroes who have served our Nation and have now come home and expect that health care to be available to them.

At Fort Detrick 4,900 Defense Department civilians will be furloughed. Those civilians support a multigovernment community that conducts biomedical research and development as well as medical material management that includes everything from advanced bandages to vaccines for soldiers on the battlefield and in military hospitals. That mission is at risk. There is no other place that can carry out the type of advanced lab work that is done at Fort Detrick.

Aberdeen Proving Ground, Harford County's largest employer, home to 11 major commands and more than 80 agencies, has approximately 11,500 DOD civilian employees subject to furlough, which is about half of APG's workforce. Before sequestration, APG reported contributing more than \$400 million in payroll and \$500 million in contracts annually. I can assure everyone that community will be affected and many businesses will be affected, as well as the mission at APG itself.

Just a few miles away at Fort Meade, Maryland's largest employer, sequestration is affecting the entire region. Most of its 27,000 DOD civilian employees face furloughs. These furloughs have all sorts of unintended consequences. A furloughed worker, for instance, may have trouble making his or her mortgage or car payments. Reduced credit worthiness may affect a worker's ability to maintain or obtain a security clearance. Is that how we

want to treat people who have helped defend us from terrorists?

Budgets cuts compounded by sequestration will lead to brain drain in the Defense Department, with some of the best and the brightest defense professionals in the Federal Government deciding to seek opportunities elsewhere.

The Federal workforce is better educated, older, and more experienced, on average, than its private sector counterparts. A significant number of Federal workers provide their services to the American people at a discount. They could command higher salaries in the private sector, but they choose to work for the Federal Government because they are patriots and they believe in public service.

The world is still a dangerous place. In such uncertain times, we cannot afford to let political dysfunction get in the way of ensuring our national security. Sequestration is harming our national security readiness.

Sequestration is not just about compromising the ability of Federal workers to carry out their critical missions on behalf of all Americans, and it isn't just hurting Federal workers and their families economically. Private sector businesses and communities across the country are being hurt by the reduced purchasing power of furloughed Federal workers.

Federal workers are similar to everyone else; they support the local businesses in their communities: auto dealers, restaurants, dry cleaners, you name it. They all suffer when Federal employees suffer. The local economy suffers and the recovery becomes that much harder and slower.

We need to stop demonizing and scapegoating and punishing Federal workers. We need to replace sequestration with a rational budget. One of the greatest attributes of the American character is pragmatism. Unlike what some other Federal employees are actually doing, in Congress, balancing a budget is not rocket science. We know the various options.

Former President Lyndon Johnson was fond of quoting the prophet Isaiah: "Come, let us reason together." That is what we need to do. We can acknowledge and respect our differences, but at the end of the day the American people have entrusted us with governing and with being pragmatic. Let us do our job so Federal workers can get back to doing their jobs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, it is my understanding that the Senator from Arizona wishes to address the Chamber about an upcoming motion to recommit the bill.

I yield time to the Senator from Arizona.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Madam President, this is the first appropriations bill we are considering for fiscal year 2014. Unfor-

tunately, in my view, it gets us off on the wrong foot because of the spending level. The bill spends more than \$54 billion, which is about \$5 billion above last year's spending level and more than \$10 billion over the House proposal for this coming fiscal year. Considering that our debt stands at over \$17 trillion, we ought to be spending less, not more this year.

This bill already takes a larger portion of the allowable spending compared to last year. People will point out that the budget agreement we agreed to in 2011 simply sets an aggregate number and that we can spend whatever we want in certain appropriations bills as long as the total doesn't go over \$967 billion. That is true, but it is impossible.

I can say that with experience in the House and now in the Senate; that if we overspend on the initial appropriations bills, we will somehow cut back in the bills that come later. Often the last bill to come up is the Defense bill. Nobody is going to undercut our troops or spend less on a defense bill, but that would be required if we were to stay under the budget control agreement number. When we overspend on the initial appropriations bills like this, it simply means one thing: that we are going to bust the budget.

I can tell my colleagues, to have any credibility with the taxpayers, we have to stick to the agreement that was agreed to in 2011. We passed so far. We even went through the sequester because we couldn't come up with an agreement to prioritize spending. But now, to go over the spending limit on the first appropriations bill would not set the right precedent moving ahead into the appropriations bills. We simply have to deal with this debt and deficit. This isn't the way to go.

That is why I support the upcoming motion to recommit that Senator TOOMEY will offer in a few minutes that will simply recommit the bill to the Appropriations Committee and say: Come back with something that fits within the Budget Control Act that is similar to what was spent last year, not overspending by \$5 billion. I hope we will pass this motion to recommit. I hope it will start off the appropriations bills in the Senate on the right foot.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. I yield 5 minutes to Senator HOEVEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I wish to thank the Senator from Maine, as well as Senator TOOMEY from Pennsylvania. I wish to express comments in regard to the motion to recommit we will be voting on around 3 o'clock.

THUD is an important bill. It includes funding for things we consider absolute priorities, including, certainly, transportation, roads, bridges, funds for housing and for other pur-

poses. So we very much want to fund the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development bill.

The problem we have is we haven't agreed, as far as the appropriations bills, as to an overall total of how much we will spend. That is really the problem we are confronting with this legislation.

Under the Budget Control Act, the total for all of the appropriations bills cannot exceed \$967 billion. That is the law. That is the law. But the majority party is appropriating to \$1.058 trillion. That is a problem. So as appropriators we want to go through prioritized spending, make sure we are funding the things that should be funded, and then for things that are lower priorities, not funding those so we can truly fund the priorities that are important to the American people.

The problem is we are not going to be able to do that unless we get an agreement on the total funding level, and that agreement is exactly what the BCA—the Budget Control Act—provides, and it says specifically \$967 billion. That is the law. That is the law.

We have a \$17 trillion debt. We have a deficit this year that CBO projects to be in the range of \$750 billion. That is a real problem for our country. That is a problem we have to address. We have to get the deficit and the debt under control. There are two ways to do that. One is to raise revenue that comes from economic growth, not higher taxes. It comes from economic growth and getting our economy going. Of course, the other way to reduce our deficit is to control spending, and that is what a budget is all about—and sticking to that budget. We ought to have a balanced budget amendment, which I very much support. But what we have right now is the Budget Control Act. It is the law.

So the question I ask is, Why is the majority party saying we are going to appropriate 12 appropriations bills that total \$1.058 trillion rather than \$967 billion? How are we going to get our deficit and our debt under control if we don't adhere to the budget guidelines that are set?

So the simple and very clear point I wish to make is this: As appropriators and as Senators, I believe we all want to prioritize funding. We want to make sure we fund the things that are important, such as infrastructure, such as housing, and other priorities. For things that shouldn't be funded, we should say we are not going to fund those items. That is the difference between prioritizing and the so-called sequester—the across-the-board cuts.

We are headed down a trail right now, if we approve this bill as is and bring other appropriations bills to the floor and approve them as they are, the sequester automatically kicks in again. Under the law, the sequester comes right back in and will bring these bills down to a total of \$967 billion. So what have we gained? We

haven't accomplished what we are trying to do, which is to prioritize the funding.

So let's find a way across the aisle to come to an agreement to make sure we prioritize funding and do so within the BCA limit of \$967 billion because that is what the law says. That is what the law says we have to do. We need to find a way to come to an agreement.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mrs. MURRAY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

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

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

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, later this afternoon, Senator TOOMEY will be offering a motion to recommit the Transportation-HUD appropriations bill back to the Appropriations Committee. While I commend Senator TOOMEY's goal of ensuring that the fiscal year 2014 spending levels comply with the Budget Control Act spending caps, I do not believe this is the right approach.

Let me be clear. I voted in the Appropriations Committee, as did every Republican member of that committee, for a top-line level of \$967 billion. That is the amount that is in the Budget Control Act. That is law. But this is the very first appropriations bill that has been brought to the Senate floor. We have no idea where we are going to be at the end of the process.

The two leaders of the Appropriations Committee have called for regular order, and I commend them for bringing appropriations bills to the floor starting with this one, one at a time, for debate, amendment, and full consideration. We have had many amendments filed to this bill. Several of them would reduce spending that is in this bill. One reduces spending by \$50 million for the HOME program that is being offered by the Senator from Arizona. There is another that reduces spending by over \$1 billion for the Community Development Block Grant Program. That is not a cut I happen to believe should be made, but that is a legitimate amendment that, if it passes, would reduce spending in this bill by \$1 billion. There are other amendments that have been proposed to reduce spending in this bill.

So this is turning the process upside down. It is recommitting to committee a bill before we have had the opportunity to determine what the final spending level in the bill is even going to be as a result of the many amendments that have been filed. Furthermore, we are not going to know if we have reached the cap until we finish all of the appropriations bills.

I realize my Democratic colleagues want a far higher spending cap than I

do and that the Budget Control Act provides, but I don't think we should short-circuit the process when there has been a good-faith effort to bring appropriations bills to the floor.

What I would propose in lieu of the approach offered by my friend and colleague Senator TOOMEY is an amendment which I am going to file this afternoon that says not later than October 1, the Committee on Appropriations shall revise the suballocations to the subcommittees for fiscal year 2014 such that the suballocations comply with the discretionary spending limits that are in the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act—what we refer to as the Budget Control Act, the BCA.

To me, this is the proper way to do it. If, at the end of the fiscal year, we find that the appropriations bills that have been passed exceed the statutory cap in the BCA, then we should reopen the process and reallocate the funds—the ceilings, the caps—across each of the subcommittees and produce bills that comply with the law.

Frankly, since current law applies this cap anyway, if we don't do that, sequestration will take effect on January 1 of next year. I do not think that is a good approach because it treats all programs as if they are the same and does not allow us to set priorities.

So I think the approach of the Senator from Pennsylvania is premature, a blunt instrument, and there is a reasonable alternative. I think it discourages a return to regular order where we bring the appropriations bills to the floor and where Members are free to eliminate whole programs, to cut billions if they wish to do so. Indeed, Members have worthwhile amendments that would reduce spending, but to send the bill back to committee before we have even had a chance to consider those amendments and before we have allowed the Senate to work its will is, to me, completely upside down of the way the process should work.

Furthermore, I will make the point once again that this is the first appropriations bill. How can we say the cap is breached when it is the very first bill to be brought before the Senate? Frankly, having gone through this process where we did have a free-standing Transportation-HUD bill and Senator MURRAY and I went to conference with our House counterparts, we came back with a consensus bill that became law that was in between the amounts in the Senate bill and the House bill. So we ended up at a lower level, which we knew we would, and which I will not feel I am going out on a limb in predicting we would in this case as well, since the Senate bill is higher than the House bill.

Why can't we let the process work? Why can't we consider the amendments that have been offered, some of which may well pass and reduce spending? Why can't we go to conference with the House where I believe additional cuts are probably likely? And why can't we

let the appropriations process unfold the way it should? Why should we short-circuit it now by saying, that is enough, let's return the bill to committee, we don't trust what is going to happen, when there are safeguards we can put in to ensure that at the end of the day we will be at the cap of \$967 billion?

As I said, I will file my amendment this afternoon to give us an actual mechanism to ensure that at the beginning of the fiscal year we are at those levels. That is one approach, and I think it is a far better approach.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 1756, 1803, 1785, AND 1789 EN BLOC

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and the following amendments be called up en bloc: Coburn No. 1756, McCain No. 1803, Boozman No. 1785, and Udall of Colorado No. 1789; that the amendments be agreed to, en bloc, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendments were agreed to en bloc, as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 1756

(Purpose: To require public disclosure of certain reports)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. _____. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act and except as provided in subsection (b), any report required to be submitted by a Federal agency to the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate or the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives under this Act shall be posted on the public website of that agency upon receipt by the committee.

(b) Subsection (a) shall not apply to a report if—

- (1) the public posting of the report compromises national security; or
- (2) the report contains proprietary information.

AMENDMENT NO. 1803

(Purpose: To prohibit the obligation or expenditure of funds made available to the Department of Transportation for cyber security until the Secretary of Transportation submits to Congress a detailed plan describing how the funding will be allocated and for what purposes)

On page 12, between lines 12 and 13, insert the following:

SEC. 1____. None of the funds made available under this Act to the Department of Transportation for cyber security may be obligated or expended until the Secretary of Transportation submits to the appropriate committees of Congress a detailed plan describing how the funding will be allocated and for what purposes, including a detailed description of—

- (1) how the cyber security funding will be obligated or expended;
- (2) the programs and activities that will receive cyber security funding;
- (3) if and how the use of the funding complies with the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101 et seq.) and any other applicable Federal law;

(4) the performance metrics that will be used to measure and determine the effectiveness of cyber security plans and programs; and

(5) the strategy that will be employed to procure goods and services associated with the cyber security objectives of the Department of Transportation.

AMENDMENT NO. 1785

(Purpose: To establish the Sense of the Congress that any vacancy in the position of Inspector General of the Federal Housing Finance Agency should be filled in compliance with the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. _____. (a) Congress finds the following:

(1) The Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 established an Office of Inspector General within the Federal Housing Finance Agency (in this section referred to as the "FHFA").

(2) The President has nominated Steve A. Linick, the current FHFA Inspector General, to be the next Inspector General of the Department of State.

(3) The nomination of Steve A. Linick to be Inspector General of the Department of State occurred on June 27, 2013, following a 1,989 day vacancy that began on January 16, 2008.

(4) The Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998 (5 U.S.C. 3345 et seq.) prescribes requirements for filling, both permanently and temporarily, vacancies that are required to be filled by Presidential appointment with Senate confirmation, and generally provides a limit of 210 days for persons serving in an "acting" capacity.

(b) It is the Sense of Congress that should a vacancy occur in the position of Inspector General of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, the President should act expeditiously to nominate a person to fill the position on a permanent basis and should wait no more than 210 days to nominate a person to serve in this position in the event of a vacancy.

AMENDMENT NO. 1789

(Purpose: To require the Federal Railroad Administration to evaluate regulations that govern the use of locomotive horns at highway-rail grade crossings)

On page 52, after line 24, add the following: SEC. 155. Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, in consultation with appropriate local government representatives, shall—

(1) evaluate existing regulations governing the use of locomotive horns at highway-rail grade crossings to determine whether such regulations should be revised; and

(2) submit a report to Congress that contains the results of the evaluation conducted pursuant to paragraph (1).

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, it is my understanding we have a Republican Senator who is coming to the floor shortly to make a motion to recommit. For the information of all Members, at some point to be agreed upon, we will dispense with that motion this afternoon. We are hoping to do that. I know a number of Members have asked the timing on that. I will work with the Senators and our staffs to try and do that as soon as possible. I know many Members are waiting.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAX CODE REFORM

Mr. BAUCUS. Just outside this Chamber are the likenesses of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and dozens of statesmen cast in bronze and marble. I often look to these individuals for inspiration and quotes when writing a speech.

On a recent walk across the Capitol to meet my colleague, Congressman DAVE CAMP, I passed a giant statue of Andrew Jackson, our Nation's seventh President.

It was Jackson who famously said—and I quote him

The wisdom of man never yet contrived a system of taxation that would operate with perfect equality.

Those words were spoken by Jackson in 1832. More than 180 years later, our Nation still struggles with a broken tax system.

Our Tax Code today is inequitable, inefficient, and incomprehensible to the overwhelming majority of Americans. It contains nearly 4 million words—4 million. If someone were to try to read the entire code out loud, it would take them more than 18 uninterrupted days.

Not only is the code long; it is mad-deningly complex. There are 42 different definitions of a small business in the code—42. There are 15 different tax incentives for higher education—so many that the IRS had to publish a booklet to explain and simplify the higher education tax incentives. And that book—I have it with me—is 90 pages long—just on the education tax incentives. Here it is. I defy anybody to read it, let alone somebody trying to go to college or a parent trying to help his or her child go to college.

The code is such a labyrinth that 90 percent of American taxpayers have to use an accountant or some kind of computer software to file their tax returns. Even with all this assistance, it still takes the average taxpayer 13 hours to gather and compile the receipts and forms to comply with the code.

The Tax Code today is also inefficient and unfair. It is riddled with loopholes and deductions that result in more than \$1 trillion in lost revenue each year.

This complexity in the code is eroding confidence in our economy and creating uncertainty for America's families and businesses. Many Americans think of the other guy, the fancy lawyer who can take advantage of the code and pay lower taxes, which means more tax burden on to me. It is not fair. Confidence is eroding.

It is also threatening to undermine the competitiveness of the United States in the global marketplace.

Harvard Business School did a survey last year asking 10,000 of its graduates

who live and conduct business around the world about the challenges of doing business in America. These individuals—these 10,000—are leaders on the frontlines of the global economy, and they are pessimistic about America's economic future.

The vast majority of those surveyed—71 percent—expected U.S. competitiveness to deteriorate over the next several years.

And what did they identify as the root of America's competitiveness problem? Respondents pointed to America's Tax Code—to the code—as one of the greatest weaknesses in the U.S. business environment.

Dig deeper and you learn respondents were deterred from investing in the United States not simply by a higher statutory corporate tax rate, but also by the sheer complexity and uncertain future of the Tax Code. I might say, when I mention that report to people, to businesses, to Americans, they nod their heads in agreement. That is what they have found themselves too.

The survey concludes with a dire warning—and I quote the survey:

For the first time in decades, the business environment in the United States is in danger of falling behind the rest of the world.

That's bad news for everyone. A fundamentally weakened U.S. economy is not only an American problem but also a global risk.

Chairman CAMP and I have been working together for more than 2 years on comprehensive tax reform. Here in the Senate I have been working on tax reform for the past 3 years with my good friend Senator HATCH, the ranking member of the Finance Committee. We have held more than 30 hearings and heard from hundreds of experts about how tax reform can simplify the system for families, help businesses innovate, and make the United States more competitive.

A lot of people talk about more jobs. There is a lot of talk about more jobs. This is one way to get more jobs. If we reform the Tax Code, it will unleash so much positive energy in this country. It would create a lot more jobs than any other plan I have recently heard of.

We held more than 30 hearings, heard from hundreds of experts on how reform can simplify the system, help businesses innovate, and make the United States more competitive. Last month Senator HATCH and I completed work with the Finance Committee on an extensive, 3-month, top-to-bottom review of the Tax Code. We met as a full committee every week to collect feedback on different topics in tax reform and issued a series of 10 discussion papers to kick off that conversation.

In an effort to include the entire Senate in our efforts, we recently called on all Senators to partner with us and provide their input and ideas for reforming the code. Starting with a blank slate, we called on every Senator to submit their proposals for what they want to see in a reformed code. This is

an important exercise. Everyone needs to be involved. We need every Senator to weigh in on tax reform. I might say, the deadline is this Friday, tomorrow. I encourage all of my colleagues to submit their ideas and make their voices heard.

I might say, your constituents are certainly making their voices heard. We have received more than 10,000 comments and ideas so far through the Web site that Chairman CAMP and I created called taxreform.gov—actually, 10,258 responses, to be exact.

Overwhelmingly, Americans, from every corner of our country, are calling for a simplified Tax Code. People think they should not have to spend hours upon hours and hundreds of dollars to prepare their taxes, and I for one agree.

Let me share a couple of submissions we have received on our Web site.

Jennifer, from Hollywood, MD, writes:

I've been doing my family's taxes for 22 years. This year my husband suggested we use a tax service. Why? The tax code is too complicated and he was concerned we were missing deductions.

Mike, from Fort Collins, CO, provides an example of the complexity in the code, writing:

I have been a tax assistance volunteer for 19 years. It is difficult to tell someone who knows what a child is that there are actually four different definitions for "a child" in the tax law. Make the same definition apply across the entire tax code. The best way is the simplest way.

Wendy from Irving, CA, writes:

I do not mind paying taxes—we need education, infrastructure, and a defense. What I do mind is that it is a complete mystery and a complete game to find every allowable deduction and that it is a significant burden as well as a significant expense to pay a qualified preparer. How has this come to be? My returns are 20-50 pages long. Why is it more than two? There must be a way to simplify the process.

You know what. Wendy is right. There must be a way to simplify the process.

That is the same message Chairman CAMP and I heard earlier this month in St. Paul, MN. We were in the Twin Cities for the first in a series of trips we are taking across the country to speak with people about tax reform.

We want to get out of Washington. We are doing it this summer. We are going to Philadelphia next Monday to get input and feedback from people on dealing with America's tax system.

St. Paul was a great trip. We met with leaders of two distinctly different types of American businesses—one a U.S.-based multinational corporation with more than 85,000 employees, the other a family-run bakery with 85 employees. While dramatically different in size and in industry, they face similar challenges when it comes to dealing with America's Tax Code. In conversation after conversation we heard the same thing: We need a simpler Tax Code.

St. Paul was just the first stop. As I mentioned, the next trip is Philadelphia. Then we plan to go to the west coast. We have other trips planned over the next couple of months. We are

going to talk to groups about how we can make the tax system fairer and easier to deal with, and we want to learn how we can restore some confidence in the code.

Our efforts on reform have been ramping up. We are continuing to build momentum. Reform provides a historic opportunity to give families certainty, spark growth, create jobs, and make businesses more competitive to provide America a real shot in the arm.

I will conclude my remarks as I began them—with a quote. These words are from our Nation's sixth President, John Quincy Adams. President Adams:

Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.

That is where we are. We are patient. We are persevering. We have a lot to do. The difficulties will disappear, obstacles will vanish, and the best result will be that the American people have a simpler, fairer code to provide more jobs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT

Mr. TOOMEY. Madam President, I rise to describe a motion to recommit that I am going to offer. Let me start by providing a little bit of context to why I am offering this motion to recommit. That has to start by reminding my colleagues about the Budget Control Act that was signed into law in 2011, about 2 years ago.

The Budget Control Act—which, again, is an act, not a bill—has been signed into law. It is the existing law of the land. It established spending caps—limits on discretionary spending—in a modest effort to try to bring out-of-control spending somewhat under control. So we have a statutory limit on how much the Federal Government is permitted to spend. It is a limit on both the defense side and the nondefense side, but it is a limit. It is an attempt to control that which has been so difficult to control in this town, which is Federal spending.

I should point out that even if we abide by the spending caps that are in the existing law, if we follow the law, we are still going to run a huge deficit. Next year the deficit will be about \$560 billion. That means that next year, if we have the spending discipline of living within the law, we will still increase our total outstanding debt by more than \$½ trillion and our debt as a percentage of our economy will rise to 76 percent—76 percent debt-to-GDP ratio. Our debt-to-GDP ratio is already higher than it should be. It is already costing us economic growth and jobs. It is going to rise further. That is assuming we stick to the spending cap.

I should point out that the way we got to this point is just spending on autopilot, just growing spending every year. I will give one example. Since 2000, total Federal spending has doubled. That is the scale of the increases in spending we have been experiencing. That is why we have been running huge deficits. We now have a massive debt.

The accumulated debt is causing this big drag on our economy and preventing us from having the kind of job growth we ought to have.

Here is my big concern. The bill we are considering right now, the Transportation-HUD bill, puts us on a direct path to bust the caps, to break the law, to spend even more than the statutory limits we put in place just 2 years ago. Let me walk through how we get there.

The fact is that under the Budget Control Act the cap that is set on discretionary spending for the fiscal year we are currently debating, 2014, is \$967 billion. That is the number. If you add up the spending sums for all of the appropriations bills my Democratic friends want to pass, it adds up to \$1.058 trillion. It is \$91 billion more spending than is permitted under current law.

It busts the caps by almost \$100 billion. We cannot afford this kind of spending. We cannot afford the spending we are currently contemplating, much less nearly another \$100 billion.

Now, I should be clear. Any single bill does not bust the caps all by itself. It is what they do in combination. But this bill is one of a series that in combination is designed to bust the caps. All you have to do is add up the total spending in each bill, and you get a number that is much greater than the cap. So it is very clear.

This particular bill, by the way, is a huge increase. The Transportation-HUD bill spends over \$54 billion in its current form, as currently contemplated. That is \$5 billion more than in 2013. That is a 10-percent increase in just 1 year. It is almost \$10 billion more than what the House proposed. It is even more money than what the President of the United States asked for in his own budget request. He did not ask for this much money. Yet here it is on the Senate floor, a bill that busts the cap, increases spending dramatically, and spends more money than the President even asked for, at a time when we are running huge deficits that are costing us economic growth.

I think this is a very bad idea, so I have a motion. I am grateful to have the support of many of my colleagues, including Senator SHELBY and Senator HOEVEN, both who are appropriators. I think Senator HOEVEN is intending to speak in support of this motion. Let me explain clearly what it will do. What my motion will do is send the bill back to committee with instructions to lower the spending in the bill to \$45.455 billion. That is the number that would be consistent with the spending caps. It would allocate an amount of money to this appropriations bill, the Transportation-HUD bill, in proportion to what the Transportation-HUD bill spends under the current fiscal year. It would do that for the next fiscal year.

I am not suggesting that I would go through and line by line make all of

the individual adjustments within the bill. I would leave that to the committee that has the most expertise, the Appropriations Committee. Let them do their work, but let them do it in a way that ends with a product that is consistent with the law, consistent with the spending caps.

One point I should make about the spending caps in the Budget Control Act—I think there are some folks in this town who mistakenly think that since deficits have gotten a little smaller in recent years than they were in the past few years, somehow we do not have a deficit problem anymore and we can just crank up spending. I have to say I think that is a profoundly mistaken view. We still have a huge problem with the spending path. A \$½ trillion deficit is a devastatingly large deficit. As bad as that is, several years in the future, under current projections—again, this assumes that we live within the law—within a few years these deficits start to explode again even beyond the current levels, which are already unacceptable.

So I think this is very important. This is the first appropriations bill the Senate is considering this year. This is the one that is going to determine whether we are going to go down a path of disregarding the bipartisan, Presidentially signed law of the land which is in existence right now. This bill is designed to be part of a process to bust that wide open so that we spend more money that we can't afford. That would be a huge mistake.

This is a motion to recommit back to the committee, report out a bill where they can establish the priorities and the allocation within the limit but set the limit at a level that is consistent with the caps.

I move to commit S. 1243 to the Committee on Appropriations with instructions to report back with such changes as may be necessary such that total budget authority for fiscal year 2014 is not greater than \$45.455 billion.

I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I rise to strongly oppose this motion that is now before the Senate. I urge all of my colleagues to vote against it as well. Senator COLLINS and I have worked very closely together to write a bipartisan transportation and housing bill that works for our families and our communities. We have been working here together on the floor to have an open debate and accept amendments from both sides of the aisle. We just accepted a number of them a few minutes ago.

In addition to six Republicans who explicitly supported this bill in committee, along with all of the Democrats, a total of 73 Senators voted to start debate on this bill. But now this motion that is now before us would take all of that bipartisan work we did

on this bill in committee and it would take the strong bipartisan support coming out of committee and just throw it all away and ask us to simply now adopt the House Republican budget and start all over again. There is absolutely no reason for us to go back to the drawing board, especially not under the conditions that are laid out in this motion.

Back in March we had a very vigorous debate here in the Senate about our values and our priorities when it came to the Federal budget. We debated about the future of Medicare. We talked about how the wealthiest Americans should contribute their fair share. We debated what should be done with overall spending levels and the automatic cuts from sequestration that were put in place in the bipartisan Budget Control Act in order to bring both sides to the table to replace them with more responsible deficit reduction.

Everyone will remember that we spent dozens of hours debating the budget on the Senate floor. Then my colleagues had a choice. We ran an open process. Any Senator could bring an amendment to the floor. We considered over 100 of them from Democrats and Republicans. One of my Republican colleagues even offered the House budget as an amendment, which locks in that overall sequestration level but actually ignores the Budget Control Act by simply pushing the entire burden onto seniors and families in our communities. But, as we all know, the House budget was rejected by the Senate. It got only 40 votes here, and 5 Republicans actually voted against it. The Senate budget we ended up passing replaces sequestration with an equal mix of responsible spending cuts and new revenue by closing tax loopholes that benefit the wealthiest Americans.

The House passed their budget that locks in sequestration on steroids. The Senate passed our budget that replaces sequestration with more responsible deficit reduction. I absolutely agree with my colleagues that we cannot finish that budget process until we find a way to bridge that divide between the House and Senate. But I want to be clear here. A motion to recommit on an appropriations bill is not the place to have the debate on the overall spending levels. That is what a budget conference is for. That is where the two sides need to go to work out a deal. But, as my colleagues all know, despite the efforts of many Republicans and Democrats alike, a few Senators—very few Senators—continue blocking a bipartisan budget conference. So far we have been unable to even get in a room to talk about that.

We are going to keep trying to start a budget conference and work toward a bipartisan deal. Until we do, the bipartisan work that is being done in the Appropriations Committee now, led by the chairwoman Senator MIKULSKI has to continue.

Now that my colleague has brought this motion to the floor that attempts

to lock in sequestration and force the House budget onto our transportation and housing bill, let's talk about it for a few minutes.

The bill we are debating right now, the transportation and housing bill, could not exist at the worse-than-sequestration levels that are being pushed in this House. My partner on this bill, Senator COLLINS, has been clear, as I have, that the differences between the House and Senate transportation bills could not be more stark.

Our bipartisan bill here in the Senate continues to invest in our communities through the Community Development Block Grant Program, CDBG, while the partisan House bill cut that in half to the lowest level ever, which would mean 40,000 fewer jobs in this country. Communities across the country would have to halt projects they are planning to help get their communities moving again.

Our bipartisan bill in the Senate invests in Essential Air Service and makes sure there is enough in the program to cover all the communities that currently participate in it.

The House partisan bill that this motion would recommit and put us back into the position of considering would shortchange the entire program and cut it more than one-third. It includes additional language that would kick out communities in States such as Montana and New Mexico that absolutely depend on this.

The bipartisan bill the Senate has invests in our families to make sure they have a roof over their heads when they need it most, to help them if they are disabled or seniors who need to stay off the streets. The partisan House bill would serve 132,000 fewer people, many of whom would end up homeless without this support.

Those are only a few examples. I could name many that are in this bill. If sequestration numbers were to be blocked in the way this motion that is before us envisions, we will continue seeing the impact across our entire Federal Government.

As Secretary Hagel has made very clear, the defense worker furloughs would continue and get worse. In my home State of Washington—I talked about it on the Senate floor this morning—we have seen the consequences of those cuts. Do you know where we are seeing them? In places such as Madigan Hospital where a young woman came and told me about being furloughed on Fridays and what it translated into in terms of people having their brain surgeries delayed because of the shut-downs on Friday. This is what we are talking about, doctors and nurses being furloughed in our Army hospitals as we have injured soldiers who need care.

This sequestration is going to impact funding for our firefighters who are protecting our homes and lands, civilian employees, and it will hit the law enforcement officials who are protecting our cities from the threat of terrorism. It will strip funds from cancer research at NIH. Our roads, bridges,

and rails will continue to crumble, and small businesses will pay the price.

This would be happening while a lot of other countries that are our competitors in the global marketplace are doing the opposite. They are investing in themselves. They are setting themselves up to compete in the 21st century economy.

This is the reality of sequestration. It may not make the news every single day in every paper. We may not see all the impacts right away, but it is very real, and it will truly be devastating. It will be devastating for our families. It will be devastating for our national security and our long-term economic growth if we don't replace it. By the way, it is not just Democrats who are saying this. Economists such as Ben Bernanke have said it is hurting the economy. Many of my Republican colleagues have spent a lot of time going around the country talking about how devastating it is on the defense side.

I am happy to have this debate. I don't think this bill, the appropriations bill, the transportation and housing bill, is the place to do it.

If the Senator from Pennsylvania and others wish to start a debate and a negotiation between the Senate budget and the House budget, they should stop objecting to us going to conference. That is where this should occur.

Until then, I urge my colleagues to reject this motion and allow us to continue working on the bipartisan bill we have worked so hard to bring to the Senate. Let's work in creating jobs, investing in communities, and lay down a foundation for long-term and broad-based growth.

I move to table the motion, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WARREN). Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

Mrs. MURRAY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SESSIONS. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. I ask that I be allowed to speak for 5 minutes.

Mr. MURPHY. I would ask the Senator if the Senator from Maryland could speak for 5 minutes. I would notify all of my colleagues that we intend to go to the motion to table once that debate occurs.

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

The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. I wish to thank my colleague Senator TOOMEY for raising this matter and asking to recommit the legislation so the Senate committee, the appropriate committee, would produce a THUD plan for spending that complies with the Budget Control Act, which is a law of the land.

Senator TOOMEY is one of our most knowledgeable Members on finance in the Senate. He is a member of the Budget Committee. He fully understands the significance of this matter.

If this legislation passes at the level it is moving forward today, then we are eviscerating the promises we made to the American public in August of 2011. In August of 2011, everyone should remember quite well, that we said we would raise the debt ceiling by \$2.1 trillion. We will reach that by the end of this year. We will have used up and borrowed another \$2.1 trillion before the end of the year, but we said that we would reduce spending by \$2.1 trillion over 10 years to make it easy on ourselves and to spread out the spending cuts.

This was passed into law with bipartisan support and signed by President Obama. This is not some law that was made up out of thin air. It was a law that was debated and passed in both Houses of Congress. Republicans and Democrats agreed to it, and it improved our spending a little bit.

We were then spending at the rate of \$37 trillion over 10 years. We were projected to increase spending to \$47 trillion over 10 years. This bill reduced it to \$45 trillion.

Under the current spending limits we now have, as Senator TOOMEY has so ably pointed out, we are going to increase spending over next 10 years. We are going to increase it from \$37 trillion to \$45 trillion at a time when we have been running the largest deficits the Nation has ever seen, bar none. An absolutely irresponsible level of debt has been added to our country.

Even this modest proposal agreed to by the President, voted on by the majority party in the Senate, supported in a bipartisan way—is set to be demolished before 2 years is up: Oh, it is too tough. We can't reduce the growth of spending from \$47 trillion to \$45 trillion. Oh, this is going to destroy America.

Well, why don't we look for ways to spread out the cuts and distribute some to the departments and agencies that got zero reductions in spending, such as Medicaid and food stamps zero reduction. No, we can't touch those. They are sacrosanct, and other programs too.

We have some reductions in spending on the discretionary accounts that we can sustain, and it will be tough. That is what we are paid to do.

The bill should properly go back to the committee, and a vote in favor of the Toomey motion would instruct the committee to produce a bill that is consistent with the Budget Control Act.

May I inquire how much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 1½ minutes remaining.

Mr. SESSIONS. Essentially, the majority leader has already said that he intends to bring up the defense bill last, national security last. Why is he

going to do that? He is going to do that because he is going to let all these other bills go over the budget limit, and then he is going to produce the defense bill and say: Oh, colleagues, we have to add more money to the defense bill, putting us over the BCA limits that were agreed to and passed into law. We have to waive that and spend more.

This is how a Nation goes broke. This is how we lose credibility with the American people.

We looked them in the eye in August 2 years ago and we said we were going to reduce the growth of spending a little bit, \$2.1 trillion, in exchange for raising the debt ceiling \$2.1 trillion.

The majority party here is blithely walking in, pretending that never happened and saying: Oh, we didn't intend to pass a limit.

Why did you vote for it then, if you didn't intend to pass it? We did intend to pass it. We promised the American people \$2.1 trillion in reducing the growth of spending not a reduction in spending, just a reduction in the growth of spending.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. SESSIONS. We need to honor that promise.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. I wish to thank Senator MURRAY and Senator COLLINS returning us to regular order and bringing an appropriations bill to the floor that is consistent with the budget resolution passed by this body. I also wish to compliment my colleague from Maryland, the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee Senator MIKULSKI.

We are returning to regular order in the Senate. I find it amazing. It was only a week ago my colleagues on the Republican side were saying we don't want to turn the Senate into the House. Now we have a motion to recommit that would take the House numbers. We didn't do that.

Should we only have a unicameral legislature? I thought we thought this body was important. Yet this motion to recommit will have the effect of saying that what we do in this body doesn't make any difference; let's just take the House's bill. I don't think that is what we want.

The House bill that has been reported I don't think it has yet been voted on was a partisan bill. What we did in this body is have Democrats and Republicans working together. That should be the model we use in this institution. The motion to recommit would destroy that, would take that away. That doesn't seem to make a lot of sense.

Let me talk on the merits, if I might, for one moment, and that is what this motion would mean as far as jobs in this country and responsible investments. Remember that we are operating under a budget resolution that will reduce the deficit. It gets us to actually stronger efforts to reduce the deficit.

I can't speak to every category of spending, but I do know something about transportation. I serve on the Environment and Public Works Committee. There is bipartisan support on our committee to do more than what is in this budget. We have trillions of dollars' worth of roads and bridges that are falling down. We have to invest, to create jobs. We understand transportation creates jobs. The motion to recommit would take us to numbers that are lower than the sequestration numbers.

I was just on the floor a few minutes ago talking about how the sequestration is hurting this country—it is hurting job growth, hurting our economy, hurting Federal workers, and hurting ordinary Americans. Well, this motion makes it worse. It goes below the sequestration numbers. We need to invest in job growth, we need to do it in a balanced, responsible way, and that is exactly what Senator MURRAY did in wearing her hat as chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. She has now brought out an appropriations bill totally consistent with the action there.

Here is the real hypocrisy. What we have said on our side of the aisle is we understand there is a difference. Let's go to conference and resolve the differences. And the same people who are supporting this motion will not let us go to conference to resolve the differences. We should return to regular order. Reject this motion to recommit.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise today in strong opposition to the Toomey motion to recommit. This motion to recommit would send the transportation-housing bill back to the committee with a new allocation of \$45.5 billion, a cut of \$8.5 billion from the Senate bill's current level of \$54 billion. The THUD subcommittee would then have to rewrite its bill to the new, lower allocation.

This motion is simply a backdoor approach to make sequester the new normal by slashing the THUD bill. This is a cut of the magnitude proposed in the Ryan budget. I remind my colleagues the Ryan budget puts a moat around defense spending, and cuts \$91 billion from domestic programs. I will not accept sequester, I will not accept the Ryan budget, as the new normal.

The allocation for the THUD bill is based on a topline of \$1.058 trillion. This is the presequester topline contained in the American Taxpayer Relief Act, a law that passed the Senate by a vote of 89 to 8 in January. The allocation for THUD proposed by the Toomey amendment is based on a topline of \$967 billion, the postsequester level.

Those who support \$967 billion want to make sequester the "new normal." They say: We must follow the law, and sequester is the law. First of all, the House is not following the law. The House ignores the law by taking all \$91 billion of cuts out of domestic discretionary programs.

This committee's spending allocations assert that sequester will be replaced with a balanced solution to the deficit problem that will be decided in a conference on the budget resolution. But guess what. Six Senators have objected to a conference on the budget resolution. And now this motion to recommit is further sand in the gears of the appropriations process. But I am determined that this committee will not be undermined by this obstructionism. While we wait for the Budget Committee to be able to do its job, we will continue to do our job.

Colleagues, this isn't a disagreement about whether we should have across-the-board cuts. Nobody thinks across-the-board cuts are smart. This is a disagreement about how much we will invest in America, in our infrastructure, our people, and our national security.

The Toomey motion to recommit would require huge cuts—in this case, \$8.5 billion in cuts—but it provides no specifics. The THUD bill keeps America moving on land, at sea, and in the air. This motion to recommit stops America in its tracks. If this motion passes, roads will not be resurfaced, bridges will not be replaced or repaired, air traffic controllers will not be hired, and airports will not be upgraded. And all these cuts mean one thing—fewer jobs—fewer good American jobs.

The FAA modernization program will be delayed—again. This delay will cause more congestion at our airports and leave America further behind in the global economy. And these cuts mean safety will be put at risk, with fewer resources for the agencies charged with keeping us safe on the roads and in the air. These cuts today have consequences for years to come. This is true for our physical infrastructure, and it is true for our human infrastructure.

This motion is irresponsible and should be rejected. It demands \$8.5 billion in unspecified cuts, which would have terrible impacts on America's infrastructure, and on our efforts to create good jobs right here at home.

I believe our government should meet compelling human needs. It should provide for the national defense. And our government should make smart investments today so our Nation will grow stronger tomorrow.

This motion to recommit puts all of these essential functions at risk and would have terrible near-term and long-term impacts. I strongly oppose the Toomey motion to recommit.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to table the motion to recommit, offered by the Senator from Pennsylvania.

The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MANCHIN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 56, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 187 Leg.]

YEAS—56

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

NAYS—42

Alexander	Enzi	McCain
Ayotte	Fischer	McConnell
Barrasso	Flake	Paul
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Chambliss	Heller	Rubio
Chiesa	Hoeven	Scott
Coats	Inhofe	Sessions
Coburn	Isakson	Shelby
Corker	Johanns	Thune
Cornyn	Johnson (WI)	Toomey
Crapo	Kirk	Vitter
Cruz	Lee	Wicker

NOT VOTING—2

Hirono	Moran
--------	-------

The motion was agreed to.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I want to let all Senators know that we have made tremendous progress on the transportation and housing bill. We intend to make more progress next week.

We are going to stay in morning business this afternoon. We have a few issues we are working out through the weekend. We will be back at this next week.

I wish to thank all of the Members who have worked very hard with us this week, and I look forward to working with them again next week.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I too wish to comment on the progress we have made this week. We have been considering this appropriations bill under regular order. We have actually cleared several amendments today. We have had some votes. We have defeated a motion to recommit the bill to committee so that we can proceed to go forward.

Senator MURRAY and I will be here on Monday, ready and open for business. We will start sequencing amendments.

I hope Members on both sides of the aisle will approach this bill in a cooperative spirit with respect to further rights of Senators to offer their amendments and get votes, and that we will not see Members drawing lines in the sand or deciding that they are going to block action going forward because I think this bill could be a model of how we should operate.

Thank you, Mr. President.

AMENDMENT NO. 1744

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, on Tuesday, the Senate adopted an amendment offered by the junior Senator from Louisiana, which effectively imposes a lifetime ban on individuals who have been convicted of certain serious crimes from obtaining Federal housing assistance. Today is a new legislative day, and many of us in this body may have already moved on to the next meeting, the next issue, the next vote. But as I have reflected on that amendment, I am concerned the direction these types of amendments are taking us.

I had significant concerns with the lack of notice given to Senators about the amendment offered by Senator VITTER, and the speed with which a vote was scheduled. In the span of roughly 90 minutes, the amendment was filed, made pending, and set for a rollcall vote. This amendment was never considered by the relevant subcommittee in the markup of the bill, nor vetted for unintended consequences.

I am deeply concerned about what the sort of amendment offered by the junior Senator from Louisiana says about us as a Senate, and as a Nation. Following on the heels of a similar amendment offered by Senator VITTER on the farm bill, I expect that similar amendments will be filed and offered on virtually every future bill. This has to stop.

In our system of justice, when someone is convicted of a crime and serves a sentence, I believe that person deserves a second chance and an opportunity to reintegrate as a productive member of society. That is a principle of fairness and justice that I know not only from my days as a prosecutor, but through my time as chairman of the Judiciary Committee. It is a basic notion instilled in me from an early age, and reinforced by my faith. As I have long heard from the faith community, it is our moral obligation to rehabilitate and restore people who have committed crimes. We all have made mistakes, and I challenge any Member to come to the floor and say that they haven't themselves sought forgiveness or a second chance.

We have to get past the point where we are scoring political points on the backs of those who have committed crimes but have served their sentence. We must find a way to reintegrate them into society. That is how we make our communities safer.

No one in this body should want a convicted felon to become a repeat offender. And I assume no Senator wants

to punish the family members of an offender for crimes they did not commit. Yet that would be the effect of the Vitter amendments. Such measures have the effect of extending punishment beyond the original term; they would act as a lifetime ban and make it harder for ex-offenders and their families to get back on their feet. I reluctantly supported the amendment this week because Federal regulations already give housing officials the ability to keep dangerous criminals, sex offenders, and domestic abusers out of public housing. While this diminishes somewhat the overall impact of that amendment, the mandatory draconian nature of the Vitter amendment remains deeply troubling. As the senior Senator from Louisiana stated when Senator VITTER offered a similar amendment a few years ago, such an approach is simply "mean-spirited and counterproductive."

I am concerned that this is just the first of a series of similarly mean-spirited and counterproductive amendments. Now that the Senate has moved to impose a lifetime ban on food and housing assistance for some who have served their criminal sentences, what will be next? Will we next decide to take away education or employment assistance? Should we ban ex-offenders from libraries or public parks? The aggregate effect of such efforts will be to relegate an ex-offender and perhaps his or her family to a lifetime of poverty, homelessness, and isolation. That does not make us safer. It just makes us meaner and less compassionate. I hope we will stop using this political tactic and work together to help give people a second chance.

I know many Senators here share this goal. This is a complicated issue that demands thoughtful solutions, and we must work together if we have any hope of achieving real change. Public safety is about more than lengthy prison sentences. It also requires efforts to reintegrate into our communities those who have served their time. We know that reentry efforts reduce recidivism and we must be thoughtful when we take options off the table like we did this week.

I praise groups like the Conference of Catholic Bishops, Prison Fellowship, and the Sentencing Project who have worked tirelessly to help provide opportunities for individuals who have committed crimes, and to work toward the rehabilitation and restoration of their families. At the core of their work are fundamental notions of justice and compassion—the same principles that I hope will guide the work of the Senate as we go forward.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate go to a period of morning business, with the time equally divided between the minority and majority, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

The Senator from Florida.

FUNDING LEVELS

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, what we have seen is a recognition that these are tough times and we need some belt-tightening. But to go back to this level of sequestration is not the right thing to do because that is taking a meat cleaver approach, across-the-board, on cutting Federal programs. It is just not a responsible way of belt-tightening. Fortunately, this motion to recommit, to in essence go to the level of appropriations for Transportation and Housing and Urban Development that was to take it to the level of the House, which is considerably lower than what has come out of our Appropriations Committee in the Senate—fortunately, this motion to recommit was defeated.

Why do we want to cut funding, as the House bill does, to critical areas such as air traffic controllers?

It is dangerous, shortsighted, and we have been to this rodeo before. As a matter of fact, doesn't anyone remember that earlier in the year we had to fix the sequestration cuts that went into effect in the current fiscal year because it was cutting out all kinds of air traffic controllers and furloughed a number of them and closed the contract towers for the small airports? We had to reverse that. The public rose and said: This is not the right nor intelligent thing to do when it comes to the public safety.

In addition to compromising the safety of the traveling public, those air traffic cuts would have increased the flight delays by hours and hours and caused a lot of cancellations. Lo and behold, when the American traveling public saw that was exactly what was happening, they rose and they said: Enough. The body politic responded. Here was an attempt to repeat that. If we reduce the top line of funding for this next fiscal year on this bill, we are going to be right back in the same situation where we were last spring: scrambling to keep our aviation system functioning safely and again delaying the next generation of air traffic controllers which we are desperately trying to set up.

This House of Representatives sequestration budget—outside of aviation—is going to mean more crumbling roads and bridges, more families unable to put a roof over their heads, and our infrastructure will continue to be falling into further disrepair. So it is our responsibility to keep our country safe and the economy moving. Thank goodness we rejected this attempt to go back to the Dark Ages, but we are going to have more and more of this.

We have a bill that is coming up next Tuesday in a markup in the Commerce Committee of the NASA authorization bill. Here is a bill that has never been partisan. It is not only bipartisan, it has been nonpartisan. We have never