

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

OBAMACARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, later this morning in Maryland, the President will try again to sell his namesake health care plan to an increasingly skeptical public. He will claim that Americans will have lots and lots of options under ObamaCare. Unfortunately, keeping the plan you have and like will not be an option for a great many Americans.

It must be frustrating for the President that folks keep tuning out all of this happy talk. It is not hard to see, frankly, why Americans are not buying the spin. Over the past couple of years, I have participated in more than 50 health care town halls in my home State. I have met with health care professionals, doctors, and nurses. I have met with patients, and I have met with everyday Kentuckians, folks who are just concerned about providing health care for their families.

Many of the Kentuckians I have met with are a lot more knowledgeable about ObamaCare than the Washington intelligentsia might like to assume. In fact, more than a few of them seem to know more about the law than some of my colleagues who rammed it through Congress. Let's be clear. A person does not need a Ph.D. to understand that a law that drives costs up rather than down is a bad deal.

Kentuckians understand that the new government bureaucracies are less likely to lower costs and improve care than they are to just simply get in the way. So it is for these and so many other reasons that Kentuckians and people across this country are rightly concerned about ObamaCare.

Two nights ago, I had another great opportunity to connect on this issue with Kentuckians via a tele-town hall. I will tell you, the good people of my State are as concerned about this law as ever. One woman who participated said she thought she had been making it, but reports that she will now be forced to get a second job due in no small part to ObamaCare.

I have received more than 50,000 letters from constituents frustrated by ObamaCare as well. Single parents want to know what they are supposed to do when their hours are cut. Families want to know why Washington is OK with their insurance premiums going up by double digits. Small business owners want to know how they are ever going to comply with more than 20,000 pages of regulations. They want to know how they are going to be able to keep their employees insured, workforces growing, businesses expanding, and far too often, their doors open once this law comes on line.

One Kentuckian from Henderson wrote to me about the small trucking

business she and her husband own. They have got 13 employees, and they have always provided insurance for all of them. But their agent recently told them their premiums would go up, a 100-percent increase in premiums. Here is what she wrote to me:

We can't afford this, even if we raise the portion the employees pay. Then they wouldn't be able to afford it.

That was the experience reported to me by a woman and her husband running a small business in Henderson. These are the utterly predictable consequences of a law rammed through by a Democratic majority over the objections of the American people early on a cold, dark, Christmas Eve morning.

Until a few brave Democrats join our united Republican conference in voting to get rid of ObamaCare and starting over with a real bipartisan reform, we are going to continue hearing this same heart-wrenching stories over and over again.

We are going to keep seeing articles like the one that appeared earlier this week in Politico. It is titled, "Obamacare: One Blow After Another." I want to read the opening paragraph:

The ObamaCare that consumers will finally be able to sign up for next week is a long way from the health plan President Barack Obama first pitched to the nation.

Among other things the story notes that "millions of low-income Americans will not receive coverage" and "a growing number of workers won't get to keep their employer-provided coverage." Just yesterday, we heard the District of Columbia's exchange hit a huge bump in the road just days before launch. I would not be surprised if we see more stories of these types of problems popping up all across our country.

Let's talk about premiums too. A few weeks ago one veteran at a town hall wanted to know how this law could possibly be free. This veteran said: How can it possibly be free? Well, of course it is not free. He was right. Premiums are part of that story. Based on the administration's own data, along with some intrepid reporting, here is how much more a single 27-year-old can expect to pay under ObamaCare in Columbus, OH: 436 percent increase, for a 27-year-old under ObamaCare in Columbus, OH.

In Charlotte, NC, it is 523 percent; Little Rock, 613 percent more, 613 percent. Imagine for a moment. You are 27. You have done everything right. You have studied hard, graduated from college. You have student loan debt, car payments, car insurance payments, utility bills, rent, renter's insurance, 401(k) contributions, and health insurance, of course. Then there is gas, food, and maybe just maybe, occasionally having a little bit of fun.

Then you lose your employer-sponsored health plan thanks to ObamaCare. You get dumped into the exchanges. So jack up those monthly health insurance payments by 300, 500, even 600 percent. What are you supposed to do now, go uninsured and pay

penalty taxes? Stop contributing to your retirement account? You cannot very well give up the car you need to get to work, or food, or paying back your student loans.

None of this is a good option. They are not good for our society either. We should not be setting up disincentives for 27-year-olds to insure themselves or contribute to their own retirement. But this is the incentive structure that ObamaCare creates. When you consider how hard the Obama economy has hammered millennials already, it is hardly fair to whack them again, especially when so many are just barely hanging on as it is.

So this law is a mess. It needs to go. It is way past time to start over. As I have been saying all week, we need just five brave Democrats to join us to make that happen. So I hope some of our Democratic friends who voted for this law will look at themselves in the mirror and think, truly think, about whether protecting the President's pride is really more important than helping the American people, because we owe our constituents better than ObamaCare.

We can do better. With your help we can do that. With your help we can start over with the kind of real bipartisan reform that Kentuckians and Americans are actually hoping for.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MAKING CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H. J. Res. 59, which the clerk will report by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H. J. Res 59) making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2014, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid amendment No. 1974, to perfect the joint resolution.

Reid amendment No. 1975 (to amendment No. 1974), to change the enactment date.

Reid motion to commit the joint resolution to the Committee on Appropriations with instructions, Reid amendment No. 1976, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 1977 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 1976), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 1978 (to amendment No. 1977), of a perfecting nature.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time will be controlled in hour increments, with the majority controlling the first hour and alternating thereafter.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, the families that I talk to in my home

State of Washington are not interested in partisan back and forth that we see so much of here in Washington, DC. They are thinking about how they are going to get their bills paid. They are wondering when and if they will be able to save enough to retire. They are hoping that they are going to be able to give their children a better future.

They, rightfully, expect us to focus on strengthening the economy and creating jobs which will make it easier for them to reach those important goals. We have had an opportunity, many opportunities over the last few months, to move forward on legislation like the Senate budget and the appropriations bills that were approved in Senator MIKULSKI's committee, which could remove some of the uncertainty that is putting a drag on our economic recovery.

But instead we are here on the floor of the Senate, to debate a temporary—a temporary stopgap measure to fund the government just days away from a possible shutdown. I think all but a few of my colleagues would agree with me that these circumstances are far from ideal. So as we work to pass this bill, this temporary stopgap bill, and continue negotiations on the longer term budget deal, I think it is really important to consider exactly how we got to this point, what this continuing resolution means in the context of ongoing discussions and what needs to happen for us to reach a more comprehensive agreement that works for our families and for our economy.

As we all remember, if Democrats and many Republicans as well had their way, we could have begun a bipartisan budget conference between the House and Senate months ago and prevented this chaos. When the Senate passed a budget, I was very hopeful that both sides would come together and work out an agreement that would end this cycle of governing by crisis and allow us to focus on creating jobs and economic growth.

Democrats have come to the floor 18 times now—18 times—to try to begin a bipartisan conference with the House on our budget resolution. Many Republicans thought this made sense. They agreed. We should at least sit down and try to get a deal. But as we all know now, an extreme minority of Republicans saw things differently, and they believed they would have more leverage if they created a crisis—like the one we are approaching now—than a few months when there was not a looming deadline.

Those Tea Party Republicans, backed by the Republican leadership, stood and said no to the bipartisan budget negotiations 18 times, against the wishes of Members on both sides of the aisle.

So, today, when we could have been focusing on the real challenges Americans are facing, we are instead focused on preventing the Tea Party from shutting down the government, all because Tea Party Republicans want another

shot at dismantling the Affordable Care Act, which, by the way, was passed by a super majority, upheld by the Supreme Court, and was a major issue the American people weighed in on in the 2012 election.

In the House continuing resolution, tea party Republicans are fighting to take away health care coverage for millions of Americans and get rid of crucial services such as prevention and wellness visits for Medicare patients, prescription drug savings for our seniors for which we fought so hard, and coverage for over 92,000 Americans who have preexisting conditions.

This is absurd. It is a nonstarter.

There is no way Democrats are going to give in to these demands that are so clearly harmful to the American people. The same is true of the fight the tea party Republicans are trying to pick over the debt limit.

Some Republicans claim it is typical to threaten a catastrophic and unprecedented default in order to extract political concessions, but the fact is the opposite is true. The vast majority of debt limit increases in the last three decades occurred independent of efforts to reduce the deficit or put in place budget reforms.

While Democrats are more than happy to negotiate on the budget—and we have been trying to do that for the last 6 months—we do stand firmly behind President Obama and are not going to negotiate about whether the United States of America pays its bills. We believe families and businesses should not have to deal with any more of that uncertainty.

Honestly, I do think a lot of Republicans agree. More than a dozen Republicans have spoken to discourage the tea party from starting a pointless debate over defunding the Affordable Care Act in the bill to prevent a government shutdown. I do know quite a few Republicans agree. Brinksmanship over the debt ceiling is the height of irresponsibility.

Given all the infighting we have seen recently, governing by crisis clearly isn't working for Republicans. It is certainly not helping Democrats make the investments we feel very strongly our country needs to succeed in the 21st century, and it has put a completely unnecessary burden on our families and our economy. It seems the only ones benefiting from this perpetual crisis mode are tea party Republicans, and I see no reason to keep doing them any favors.

I call on the House Republicans to cut the tea party loose, give up these partisan games, and pass the Senate's bill to prevent the government shutdown. This bill is, by no means, a permanent fix. It is temporary. It continues the cuts from sequestration that are already in place and locked into law until we get a bipartisan deal.

It will keep our government operating while those negotiations continue. This is critical, because even though some might not be able to see

it in Washington, DC, a government shutdown will have serious consequences for families across this country.

My home State of Washington is home to more than 100,000 uniformed civilian and defense employees at places such as Joint Base Lewis-McChord and Fairchild Air Force Base. If this government shuts down, these men and women will still have to go to work the next day, but they will not get paid for it.

Thousands of civilian defense employees in places such as Tacoma, Whidbey Island, and Spokane would be forced to do the same and thousands more could face furloughs. These hard-working Americans and families across my State and the country are already dealing with the consequences of gridlock in Washington, DC. They are dealing with the across-the-board cuts from sequestration, which continue to pile up.

Hundreds of thousands of our defense employees, who now have to wonder about the effects of a shutdown, have been furloughed already and have taken pay cuts. Crucial supports and opportunities for vulnerable families and communities, from Head Start to Meals On Wheels, have been slashed. Sequestration is crippling our ability to plan for the future and make the kinds of investments in research, education, and infrastructure that will help our workers succeed. I hear about the impact of these arbitrary cuts whenever I am home in Washington State. I know every single one of my colleagues has heard similar stories. The cuts are only going to get worse with time and they simply have to go.

When we send this legislation back to the House, Republicans have to put an end to the tea party temper tantrums and pass our bill without any gimmicks and games. After we do that, I hope we can leave the tea party brinksmanship behind so those of us on both sides of the aisle who believe in commonsense bipartisanship can move forward with negotiations on a desperately needed longer term deal.

In those negotiations, I am going to continue fighting for an agreement that ends this governing by crisis and supports our families and economies by replacing sequestration with smarter deficit reduction, evenly divided between spending cuts and new revenue from the wealthiest Americans and biggest corporations. I am fully aware the Republicans have their priorities as well. I have never said reaching an agreement would be easy, but I know many Democrats and Republicans are sick of brinksmanship and crisis. I know they understand, as do we, that compromise is part of our job description. I truly believe if those Republicans work with Democrats, we can reach that critically needed bipartisan agreement we have been working toward.

I have heard some of the tea party Republicans here in Washington, DC,

dismiss the damaging and costly disruptions a shutdown could cause. Some even seem to think that a default wouldn't be that bad, despite warnings from countless economists that default would, in fact, be catastrophic.

Americans across the country who are still fighting to get back on their feet don't have the luxury of dismissing these risks because they are the ones who are going to be affected. They are rightfully expecting us to work together and reach a fair budget agreement that offers hard-working families more opportunity and more security. I believe putting the gimmicks and games aside and keeping the government open is a necessary step toward that goal.

I am going to vote for this temporary continuing resolution and against the tea party's dysfunction and brinkmanship. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do the same.

Part of the reason I am confident we can reach an agreement is because I know what we can do when we do work together. During this past summer, I worked with Senator COLLINS to write the transportation and housing appropriations bill for the coming fiscal year. It included priorities of Members on both side of the aisle, and it was approved in our committee with the support of six Republicans. That bill received strong bipartisan support because it helps families, helps communities, and it gets workers back on the job. It was fiscally responsible, and it laid down a strong foundation for long-term and broad-based economic growth.

Our bill stands in stark contrast to the across-the-board sequestration cuts we have been operating under for the last 6 months. Rather than slashing crucial investments in our infrastructure, our bill supports critical transportation projects across the country. It fully funds the highway and transit grant programs that allow our States and local agencies to keep our transportation system working.

Rather than leaving our cities and towns that have been hard hit by the recession to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, our bill strongly supports community development grants which offer the tools to strengthen small businesses and local economies.

Instead of asking the most vulnerable to bear the burden of spending cuts, our bill funds a critical piece of the safety net, housing assistance and homeless shelters, for millions of struggling families and seniors who are just one step away from the street.

As any business owner will tell you, it makes no sense to slash the investments that allow one to compete and prosper in the long term only to make the numbers work in the short term. The investments that are laid out in our bill are great examples. They make our country stronger by supporting job creation, economic growth, and by keeping our commitment to help those most in need get back on their feet.

The need for these investments far exceeds the resources of the bill. The bill Senator COLLINS and I have written keeps our commitment to our States, communities, and makes sure the agencies in the bill can meet their statutory responsibilities. That will not be the case as sequestration continues for yet another year, which would make these commitments impossible to keep.

It is important to note that the housing and transportation bill addresses challenges our country faces today. A full-year bill enables Congress to adjust funding levels to meet current needs and to implement new policies that address the problems that have come to light in recent years. This is something that does not happen when we opt for long-term continuing resolutions.

A great example is we know that one of every four of our bridges is considered deficient by the Federal Highway Administration. Our bill includes funding to repair or replace deficient bridges across the country in order to protect the safety and reliability of our transportation system.

If we simply extend the funding levels we debated 2 years ago, then those investments and many others that create jobs, protect public safety, and support the most vulnerable will be lost. We will also lose the improvements our bill makes to programs, including reforms that address concerns Members have raised the last time the transportation and housing bill came to the Senate floor.

Our bill includes important section 8 reforms that will reduce costs and create efficiencies. It contains reforms to improve oversight of public housing agencies and boards, ensures accountability for property owners who don't maintain the quality of their HUD-assisted housing, and it increases accountability in the CDBG Program.

It is very important that we enact those reforms and do the important oversight of Federal programs and agencies that the public expects us to do. For all these reasons, we need to pass this continuing resolution to keep the government running. Then we have to move forward on a longer term budget agreement that replaces sequestration with more responsible deficit reduction, a bill that puts our families and economies first, and allows us to enact real, thoughtful solutions to our country's challenges, instead of these stopgap measures that do not move us forward.

Investing in our families, communities, and our long-term economic growth shouldn't be partisan. The bipartisan work that went into the housing and transportation bill and the strong support it received in committee proves they don't have to be.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise in support of the Democratic amendment to the House continuing resolu-

tion. We have offered this amendment because its content offers a clear path forward to do three things:

No. 1, avoid a government shutdown; No. 2, lay the groundwork for ending sequester for hopefully the next 2 years, which means finding a way to reduce our public debt in each of those years by \$100 million; and, No. 3, get rid of the theatrical veto-bait-provocative amendments that are in the House bill calling for the defunding of the President's Affordable Care Act and also for the way they structure public debt.

We offered this amendment because we think it is the best way forward. The American people expect us to do our job. It is Thursday morning, 10:45, and we are only now getting on the amendment. Why? Because for the last several days we had to put up with theatrical politics, rather than get the job done and begin deliberation. We have gone from being the greatest deliberative body in the world to the greatest delay body in the world. The American people are fed up, and so are many of us in the Senate. When all is said and done, more gets said than gets done. This is the time to act.

We have an amendment on the floor that is open for full debate. I am absolutely for this, but we need to do the business of government to be able to do our job. We must replace the sequester and allow a 2014 Omnibus appropriations to move forward before the end of the year. That sentence alone shows what is wrong in communicating with the American people. Factually, it is accurate. It is absolutely truthful. But nobody understands sequester. Nobody understands the word omnibus and nobody understands what we are doing or, most of all, what we are not doing.

Sequester was an invention by the Congress, working with the President, to say that we will reduce public debt over a 10-year period by \$110 billion a year, do it in a balanced way—strategic cuts, a review of mandatory spending and additional revenue—and if we fail to do that, sequester triggers, which means across-the-board cuts—50 percent in Defense, 50 percent in domestic.

The problem with across-the-board cuts is that it cuts good programs as well as programs that are dated, duplicative, or dysfunctional. I oppose that. I would rather make strategic cuts arrived at by the committee I chair—the Appropriations Committee.

For the last year, our committee has done its due diligence. Our job is to review programs and to put them in the Federal checkbook and bring them to the floor for debate, for amendment, and then for passage and sending them to the President. What we want to do in our amendment is to change the date of December 15 in the House bill to November 15. That will keep the pressure on to get the deal needed so Congress can get to work and enact 12 fiscally responsible appropriations bills, lay the groundwork for canceling sequester for 2 years, and invest in the

needs of America today and the needs of the future.

This amendment is important for two reasons. It prevents a government shutdown. The President has already said he will veto any bill that defunds ObamaCare; he will veto any bill that undermines the full faith and credit of the United States. So you can huff and puff for 21 hours, but you can't blow ObamaCare away. I repeat: You can huff and puff for 21 hours, but you can't be the magic dragon that blows the Affordable Care Act away. So if we pass the House continuing resolution, the President will veto it, which means more wasted time in getting the job done, and our agencies, instead of doing their job and fulfilling their missions—making wise use of taxpayer money and being responsive to the American people—will be spending their energy in planning for a shutdown, which amounts to a slamdown.

The President can sign the continuing resolution and keep the government open if we pass the Senate amendment, which will keep the government open until November 15 and gives us 1 month to arrive at pragmatic solutions. It cancels the provocative elements in it—the elimination of ObamaCare and the public debt—and also lays the groundwork for moving forward.

There will be a few things that will happen if we can't enact a clean continuing resolution, meaning keeping the government open by October 1. There are consequences here. This isn't just about show business. The government has to be open for business. An estimated 800,000 civil servants will be sent home or furloughed. What does that mean? If you are an FBI agent during this time, you will be on your job, you will be at your duty station, but when you are working, you won't get paid. You will get an IOU. What does that say to people who put themselves in the line of fire?

Shutting down the government means we will affect crucial research and lifesaving discoveries that will be put on hold. The NIH clinical center won't be able to admit new patients for new clinical trials. Weather forecasters, food safety inspectors, and those involved with public safety will be at their duty stations, but they are going to be earning IOUs and looking forward to across-the-board cuts, which means they could be furloughed when we have already told them there will be no cost-of-living increase for 3 years.

We want to recruit the best and the brightest for the FBI, to oversee our drug approval process, or to be border control agents—work that is dirty and dangerous out there. What are we doing here?

We show a contempt for the people who work for the government, and that also shows contempt for the people who pay for the government. Our government should be working as hard as the people who pay the taxes to support the government. The way they work

hard is to put the money in there for the mission and purpose of these agencies, insist they do their jobs, and then we insist we get rid of the dated, the duplicative, and the dysfunctional. We have laid the groundwork for doing this. In fact, we have been doing it all year long.

I chair the Appropriations Committee. It is made up of 12 subcommittees. You will be hearing from my subcommittee chairmen throughout the day. I am so proud of them. For the last year they have listened. They have taken the President's budget and they have analyzed it. They have conducted hearings. They have reviewed it, they have scrubbed it—as I said, they have analyzed it and squeezed it. I am proud of them. Out of what they have done they are ready to bring to the Senate floor legislation that makes wise use of taxpayer dollars. They have listened at every single hearing to inspectors general, where we learn about the dated, dysfunctional, or duplicative, and they are ready to move. But we cannot move if we continue having theatrical show-down politics.

This will have grave impact. When we hear shutdown politics and eventually slowdown through sequester, what we are facing here will have a negative impact on our economy. It will add to the uncertainty for businesses to make wise decisions. It will also slow down, in a way, the impact to jobs because we fund infrastructure and other needed programs. It will impact public safety and it will impact future generations because of the big hit on research and development that comes up with the new ideas for the new jobs.

Later on today I will be talking about the NIH, which is in my State. Yes, the NIH. Because of NIH funding, thousands of people work in Maryland but thousands of people are working for the United States of America. And at the end of the day, they are trying to come up with cures—cures that can be opportunities to create—so we are talking about saving lives, doing the basic research that then helps us get those jobs in biomedical and pharmaceuticals, and also to improve the lives of our people, improve our economy, and get the job done.

I will have more to say, but right now I want to turn to Senator PRYOR, who is the chair of the agriculture subcommittee. He is a new chairman, but he is not new to getting the job done. In fact, we refer to him as "Tightwad" PRYOR. He has looked at the programs, he has analyzed how we are truly going to get value for the dollar and at the same time feed the hungry here and around the world, and also make sure that important, vibrant sector of our economy—the agricultural industry—is viable.

I yield the floor for Senator PRYOR.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the Agriculture appropriations bill, but I have to start by thanking our chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee. She has al-

ready done so many good things for that committee and for the Senate. Obviously, she has been a great Senator for the State of Maryland, and we see that greatness as she leads the Appropriations Committee. I think all the members of the Appropriations Committee, both Democrats and Republicans, would like to thank her for her service and her leadership.

Today I do want to talk about the agriculture appropriations bill and the impact a government shutdown would have on the activities it supports and the negative ripple effects—and there would be many negative ripple effects—that would come to our Nation's economy if that in fact does happen.

When people hear the phrase Agriculture appropriations, they naturally think about farmers, and that is certainly a key part of what is in our agriculture sector and in this bill, but that is certainly not all it does. The bill helps farmers with operating loans and conservation projects and marketing—all those are very important—but it also funds programs that benefit rural communities to supply clean drinking water for people in rural areas, and housing. It supports nutrition programs. It helps kids all across the country. It also not only involves food but the international food programs—programs such as Food for Peace, et cetera. It also has the Food and Drug Administration in it, and that is critically important. We need a strong, robust FDA.

This bill has been very bipartisan. This bill is about investing in our future. What we do here in this bill is actually try to save money. We understand there are budget constraints. We get that. We want to lead the way by responsible governing, making sure we do things in the right way by making smart, targeted investments and saving taxpayer dollars by eliminating redundancy and streamlining loan programs and doing things to make the USDA and the FDA spend their money wisely.

At the same time we are trying very hard not to reduce any services to hard-working Americans, and we are also certainly trying not to hurt any industries in this country.

Sequestration is already taking a toll on many of these programs. If we look at the cuts these agencies have had to undergo in the last 2 or 3 years, we already see a strain on their budgets and the difficulties there. A government shutdown would wreak havoc on our economy.

I think I speak for most Americans, certainly most Arkansans, when I say I am currently undergoing shutdown fatigue. We are tired of this. We are tired of the drama. We are tired of, honestly, the other Chamber embarrassing the Congress and engaging in these dramatics. People are just tired of it. When I am home in Arkansas, whether I am filling up at the gas station or I am at the grocery or at the ball game or wherever I happen to be, people

come up to me and say: What is wrong with Congress?

In fact, I was at a major fundraising event for cancer research in Little Rock on Friday evening. I bet I had a dozen people come up to me and say: What is going on with the House of Representatives? Why do they continue to do this? And I agree. It is hard to watch. It is not good for the Congress. As I say, I have shutdown fatigue. We don't need any more drama. We need to get back to the business of governing. Governing isn't always easy. We have to make hard decisions. That is why we run for these jobs. We run for these jobs to work to get things done and to try and make good and wise decisions for our people and for our Nation. That is the way it is supposed to work.

I think my colleagues will agree with me when I say that strengthening our economy and creating jobs is our No. 1 priority right now. We look at the recession we have been through and we see the hardships folks have gone through. Strengthening our economy and creating jobs is our No. 1 priority, and this bill will help us do it. Again, it is hard to get to that No. 1 priority when we have some of the shenanigans going on here in the U.S. House with some of these manufactured crises they have created.

What I want to say about agriculture is it is one of the core strengths in the U.S. economy.

We do a lot of things well. Our economy does a lot of things well. But no one does agriculture better than America. It is something we should be proud of. We do it so well, we probably take it for granted sometimes, but it is a core strength in the U.S. economy.

If we want one little bit of evidence for that, look at our trade deficit. Everyone in this Chamber knows our trade deficit is not good. We know it is bad. We know it is ugly. We want to change that. We want to make it better. But our trade deficit would be horrendous if it were not for agriculture. That is our No. 1 export. This is something we need to be mindful of: Agriculture is very good for the U.S. economy.

Take something as simple as raising chickens. That is not very exciting and a lot of people don't understand the first thing about it, but think about what impact it has on the States and the counties and the communities where this happens.

First, someone has to build the chicken house, someone delivers the chicks, someone delivers the feed. Someone has to maintain the trucks that deliver the chicks and the feed. Someone has to generate the electricity, someone has to supply the water. Someone is paying taxes on all this, and it is helping local schools and local police and fire departments, et cetera. Someone at some point picks up the chickens and delivers them to the processing plant, and it all starts over. Someone has to build the plant. This has a huge ripple effect on the

U.S. economy and on everything about agriculture. It is not just the farmers, it is a ripple effect and a positive effect on the economy.

Take the example of Arkansas, and I am sure this is true in many other States. I haven't looked at the numbers, but I bet this is true in 35 or 40 other States, and it is our largest industry. We love having our Fortune 500 companies there and we have several that are based in Arkansas. We have more that have some sort of facility or plant or site of some sort. We love that and we are proud of that. But agriculture is our No. 1 industry. One in six jobs in Arkansas is tied to agriculture. It has a \$17 billion net effect on the economy and it is 25 percent of our State's economy.

I was speaking with DEBBIE STABE-NOW not too long ago. She said, We are all known for manufacturing and heavy manufacturing in Michigan. And they are. But, she said, our second largest industry is agriculture. She is chairman of the Agriculture Committee, and she fought very hard to get the farm bill back on track, and much to her credit she has moved that ball farther down the field than I think anyone else could.

Another reason I want the House to stop with this manufactured crisis and follow the Senate's lead to pass a commonsense, comprehensive farm bill—and I don't say that lightly. I have a lot of respect for the House. Certainly they are a separate institution within this branch of government. I certainly have a lot of respect for that and their position, and their role is critical. But they need to follow the Senate's lead. They need to follow the Senate and do what the Senate has done. We are trying to be responsible. We are trying to show leadership. We are trying to get things back on track.

But when I mentioned Arkansas a moment ago, we are not alone. There are over 3 million farmers in the United States, and as a nation agriculture employs about 22 million people. The Agriculture appropriations bill would allow us to build on this economic powerhouse that we have in this country. This bill helps farmers get started. It helps farmers increase their yield and it helps them become better stewards of the land. Funding these programs creates jobs in rural America. If you haven't been there recently, rural America needs jobs.

Take a program such as the USDA Rural Development Program. They create construction jobs. They rebuild hometowns and schools and other facilities, and they keep our rural communities strong. We don't want the Tale of Two Nations here where you have urban and suburban America, and rural America is left behind. We want rural America to be strong as well.

Almost every Member of this body has sizeable rural portions in their State. We want those areas to grow and be prosperous. So in this bill we provide guaranteed loans for rural busi-

nesses to let them grow and to get small and emerging businesses where they need to be. We also provide money for creation and expansion of businesses in rural settings. A government shutdown would stop these programs. It would bring these programs to a dead halt in rural America. Why break the momentum? Our economy is just turning the corner. We do not need to do this. We can't forget the role that Agriculture appropriations bill plays in keeping our families and communities safe.

One thing I have to say is the Food and Drug Administration does a great job. Again, a lot of people may take them for granted because they do such a good job, but we have the safest food supply in the world and we have the safest drug supply in the world. Do we want to jeopardize that? No. Please, let's not jeopardize that. Why are we playing games with people's food and medicine? It makes no sense at all. It is an unbelievable statistic, but in Arkansas alone the FDA oversees 1,300 facilities, just in my small State. They also have presence there with the National Center for Toxicological Research in Jefferson County that employs about 500 people. They do great things there, and it is a very important, vital part of what FDA does. We are certainly proud to have them.

Arkansas has 85 poultry and 50 meat processing plants. These are inspected by the Food Safety Inspection Service, FSIS. Last year my good friend, Senator BLUNT from Missouri, and I worked very hard with the chairwoman of the committee and others in this Chamber to make sure those meat inspectors stayed on the job; because the day that they miss, that jeopardizes thousands of private sector jobs and productivity and disruption to a very efficient market. So we were able to do that. Here again, all that is in jeopardy because of the games they are playing in the House on this issue.

The progress we made when it comes to infrastructure would also stop. We don't want to see that. We want to lay that foundation for future economic growth. We all know infrastructure creates jobs. Clean water, waste disposal systems, broadband expansion we have been fighting for, not just in rural Arkansas but in every rural State.

These investments are critical to growing our Nation's businesses and they are critical to local communities. This helps all Americans.

The programs I have talked about today are supported by Members on both sides of the aisle. When we moved this through the committee, we got a 23-6 vote. Senator BLUNT and I worked together, hand in hand, on every single provision. We produced a better bill because we did work together. It is a good solid case for bipartisanship and how to get things done. It is one of the strongest bipartisan votes we have had in the committee so far.

Nonetheless, I urge my colleagues to please follow the example of the Appropriations Committee generally, but the

Agriculture appropriations subcommittee specifically. Let's come together and let's do what is best for our economy and for the American people.

Before I yield the floor, I thank Senator MIKULSKI for her leadership. It is not always easy to lead Senators. It is sometimes like trying to herd cats, but nonetheless we are responding to her leadership. She is doing great things, not just for the State of Maryland but for the country and the Senate.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT *pro tempore*. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I will begin where Senator PRYOR left off, and that is to commend our chairwoman for her extraordinary leadership—not only on behalf of her constituents but for the Nation. These are very difficult times, and we all feel much more confident because of her leadership, because of her commitment, because of her incredible and energetic advocacy for commonsense solutions, in terms of not just her work on appropriations but in terms of the way we conduct ourselves in the Senate. We are fortunate to have her leadership.

Along with many of my colleagues I am here to address the looming fiscal deadlines, and, more importantly, how to keep our economy growing and increasing jobs. That is why I believe we were sent here, not to engage in some of these procedural arguments, not to challenge the basic presumptions and the history of our country—which show that, with few exceptions, we have always managed to keep our government open, and with virtually no exceptions we have paid our bills. Yet today we are consumed by these debates when most every American in every corner of this country is asking us: What about our jobs? What about growth? What about the future for our children? So we have to refocus on growing our economy and investing in our country. A big part of that is to fund our government and to pay our debts.

Let me start by pointing out that denying health insurance to 30 million Americans doesn't help the economy and it doesn't create jobs. It will do quite the opposite—it will set us back. We had substantial debate and we passed legislation; the Supreme Court of the United States declared the legislation constitutional, and we are going forward now, as most Americans want us to do, to deploy it, to fix it where it needs to be fixed, but not to use it as a political wedge for purely political means. We are for the first time about to achieve the dream of many people in many decades—that every American will have affordable access to health care; and, by the way, to do what other nations have been able to do and reduce the cost of health care so it's affordable, not just today but in the generations ahead. I think the idea that you would threaten a government shutdown to try to defeat this objective is unfortunate and inappropriate.

We are facing two fiscal deadlines, and they can be reduced to very simple

questions: Do we fund the government? Do we pay the Nation's bills? My answer, and the answer of the vast majority of constituents, is: Yes, we do. We have to.

We understand we have to have an economy that works and a government that helps that economy work. We have to be efficient and effective. But we simply can't leave to the mercies of the market and fate what happens in our economy. We have to take purposeful action. That means we have to have a government that is prepared and able and has the resources to act.

If Republicans force a shutdown of the government, it will have extraordinarily adverse consequences to thousands of Rhode Island workers, my constituents, and people all across this country. It would hurt our economic growth. Rather than doing this, we should be working to expand our growth. We should be doing more to get people back to work.

But, instead, we have heard Republicans from both Chambers talking about another round of brinkmanship. We saw this in August 2011, and the results there were palpable. It set back our economy. It suppressed job creation. It took what looked like growing economic momentum and it deflated that momentum. Our credit rating was downgraded for the first time in anyone's recollection and perhaps in history. It was a shortsighted political game that hurt people all across this country. Yet Republicans are here again, apparently prepared to play the game. People do not want us to gamble with their futures, their children's futures. They want us to be helping them, both sides investing in those futures in a positive and collaborative way.

But we are back arguing over whether to pay existing bills. Will we pay our bills by voting to raise the debt ceiling? Will we keep the government open and working so we can help people who need help, so we continue to research issues, so we continue to innovate, so we continue to build, literally, the country? We believe we must do this.

This March, Senate Democrats passed a budget that set spending levels, responsibly replaced the sequester, reduced the deficit, and included a \$100 billion targeted jobs and infrastructure package that would start creating new jobs quickly, begin repairing the worst of our crumbling roads and bridges, and help train our workers to fill 21st century jobs.

The Republican-controlled House also passed a budget. It is in stark contrast to ours, but they have a budget too. The basic constitutional approach, the basic procedural approach is to bring those two budgets to conference, to iron out the differences, and to have a plan to go forward to fund the government.

But we cannot do that because repeatedly Republicans here have objected to going to conference. This is ironic since the refrain we heard sev-

eral years ago from Republicans was "the Senate Democrats don't have a budget, they don't have a budget, et cetera." This of course was a political refrain; it ignored the fact that in the Budget Control Act of 2011 we actually set budget limits and effectively had a budget. But now the Republican refrain is sort of, "never mind, they have a budget," and Senate Republicans object to conferencing the Senate and House budgets because they do not want the Congress to have a budget.

We need to pass a budget. We need to responsibly deal with sequestration. We have to create jobs and strengthen the middle class.

Last Friday, the House Republicans played their latest card in this gambit, which they have extended over several years, to achieve their political goals by holding the economy hostage. This time they want to defund health care reform as a condition of keeping the government open—indeed, a tactic that I believe even some Republicans in this body have rejected, and I think sensibly rejected.

There is no doubt if the House position prevails it will hurt our economy, it will reduce revenue, it will waste taxpayers' dollars. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the shutdowns of the mid-1990s reduced GDP by half a percent. Those shutdowns during the Clinton administration, again prompted by a Republican political agenda in the House, not an economic agenda, cost Americans jobs and growth. It is estimated every week the government shuts down it will cost the economy about \$30 billion. This is a very expensive political gambit—something that should be rejected on its face but also rejected because of the harm, the demonstrable economic harm, it will do to the country. If you do care about jobs and the economy, the last thing you want to do is shut down the government.

First of all, it eliminates directly a lot of people who work for the Federal Government—who pay taxes, who provide critical services. The secondary effect is they cannot do their job so economic activity stalls. Then the tertiary effect is that the local vendors in the community who rely on government contracts lose their business. It is a downward spiral. Everyone here, particularly my colleagues, the chairmen and women of the appropriations subcommittees, recognize this.

Senator PRYOR was articulate about some of the effects on the agricultural sector. I have the privilege of chairing the Interior appropriations subcommittee. A shutdown would be very disruptive. For example, lease sales and permits for oil, gas and coal and other minerals on Federal lands would be stopped. Processing onshore oil and gas drilling applications would be stopped. Processing applications for permits to drill offshore will stop. Review and approval of offshore exploration and development plans will stop. What will be the effect? This will delay

revenue, obviously, both to the Federal Government and for the private sector, as those private entrepreneurs who are out there investing their own capital to try to develop natural resources and provide them to the marketplace will lose out too.

Another example, public access to recreation on Federal lands will virtually cease. The national parks, national monuments, and national wildlife refuges will be closed to visitors. Campgrounds, lodging, visitor centers, marinas, food services, and other concessions will be closed, with thousands of people without jobs. Businesses that operate in the parks or as outdoor outfitters will not be able to access permitted areas.

If you go to any national park there is typically around it a group of small businessmen and women who provide backpacking gear, who provide rental of rafts and boats and outdoor equipment. What happens when the park closes? Their business goes to zero, practically. That is a consequence that is predictable, in fact, inevitable in the event of a shutdown.

There is another aspect to this government shutdown too. While many Federal employees will be furloughed—again directly losing their pay, not contributing their tax dollars to the national economy—there are some who will not be. In the Interior Department alone, thousands of Federal workers will continue their jobs in order to protect life and property, but they will not be paid. This will include the Park Police. They were one of the first responders a few days ago to the Navy Yard shootings. Typical of their ethic of service and dedication to the country, they risked their lives, rushed to that place to try to protect fellow Americans. Those men and women of the Park Police will still stand guard, but they will not be paid.

It also includes park rangers who provide valuable safety. It would include tribal law enforcement officers for our tribal police departments, tribal child protection services, and the oil and gas inspectors who have to go out and make sure existing operations are being conducted in a technically appropriate way.

Turning to the EPA, Administrator Gina McCarthy has said, in her words: “EPA effectively shuts down with only a core group of individuals who are there in the event of a significant emergency.”

EPA is planning to furlough approximately 95 percent of its total workforce. Staff will not be reviewing air, water, and hazardous waste permit applications or writing such permits. This will slow construction of new facilities and major improvements to existing ones, impacting jobs and impacting industry's overall willingness to plan investments.

This could shrink construction in the United States, it could halt major construction projects, because you can't just take out the permitting process,

or nullify it; these projects cannot go forward legally without permits, permits from EPA, permits from local regulators. We could have a huge construction contraction. We will have projects that have been planned, that are going forward, that will be put on hold, and it will ripple through the economy.

EPA, for example, also will stop certifying that manufacturers are complying with all vehicle emission standards and without EPA certification, automakers will have a difficult time selling products in the United States.

One of the great examples of what the President's leadership has done, the revitalization of the American automobile industry, could be jeopardized simply because they cannot have their vehicles certified by the EPA, which has basically closed.

A shutdown compounds the hidden costs of the sequester. Sequestration is an inefficient and blunt instrument. It forces the Agency to make drastic decisions that frustrate that mission, that do not allow them to prioritize their work, and it frustrates our work here and throughout the United States. It will complicate and compound our life going forward.

We are already feeling—put aside for the moment a potential government shutdown—the effects of the pending sequestration. We are seeing forced furloughs up in Rhode Island at the Newport Navy Base and other facilities and we are seeing the ripple effect of that. The local businesses are seeing demand go down, revenues go down. Their financial stability is being threatened. Rhode Islanders who have been laid off in private enterprises, through no fault of their own, are seeing their unemployment insurance cut by the sequester already. The average weekly benefit of \$377 is being cut by \$46. The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training estimates 6,000 to 7,000 Rhode Islanders are being affected, taking \$1.4 million per month directly out of our economy. Our economy is at 9.1 percent unemployment. This is something that is causing pain and hardship to families throughout my State. The sequester is cutting back on the very modest benefits that they might be receiving after losing employment.

Head Start is an extraordinarily valuable program that serves more than 2,400 children in my State. For fiscal year 2013, the sequestration has reduced funding by \$1.3 million, which is a big number when it comes to the smallest state in the Union. To manage these sequestration cuts, staff have been laid off, transportation has been reduced, as have other support services. Even with those savings, 370 slots—children, don't call them slots—children will not gain access to Head Start. That means in many cases their parents cannot continue to work because they cannot leave their child alone, and the problem becomes more and more complicated. These problems have profound implications and they reach very far across the spectrum.

Then there is one other point I wish to make. Some people are saying sequestration is bad, but we just have to deal with the defense aspects of it because that is the most important thing—that these other programs, they can go away. Norm Augustine is one of the premier leaders in the defense industry. He is former chairman of Lockheed Martin, former Secretary of the Army. He served on so many different boards as one of the great public servants as well as one of the great industrial leaders—National Academy of Engineering, Defense Science Board, American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. In his speech recently, Mr. Augustine said that much of the nondefense spending people are dismissing as unimportant is more critical to our national security or as critical as some of the defense programs. He talked about how today's youngest generation will be the first in history to be less well educated than their parents, if trends continue. They are likely to be less healthy, particularly if we do not continue to support the health care improvements of the Affordable Care Act. One of the startling discoveries is that the military, according to Mr. Augustine, is claiming that 70 percent of today's young people are ineligible for military service because of mental, physical, and moral shortcomings.

The mental and physical shortcomings are a function of two things—education and health care. Republicans are proposing to say: Let's cut them. Let's defund the Affordable Care Act. Who will be the beneficiaries of the Affordable Care Act and better Head Start and better education? Probably those 70 percent of the young people who cannot qualify to be recruits in the Army. So if you think we have a problem of national defense, we do have a problem of defense, but it is not simply solved by buying more platforms, more ships, more planes; it is by having a generation of Americans who can stand and serve.

I could go on, but I simply want to say we are in a situation where we have to basically do what we have always done, stood and said: We are going to keep the government moving. We are going to make choices about priorities, but we are going to keep our government open. We will debate those choices and we will debate those priorities and we will come to a conclusion and we will move forward and we are going to pay the debts we already accumulated.

The American people should understand this is not like an initial offer of a debt security.

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

Mr. REED. I ask unanimous consent for an additional 30 seconds.

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

Mr. REED. We are not going out there and saying: Listen, let us borrow

some more money so we can spend this new money. We are just trying to pay for programs and appropriations that have been approved by Congress, both Republicans and Democrats in both the House and the Senate. These are accumulated debt. Many of the debts were accumulated in the previous administration while we were fighting two wars.

We are not—and we shouldn't—turn our back virtually for the first time in our history on what we have voted previously to spend. Indeed, if we do that, it will create chaos in the economic markets. It will create chaos like we have never seen before. The international markets are so fragile that we dare not risk this.

With that, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican whip.

TRIBUTE TO ARNOLD GARCIA

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, before I begin my other remarks today, I would like to say a few words about my friend, Arnold Garcia, who recently announced his retirement as editor of the Austin American-Statesman editorial page. During a time of political polarization in Washington, Austin, and other cities across the country, Arnold enjoys the respect and admiration of Republicans and Democrats alike.

He is a veteran of the United States Army and the Texas National Guard, and he spent 40 years at the Austin American-Statesman serving as head of the editorial page for more than 2 decades.

One of the most prominent and influential journalists in Texas, Arnold has a great love and respect for our state, his country, and the men and women who defend us. He is, by all accounts, a fair-minded reporter—which is saying something if you are in our business, because we know that there is a natural adversarial relationship between the press and elected officials. Everyone in Texas who knows Arnold agrees that he is a fair-minded reporter who has always made time to talk to almost anyone and has always had an open door for those who wanted to have a discussion on virtually any topic.

I wanted to say a few words today about Arnold Garcia.

Arnold, I salute your pioneering accomplishments. I thank you for all of these years of your friendship, and I wish you and your family nothing but the best in this next chapter of your life.

Mr. President, turning to the topic du jour, along with many of my Republican colleagues, I spent the past several days discussing all of the negative consequences of ObamaCare. I think it is important to remember that these are human consequences, not just about numbers.

When taxes and premiums rise, when doctors are forced to drop their patients, when people lose their pre-existing insurance coverage, when full-time jobs become part-time jobs, and when our health care safety net is

stretched to the breaking point, each has a profound impact on the lives of real people. That's especially true for the neediest and most vulnerable among us who rely on the safety-net programs that the President's health care law is further weakening.

To better appreciate the consequences of ObamaCare, we should consider the following questions:

Question No. 1: What does ObamaCare mean to a 28-year-old college graduate who can only find part-time work and living with his parents?

It means he will either pay higher insurance premiums or pay higher taxes, and it also means he will have a harder time finding full-time employment and starting a career.

Question No. 2: What does ObamaCare mean for a single mom who is insured with Medicaid—that safety-net program I was talking about?

It means that her family's primary insurance program, a program that is already broken—for example, in my State only one doctor out of every three will see a new Medicaid patient because it reimburses at such a low rate. So Medicaid is already failing to reliably deliver access to health care. With ObamaCare, and the dumping of millions of additional people into this broken program, it means this program will be flooded with millions of new beneficiaries, and it means Medicaid will soon be even less effective at delivering access to quality health care to the most vulnerable people in our society, the very people it was designed to protect.

Question number 3: What does ObamaCare mean to a 70-year-old retiree who is enrolled in Medicare?

It means that fewer and fewer doctors will accept him or her as a patient, because Medicare pays doctors at a fraction of what private health insurance pays in terms of reimbursements for their services. ObamaCare also means that unelected bureaucrats will soon be making decisions about whether they will get the care their doctor believes they need.

Question No. 4: What does ObamaCare mean for a working family that has been receiving employer-provided health insurance from their small business?

It means they very easily could lose their existing coverage and get dumped into an ObamaCare exchange. It also means they could very easily find themselves paying higher premiums for lower-quality insurance.

The final question I would ask is: What does ObamaCare mean for a small business owner with 49 employees?

It means they have a powerful incentive to stay below that 50-employee cap which would then kick them over into the employer sanction if they don't provide government-approved health care for all of their employees. So their incentive is to keep employment low and not hire anymore workers because of ObamaCare's extensive regulations and financial penalties.

As we think about each of these questions, we should also think about what business owners across America are telling us—I daresay all of them—about ObamaCare. For example, a small business owner named Linda Peters who runs a radio communications company in Anchorage, AK, recently said ObamaCare's health insurance tax "hurts our future and threatens the stability of the small-business sector."

In Arkansas, the owner of Little Rock Tours and Travel, a woman named Gina Martin has said, "None of us really understand how we are going to continue to stay in business."

In Louisiana, the owner of Dots Diner restaurant group, a gentleman by the name of Larry Katz recently told a Senate committee that he was being "forced to put 16 people out of work just to save himself from the negative effects of [ObamaCare]."

In North Carolina, a franchise holder of the popular Five Guys burger chain, a man named Mike Ruffed, has estimated that ObamaCare will cost him roughly an additional \$60,000 a year.

Each of the business owners I mentioned lives in a State with at least one Democratic Senator who voted for ObamaCare back in 2009. I want to emphasize once again that ObamaCare is not inevitable. Any law that Congress passes it can repeal, it can amend, and it can change.

The Members of this Chamber now have an opportunity to correct the mistake that the Senate Democrats made in 2009 when ObamaCare passed on a party-line vote. All the Democrats voted for it, and all the Republicans voted against it—including me. We now have an opportunity to stop this law before it does any more damage to people like those I mentioned and millions more across America.

To add insult to injury, yesterday we learned that the IRS has somehow misplaced \$67 million that was allocated to the ObamaCare slush fund. I daresay, given all of the money being pushed into the implementation of ObamaCare, we can expect more stories like that in the weeks and months ahead, unless Congress acts.

As I said, I am proud to say I voted against ObamaCare 4 years ago because I simply did not see how it could possibly work. I was concerned about the higher taxes on hard-working American families such as my constituents in Texas. I was concerned about the command and control of Washington, DC, on all the health care decisions that should have been left to doctors, patients, and families trying to work together to determine what is in the best interests of those individuals and those families.

And, yes, I was concerned that the government would continue to cut reimbursements to providers which would make it more and more likely that fewer and fewer doctors and hospitals could actually see Medicare or Medicaid patients. I was concerned

that ObamaCare represented a statement and an attitude that Washington knows best and that nothing anybody has done at innovative medical facilities around the country and in different States matters because Washington really knows best.

Many people had the audacity to say that even though ObamaCare was unpopular when it was passed, people would learn to love it—sort of like when Social Security and Medicare were originally passed.

Many of our Democratic colleagues who were responsible for giving us ObamaCare have what we don't have often in life, and that is a second chance. These Senate Democrats who voted for ObamaCare—having seen and heard the stories I just described—have a second chance to help save the American people from a looming disaster. When we have people like Senator MAX BAUCUS, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, on which I serve, telling Kathleen Sebelius, the secretary of Health and Human Services, that the implementation of ObamaCare is like a train wreck, we ought to listen.

When some of the biggest cheerleaders for ObamaCare, such as organized labor, are now traveling to the White House and saying: Please, Mr. President, won't you give us a waiver or exemption because this is turning out different than you told us it would, we ought to listen.

Full-time work—the 40-hour workweek—is in jeopardy because in order to protect themselves from employer sanctions, employers are moving people from full-time work to part-time work—if they can hire people at all—which may be one reason why the labor participation rate, which is a percentage of Americans who are actually in the workforce looking for work, is the lowest it has been in the last 30 years.

As I said earlier, each of these stories is a human tragedy, and the stories behind the numbers tell a very sobering tale. But we are now powerless to deal with this looming disaster and impending train wreck, as Senator BAUCUS said.

I hope Senate Democrats will vote with Senate Republicans and take a stand, as we will have a chance to do, when we get a chance to vote to defund ObamaCare on the continuing resolution. If we do, we will be protecting the American people from one of the most unpopular, unworkable, and unaffordable laws in modern history.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I would like to elaborate on the comments from my colleague from Texas who I think laid out in very clear terms what is at stake and the debate we are having and really what the vote that we are going to have here in the not-too-distant future means.

I think it is pretty clear—if we look at any objective measurement or met-

ric—ObamaCare is a huge disaster, and obviously we have seen tremendous anecdotal evidence of that. Anybody who travels in their State or around the country or talks to anybody who is in business, the message comes back very clear that ObamaCare is making it more difficult and more expensive for them to create jobs.

It is creating uncertainty; there are mandates and requirements associated with the new law because employers are being forced to provide a government-approved plan, and so costs go up. As a result, that means there are people who are not getting hired who otherwise might have gotten hired. Companies are looking at reducing their workforce and obviously creating a tremendous amount of disruption in our economy. I think it is pretty evident that the middle class in particular is being crushed by the President's policies, and ObamaCare is certainly no exception.

Yesterday, in *Forbes* magazine, Avik Roy reported on a recent study done by the Manhattan Institute that ObamaCare will increase insurance rates for younger men by an average of 97 to 99 percent and for younger women by an average of 55 to 62 percent.

In my home State of South Dakota, that is more than just a statistic, it is a grim reality facing thousands of young men and women. By comparing a typical low-cost plan for a healthy 30-year-old in South Dakota this year with a bronze plan in South Dakota's health care exchange next year, the premium increases are staggering. Younger women are going to face a 223-percent premium increase and younger men are going to face a 393-percent—393-percent—premium increase when comparing new data from the Health and Human Services Department with data that came out from the Government Accountability Office about premiums in my State just this year—earlier in January.

For those millennials in South Dakota, that is a \$1,500 increase in health care premiums each year for women and a more than \$2,000 increase in health care premiums for men. So the money that could be used for other things will now be put toward this increase in health insurance premiums that people are going to have to pay to get covered. They could have used that money to pay off a student loan. They could have used it to save for a home or to start a family. So this has a tremendous impact on the economy and particularly on those who are going to get hit hardest, and in my State of South Dakota, not unlike other States around the country, it is young people, younger men and younger women.

Interestingly enough, the President is talking about how the HHS study or report confirms what they have been saying, which is that somehow premiums are going to go down. The reason they are saying that is because they are comparing the exchange premiums—what they think people are

going to pay—with what the Congressional Budget Office predicted they might pay earlier this year. So it is a hypothetical. It is a mythical comparison. There is nothing to it. It is fiction, if you will.

What we have to do is make this real for people. When we make it real, when we compare it to what they are paying today, young people in particular are going to see dramatic increases in their premiums. So the report was a complete fraud in terms of informing people with real information about what their health insurance premiums are going to be under these exchanges. As I just pointed out, when we compare what they would be paying in the exchange in my State with what people are paying today with similar-type coverage, the increases are staggering—a 223-percent premium increase for younger women and a 393-percent increase for younger men.

They are saying that some of these individuals are going to be eligible for premium tax credits to help cover the increased costs, but not everyone is eligible for those premium tax credits. A lot of people are not going to be eligible for the credits, and they don't cover all the costs. According to a new analysis by Avalere Health, Americans could face steep cost-sharing requirements, such as copayments, coinsurance, and deductibles, layered on top of the monthly premiums, which are going to increase dramatically. It is clear that health care costs are going up, particularly for younger Americans.

President Obama promised that health care premiums would go down by an average of \$2,500 per family. If we look at what the real situation is with regard to families, those premiums have actually jumped by more than \$2,500 since the President took office and since ObamaCare became law. So we have costs that continue to increase despite the President's promises to the contrary, and household income has been dropping since the time the President has been in office—about \$3,700, according to a recent study. So when an American family is looking at their economic situation, they are saying: Let me get this straight. I have higher costs and lower income. How does the President expect that we are going to be able to cover these higher costs?

That is the reality, as I said, that most Americans are dealing with and that people in my State of South Dakota are dealing with, particularly millennials, who are going to be most adversely and harmfully impacted by the new plan.

With respect to jobs, the other thing I wish to point out—obviously the cost of health care is a very important situation and something every American has to think about as they think about their own personal economic circumstances, but we also have to have jobs, and most people get health insurance coverage—a lot of them do—through their job. Well, what is the

ObamaCare legislation doing to our jobs and to our economy? Nearly three in four small businesses plan to fire workers or to cut hours as a result of ObamaCare. According to Investor's Business Daily, more than 250 employers have cut jobs or slashed hours as a direct result of ObamaCare's high cost and job-killing regulations.

Another thing that is important to point out is that 60 percent of the jobs created this year are part-time jobs—not full-time jobs, part-time jobs. The way the ObamaCare legislation and the law is structured, there is a disincentive for companies to grow because if they get bigger, if they get more than 50 employees, they will be subject to a lot of new regulations and mandates when they provide government-approved health care.

There is also a definition in the law of what a full-time employee is. If someone works more than 30 hours, they are a full-time employee. So what are companies doing? What are businesses doing? They are hiring more and more people to work 29 hours a week. The President is probably going to go down in history as the President who created the most part-time jobs. But Americans want full-time jobs, they want to be able to have a job that allows them to make ends meet for their families, to plan for their children's education and for their own retirement, and having to work more than one job—multiple part-time jobs—just doesn't get it done for them. So this trend we are seeing occur of part-time jobs being created is largely because of mandates imposed in ObamaCare.

The middle class is being squeezed from both ends. Americans' premiums are going up, while their hours and take-home pay are going down.

The job impacts are as clear across the country as they are in my State of South Dakota. I wish to give one example of a South Dakota business owner who was recently interviewed. He was asked in that interview about the higher costs and mandates of ObamaCare, and this is what he said:

You'll just have to adjust accordingly and you'll have to cut jobs, and you probably won't hire as many people, and I think you'll see a lot of that.

That is a small business owner in my State of South Dakota responding to a question about the impact of ObamaCare on his ability to hire people, to create jobs, and to help expand his business and grow the economy in my State.

It is no wonder the President's approval rating is underwater. Nearly 60 percent of Americans say they oppose ObamaCare, the President's signature accomplishment. So while support for the President's signature law continues to fade, we are also seeing an impact on the President's personal approval rating. For the first time, more Americans view the President unfavorably than they do favorably. According to yesterday's Gallup poll, the President is struggling with his own base. Sup-

port among Democrats has dropped 13 points since December of 2012.

I say all that to point out that the effects of these policies—particularly ObamaCare in the specific—are having an impact on the President's standing. I think people are understanding what the impacts are, what the effects of this are, what the results of this are, and they are starting to react accordingly.

What is also of great concern to anybody who is thinking about going into an exchange or looking to do this next week when the exchanges "go live" or go online is that there are an awful lot of glitches and bumps. As I said, premiums are on the rise, workers' jobs, wages, and hours are being cut, and now we have glitches and bumps when it comes to implementation. The latest example of an ObamaCare glitch comes from the District of Columbia exchanges. A report that came out just yesterday said the District of Columbia ObamaCare exchange is experiencing "a high error rate" in calculating the tax credits that low- and middle-income people are going to receive. You can't make this stuff up. The government-run exchange is experiencing "a high error rate" in handling health care. Who would have thought that would be the case? These exchange shoppers are not going to have access to the premium prices now until mid-November. This is according to the recent report on the District of Columbia.

There are similar glitches happening at the Federal level as well and in other States. Oregon and Colorado have faced setbacks.

Reuters reports:

On Monday, employees running Connect for Health Colorado told board members that the exchange would not be able to calculate federal subsidies either, at least for the first few weeks.

Inaccuracies, glitches, and malfunctions mean this law is not ready for prime time.

Meanwhile, we have top Democrats here in the Congress who I think are in complete denial. The President said earlier this summer, "I think it's important for us to recognize and acknowledge this is working the way it is supposed to." Representative PELOSI on the House side said, "The implementation of this is fabulous." Senator REID said on "Meet the Press" not too long ago, "ObamaCare has been wonderful for America." Well, that message is being lost on Americans.

We have an opportunity to correct that. We get a chance at a do-over. We can fix this. We can correct this wrong. We can do this in a much better way. It doesn't take a 2,700-page bill and 20,000 pages of regulations to fix the problems we have in our health care system today. What we have now is a government takeover of one-sixth of our economy, and we are seeing what that means for many Americans: higher premiums, higher costs, fewer jobs, lower take-home pay, and glitches and bumps when it comes to implementation.

At a minimum—at a minimum—we ought to delay the implementation of this not just for a favored few, not just for those select constituents the President wants to grant waivers and exceptions for, but we should allow a delay of ObamaCare for all Americans because it is not ready for prime time.

I think ultimately what maybe drives or motivates people to stay with this in spite of all this—every day, news stories, news organizations talking about the flaws, the errors in implementation; the, I guess, overpromises made by the administration when it comes to what costs were going to be for people and whether they would be able to keep their old insurance—but when we look at all that, the cumulative effect of all of that, the wise thing for us to do is to recognize that this was a mistake and, at a minimum, delay its implementation. At best, my favorite scenario would be to repeal it and start over.

I think we have a lot of people here, as was mentioned by Senator REID not too long ago, whose goal really is to get to a single-payer system. If that is the goal, then people want this thing to muddle along and get so bad that the only thing people are left with is a single-payer system—in other words, socialized medicine. I don't think that is consistent with what the American people want. It is certainly not consistent with our history and heritage of freedom and competition and giving people in this country more choices. That might explain why many of the things we have proposed, alternatives we have proposed on this side of the aisle, consistently get voted down.

Why don't we allow people to buy insurance across State lines and create interstate competition that drives prices down? Why don't we allow pooling for small businesses so they can get the benefit of group purchasing power? Why don't we reduce the cost of defensive medicine by ending junk lawsuits in this country? Why don't we allow people to have their own refundable tax credit so they can buy their own health insurance? We want to come up with a system that is portable, that creates competition, that allows people to have more choices, and that is based upon market impulses and market principle. When we have a free market and it is working, we get much lower costs because competition brings that about.

I hope we can get to the point where we acknowledge that this was the wrong direction. We are going to have a chance to vote on that later today. The vote that is going to be before us—and I am not aware of any Republican in this Chamber who is not going to vote to defund ObamaCare—will present us with an opportunity, as Republicans and Democrats, to acknowledge what the American people have already recognized, which is that this is not working. It is not working as it was intended, it is not working as planned, and the best thing we can do is acknowledge that and give the

American people a break and give the American economy a break by delaying its implementation or, more importantly, just repealing it and starting over and doing this the right way by building upon the strengths we have in our health care delivery system today, acknowledging the challenges and weaknesses but things that can be fixed without passing a 2,700-page bill and 20,000 pages of regulations.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, I appreciate the Senator from South Dakota and his words but also his leadership, not only in this area but in so many areas of such importance facing our Nation. Again, we appreciate him very much.

With the exchanges set to open in a matter of days, we are getting an up-close and personal look at how bad this law is for Arkansans.

On Monday, the ObamaCare premiums were released for the Arkansas exchanges. The exchanges were supposed to provide choices. The President said it would be like booking travel on Expedia.

Do you know how many insurance companies you can pick from in el Dorado and Magnolia? Two. In Pine Bluff, Helena, and Lake Village? Two. In Jonesboro and Hot Springs? Three.

There are not a lot of options, and none of them are affordable. Sticker shock, I think, is the best way to describe the response I have heard from Arkansans.

Yesterday, a caller to my Fort Smith office said he could barely afford his diabetic medicine. With the new premiums, he simply cannot afford it. That is one example of many similar calls I have received and am receiving.

With a pricetag of nearly \$3 trillion, the law creates more problems than it solves. It drives up health care costs, busts our budget, bankrupts Medicare, and deflates our economy. On top of that, it does not create economic stability for Arkansans. It raises their taxes.

On some level, even President Obama acknowledges this will not work. He has delayed, without legal recourse, the employer health care mandate. More relief for other allies will certainly come. It is clear the White House is picking and choosing who has to comply with the law, which leaves the rest of America asking: Where is my exemption? Why can't everyone get a special deal? They rightfully want to know why they have to follow a law the President's allies are not following.

Every Republican in this Chamber wrote the President shortly after he made this decision to delay the employer mandate. We demanded that he extend relief to the public. In fact, we asked him to permanently delay implementation for everyone.

Senator COATS and I, along with several other of our colleagues, have introduced a bill that would accomplish

just that because this law is not just bad for U.S. businesses, it is bad for workers, it is bad for American families.

The President says he is working for a "better bargain for the middle class." This law crushes the middle class. It is going to make coverage unaffordable for everyone, including the very people the President seeks to provide coverage to—low-income workers.

Because this law is poorly written, a worker making \$21,000 a year may be offered plans with premiums that are near \$2,000. How is this affordable? For a basic plan they could also face an annual deductible upwards of \$3,000 before coverage kicks in. That is almost a quarter of the annual salary of a worker making \$21,000. And this is supposed to be affordable?

One of my constituents hit the nail on the head during a telephone town-hall I had on Monday night when he said this law is actually making health insurance more expensive for the average person.

Nowhere in the 20,000 pages of regulations can you find one that drives down the cost of health care. That is the core of the problem.

This law has to be replaced with reforms that drive down the cost of health care and make insurance truly affordable for every American.

Instead of allowing the government to dictate our health care needs, we should strive to reward quality health care, encourage healthy living, and minimize waste through patient choice and health care ownership.

We should pass laws that expand health savings accounts. We should allow small businesses, people such as my barber, to pool together with other barbers and purchase group insurance to cover their employees at a low rate. We need to allow Americans to purchase insurance across State lines, as we do for car insurance.

There are other reform avenues we can explore, some I think that we can even get the majority and the President to support.

Every Republican in this Chamber wants to do away with this law. We may disagree on strategy, but we all seek the same goal.

For me and many of my colleagues, it is hard to find the logic in opposing a bill that defunds ObamaCare. Again, this bill the House has sent us is exactly what we were trying to accomplish. It defunds ObamaCare and keeps the government open. We must also ensure it keeps us on a path to fiscal responsibility.

If the majority leader attempts to restore funding for ObamaCare, you can be assured that I will vote against it.

My vocal opposition to the law, my record of voting against the original bill, and my support of efforts to repeal it are evidence that I want to replace this law with real reform that will drive down the cost of care and increase coverage for all.

However, at the end of the day, it is not wise to force a shutdown by hold-

ing up a bill to continue the funding of government. Our troops in harm's way deserve to be paid. Seniors in Arkansas need their Social Security checks in a timely manner just to get by. And Arkansans who have jobs that require government action—regardless of the situation—will have their livelihoods at stake as a result of a shutdown.

Perhaps most concerning is what a shutdown could do to the markets in this very fragile economy. Our economy is in a far more precarious position than it was during the last shutdown. The retirement and savings of millions of Arkansans could take a dramatic hit.

We face a serious crisis. Health care costs are crippling this country and many Americans lack access to quality affordable care. It is stifling our Nation's overall economic development. These are real difficulties patients, physicians, and hospitals face.

I understand this problem firsthand. For 24 years, I practiced optometry with my brother and my partners in Arkansas. My experience as both a health care practitioner and a clinic owner led me to understand there is a right way and a wrong way to address this crisis. The President's health care law is the wrong way. Let's move forward by supporting the House-passed continuing resolution that defunds ObamaCare. Let's work together for affordable and effective health care reforms through free market principles.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I rise to discuss the current dilemma before the Senate with regard to whether to vote on the motion to close debate and go to the debate and final vote, if you will, on the House-passed version of the CR which put in the language that defunds ObamaCare.

I will vote yes for cloture so we can go to the vote I have promised my constituents in my State 57 different times in other votes I have cast in the Senate in favor of defunding the ObamaCare legislation because I believe there is a better way to do it.

We only have two options before us. One is to end debate and go to a vote on legislation passed out of the House that will continue the government and defund ObamaCare, understanding the leadership will have an amendment to strip out the defunding. I will vote against that amendment because I want to be consistent with the other 57 votes I have taken.

But the other alternative is an alternative not to shut off debate, to continue the debate, which means we come up to Monday night, midnight, when the fiscal year ends and the government shuts down. Government shutdowns are a bad idea. They are bad for the people who send us here to this body to represent them. They are bad for seniors on Social Security. They are bad for those whose husbands and wives and sons and daughters are fighting in harm's way in Afghanistan and

other parts of the world. It hurts our military. It hurts our health care system. And it does not do anything to stop ObamaCare.

What a lot of people do not realize is, if you shut the government down, you are not shutting down ObamaCare. A great percentage of that is mandatory funding. If you shut the government down, you are actually encouraging ObamaCare and discouraging our government to function as it should.

I will not vote to shut the government down. I will vote to end the debate. And I will vote in the way that I have promised every citizen of my State since the ObamaCare legislation came before us.

Look, I am on the HELP Committee. We did the markup on the Affordable Care Act in 2009. Like almost every other Member of the Senate, I was here on Christmas Eve 2009 and voted against the ObamaCare legislation on the final vote. Since that period of time we have had a plethora of votes and challenges and opportunities, and I have remained consistent. I am not going to all of a sudden, in a debate, change my consistency and vote to shut down the government and continue ObamaCare. I want to be consistent with the way I voted. I want the Senate to take up its responsibility. I want us to be sure we do not shut down the government for our people. I want to be sure everybody in the Senate has the opportunity to cast their vote, both on the continuing resolution and on whether ObamaCare stays or is defunded. That is the question before us—not whether we shut the government down.

So while I respect and appreciate everybody's position, I think it is irresponsible for us as a Senate to knowingly and voluntarily shut down our government and extend ObamaCare when we have the opportunity to have the debate, have the vote, strip out the funding for ObamaCare, and move forward as some of us have tried.

I do not know how it will end up. I think I know. But I know one thing: Inaction and not voting is wrong. The people of Georgia sent me here to take action, not to avoid action. They sent me here to run the government, not to shut down the government. In fact, I got to the Senate and the House because of a government shutdown, and I want to tell that story.

In the 1990s, when President Clinton was President and Newt Gingrich was Speaker, many issues came about on fiscal spending, and the Speaker and the President and the majority leader of the Senate, Bob Dole, got in a conflict over whether to extend the budget. The Republicans took the position: We will shut the government down rather than yield to what President Clinton wants to do. So the government shut down. About 3 weeks later, the government was brought back. The Speaker, Mr. Gingrich, came back and capitulated. We reopened the government, but he lost a lot of ground. Two

years later he was reelected by a narrow margin but was not reelected Speaker and resigned. I replaced him. Be careful if you shut down the government. You might get another me.

So that is what happens when government happens. The voters speak out. The voters make sure we are accountable and responsible. It cost us a Speakership. It cost us leadership in the House, and politically that is unsustainable and something we should not do.

I want to be a part of doing my responsible action, voting like I have told my voters I am going to vote; instead of shutting down the government, having the vote we need to have to see which way we are going to move forward as a country.

I yield the remainder of my time and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. For this hour of majority time, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators have 15 minutes each: Senator UDALL of New Mexico, Senator MERKLEY, Senator BALDWIN, and Senator WHITEHOUSE.

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

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Five years ago, our economy went off a cliff. We all remember how bad it was. Wall Street crashed, great industries faced ruin, trillions of dollars in savings of American families gone, wiped out. That was the reality. It was a nightmare for millions of Americans. They lost their jobs, they lost their homes. So many saw a lifetime's work disappear through no fault of their own.

Five years later we are slowly making our way back. We have seen 42 months of private sector job growth. That is 7.5 million jobs. That is a new start for millions of Americans, but as families in New Mexico know, having a job in this economy does not mean the struggles are over. We are moving forward, but not fast enough. Too many folks in my State are still looking for jobs, or they are working and still struggling to pay for rent, food, and gas. They still have not caught up to where they were before, even though they are working harder than ever.

New Mexico's unemployment remains too high. It is at 6.9 percent, and it has been stuck at around 7 percent for far too long. We still have a way to go, so we can't afford any more self-inflicted wounds—no more manufactured crises and no more manufactured government dysfunction.

Unfortunately, we are seeing this again and again. A minority of radical obstructionists in the House and in the

Senate is threatening a government shutdown unless they get their way. They wish to repeal the law of the land even though they lack the votes to do so. They are driving us toward another cliff.

They are willing to endanger the full faith and credit of the United States, all for their narrow ideological agenda. The American people will be the ones who feel the consequences.

There is no reason for this drama that threatens our struggling economy. The American people don't want this. From Wall Street to Main Street, most Americans are watching this spectacle with disbelief. They are looking for progress, for recovery, and they are getting gridlock over and over, with no budget, no long-term plan. If this continues, we have a government in paralysis—all this to drive a tank through health care reform.

The American people don't want to shut down the government to prevent people from getting their health insurance. They want jobs and they want economic recovery.

It is clear to folks on all sides of this desperate stunt that this is dangerous. Even the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, not exactly a leftist group, has said, "Stop." Last week they told the Representatives:

It is not in the best interest of the U.S. business community or the American people to risk even a brief government shutdown. . . . Likewise, the U.S. Chamber respectfully urges the House of Representatives to raise the debt ceiling in a timely manner and thus eliminate any question of threat to the full faith and credit of the United States Government.

We need to move past these partisan games and get back to working on our economy. We need to provide stability so our Nation's families and businesses can grow and prosper. We need to pass a bill that prevents a government shutdown and funds the programs critical to our economic health.

I wish to talk about the effect on my home State of New Mexico. New Mexico's economy can't afford these partisan games. We are already struggling with sequestration.

In New Mexico, sequestration is a painful reality, having a chilling effect on our economy. Folks are worried about their jobs. The most vulnerable groups—the poor, families with children, seniors, and Native Americans—face serious cuts in education and social services.

Our State has two great national laboratories, Sandia and Los Alamos. Their work is essential to the security and safety of all Americans, keeping our Nation's nuclear stockpile safe and secure.

We are host to three Air Force bases, as well as White Sands Missile Range. This budget impasse is damaging to these installations and it threatens economic chaos in the nearby communities.

Businesses that rely on Federal contracts wonder if they can keep their doors open. Sequestration is already

damaging small businesses that survived the recession, businesses such as Queston Construction, a general contractor. Queston's president, Tina Cordova, has seen the number of employees shrink from near 40 to only 18 today.

Then there are the businesses such as PSC, a 100-percent Native-American, woman-owned security personnel business that had to let go employees last year. Threatening shutdowns only makes this worse.

These partisan games are also hurting businesses that depend on tourism. According to the National Park Service, New Mexico's national parks and monuments had 1.5 million visitors last year. We can't afford to close down sites such as Bandelier National Monument, Carlsbad Canyons, Chaco Canyon, Tent Rocks National Monument, Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge, and a host of other unique and special places. Customers who visit these sites stay in our hotels and eat in our restaurants. Tourism means big dollars for New Mexico and our small businesses, about \$5.9 billion in direct spending.

However, here we are with a House resolution that is playing politics with our economy. This is a dead end. We are on the wrong train, the wrong track, and going nowhere. Americans understand this, and I think that is why they are so disappointed in us.

Our economy can't afford even the threat of government shutdown. Too many businesses and families are still barely making ends meet 5 years after Wall Street crashed.

Today's vote is some good news. We are facing obstruction, but we are moving forward. In a bipartisan way, I believe the Senate can do its job. It can pass a bill to fund the government without partisan poison pill amendments. Then it will go back to the House. With little time to spare, we can only hope the House leaders will come to their senses and allow a bipartisan bill, not a partisan bill, to move forward.

When that happens, if it happens, we have more challenges ahead. The House has drastically underfunded programs that American people depend on.

I spoke about the impact on New Mexico. Now I wish to speak for a minute as chairman of an appropriations subcommittee.

We see the needs out there. We see the need for investments. We can't keep kicking the can down the road hoping that somehow a miracle will happen and our roads and bridges will fix themselves, that our veterans will get the resources they need without funding, and that our national labs will be able to take on additional responsibilities without additional resources.

In the case of my subcommittee, Financial Services and General Government, we are making sure our financial systems are sound so Americans won't have to worry about a collapse, about losing their retirement, their homes, or

their life savings. We are making sure we do not need a government bailout again and we are protecting consumers against fraud.

The House bill would put all of those important functions at risk. We can't afford that, the American people can't afford that, and we will continue fighting for a commonsense path forward.

One of the areas in my subcommittee is small business and funding the Small Business Administration. If we go into a government shutdown, the Small Business Administration closes down. All those small businesses across America that rely on loans, rely on advice, and rely on small business development centers aren't going to be able to do that, take an idea from the beginning of a business through a business plan. It is going to thwart entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. We can't afford that.

I plead with my friends in the House, when you get our bill this week or near the end of the week, please think long and hard. Let's pass it and move this forward.

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

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

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I rise today to address some of the challenges we face here on September 26. The significance of that date is it is only 4 days before September 30, the close of the financial year, and October 1, the following day, starts a new financial year. So it has been our responsibility as a Congress to prepare for October 1 by passing a budget, reconciling that budget with the House of Representatives, then using that budget to produce 12 appropriations bills, reconciling those 12 appropriations bills, and have a spending plan completely in place so that we smoothly begin the start of a new financial year. No crisis, just adults working out a spending plan for the next 12 months on time.

I would like to say that is where we are today. But instead, as I stand here on the floor of the Senate, we are only 5 days away from a shutdown of the U.S. Government, a shutdown because that spending plan has not been put together. For the many Americans who have been following the challenges of the last couple of years, this will sound a little like déjà vu all over again, to quote Yogi Berra, because we have been here before. We have been through this crisis before.

Indeed, it was April 2011 when we had a near government shutdown, and that had a huge impact on job creation, and it had a big impact on the stock market. In other words, it wounded our economy at a time when Americans wanted us to build a strong foundation

for a better economy, to create jobs for the middle class, to put people back to work, and to get momentum built up to put American families in a better place. Instead, we had this manufactured crisis in April 2011, courtesy of my colleagues, who felt more about exercising partisan warfare than caring about the success of our middle-class families. Quite simply, that is just wrong.

Then it was just months later, in July of 2011, when we had a debt ceiling crisis. This is quite interesting, because the debt ceiling is simply a term for paying the bills we have already incurred. President Reagan had something to say about this. President Reagan said: Don't mess with the good faith and credit of the United States of America. We pay our bills on time. And we have always paid our bills on time. We didn't manufacture crises to do damage to the economy because of extremely poisoned partisanship gripping this Chamber and the Chamber on the other side of Capitol Hill.

Not only did that combination of crises do significant damage, but in 2012 we faced the big fiscal cliff. This is where the tax structure developed under the Bush Presidency was set to expire, so a new set of policies had to be worked out. We were unable to have that adult, responsible conversation due to the extreme partisanship gripping this Chamber and gripping the other Chamber. So we had a crisis at the close of that year that, quite frankly, did damage as well. Suddenly businesses were seeing that not only did we have the great recession of 2008, as a result of out-of-control failures in regulation that allowed predatory mortgages and predatory securities—securities that melted down and took a large part of America's financial world with them—but we had this follow-on of not being able to have a reasonable, thoughtful, commonsense budget plan in place to take us forward.

So 2012 led to March of 2013—3 months later—and now we had the delayed implementation of the sequester. The sequester comes from the Budget Control Act—an Act I voted against because Members on both sides of the aisle described it as “dumb and dumber,” so dumb we will not let it happen. I thought it was so dumb it should never be written into law, so I voted against it. But I was on the losing side of that battle. So this diabolical financial plan exploded onto the American scene in March 2013, creating a significant problem for the American economy and doing significant damage to the American economy. And here we are, 6 months later, unable to complete our budget and our appropriations bills for the coming financial year.

This has become a pattern where we see ourselves lurching from crisis to crisis—manufactured crises—due to this poisoning partisanship, rather than working together to address the challenges of working families and the middle class. The American people are

quite tired of it. That is why they rate the quality of work we are doing so low. That is why they rate Congress so low.

There was a time not so long ago when it was a very different story. When I was growing up, the story about Congress was that we had had this Great Depression but we came together as a Nation and recognized many of the problems that contributed to that. Those problems included allowing banks to stop doing loans and start gambling on risky ventures, and we stopped that when we put in Glass-Steagall. It included having mortgages that were balloon mortgages, and those could be called in at any time, which meant an individual had to return to the mortgage market to get a replacement loan. That created a crisis for a family if the loan was called and they couldn't actually get another loan. So we fixed that by creating full amortizing long-term mortgages with no balloon payments, and we got rid of that callable feature.

We also created the Securities and Exchange Commission to take on the predatory scams and practices of Wall Street so people would have faith in investing. Faith in investing meant you had the capital to fuel a strong comeback.

We created the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation so people could trust putting their money in banks, knowing the bank wouldn't collapse and take their money with them.

We did all these things as a Congress, coming together to respond to great national problems. Sure, there was some partisanship, some disagreement between the parties, but there was a deeper understanding that we as Americans must work together as Americans, including on the floor of the House and the Senate, for the greater benefit of our American families.

Unfortunately, that has apparently been lost. It has been lost not just in these last few days but in these last few years.

When World War II was thrust upon us, in a short period of time, with congressional help, we transformed our economy into a war economy and played a big role in basically resolving a terrible worldwide crisis. After World War II we rebuilt, through our loan programs and our trade relationships, much of the world economy as well as our own economy, creating the largest middle class the world has ever known.

All of this is what we did in this Chamber and in the Chamber on the other side of Capitol Hill—decisions that were made together to put America back on track. But today we don't have legislators thinking about the health of America. They are thinking about the next election. They are thinking only about their own election. They are thinking about how to undermine our President. Yet he is our President. He is America's President. He is not the Democrats' President or the Republicans' President. He is our

President, and he only gets to sign or veto bills that we send to him.

It is our responsibility in this Chamber to work together in a respectful, responsible fashion to do the basic work that is at the foundation of our ongoing expenditures—to get the budget in place and to get the spending bills in place.

The story of this year is really one that belongs in a fiction novel, because here we go: The U.S. Senate passed a budget, the U.S. House passed a budget. Immediately, the next day, the conference committee should begin. But, no, it didn't happen because Senators in this Chamber decided to filibuster that conference committee and stop any conversation from occurring between the House and Senate about getting a common budget.

This is really akin to burning down the house—blocking the House and the Senate. And by “the house” I mean a house that encompasses this whole legislative process. It is like lighting a bomb and letting it blow up. Don't let the budget process proceed; don't let there be a conference committee. “Completely irresponsible” should be the sign worn on every legislator who has blocked there being a conference committee on the budget. Without a budget we can't get common appropriations bills because they are based on different numbers.

Let us look at this appropriations process. There are essentially twelve spending bills, called appropriations bills. If we look at the period from 1988 through 2001—that 13-year period—we passed the vast bulk of appropriations bills every year through this Chamber before the next fiscal year started—the vast bulk of them. Some years we got every one done and some years most of them done, but the process worked.

Now let's come to the modern era: 2008, zero appropriations bills passed through here; 2009, we actually got half of them done, six; 2010, zero; 2011, one; 2012, zero; this year, 2013, zero. Any schoolchild in America grading the Senate on their success in getting the spending bills in place would give us an “F” for “failure” because we can't come together as responsible parties and have a debate on this floor, adopt amendments, and have an up-or-down vote.

This does enormous damage in multiple ways. The first source of damage is that we end up with late-night emergency continuing resolutions. And when you have a continuing resolution, it means you keep doing what you did before whether they made sense or not. So for every person who believes we should spend a dollar wisely—and I certainly do—we should take advantage of a year's worth of conversations and testimony about what is not working and we should end those programs, not keep continuing them. And when those hearings show that more money is needed in certain areas to make America work better, then we need to spend more in those areas, not continue spending less.

So this effort to blockade the budget process is a determination to continue government waste and inefficiency. I propose that Senators who are blocking the Budget Committee from even getting the numbers and blocking the spending bills should come to this floor and say: Yes, I am for government waste. Because that is what they are doing. They are wasting the taxpayers' dollars. They are investing in inefficiency.

Meanwhile, businesses across America are looking at these sets of crises—April 2011, July 2011, December 2012, March 2013, September 2013—and saying: We are not reinvesting in America until this Chamber and the other Chamber on Capitol Hill get their act together—so that we are not legislating from crisis to crisis, doing great damage to the economy. They know they can't sell their wares unless there is a middle class ready to buy them, and there can't be a middle class unless there are jobs, and there can't be jobs lurching from crisis to crisis.

The end is not in sight. We have colleagues in this Chamber right now planning to have another crisis over the next debt ceiling, the responsibility to pay the bills we have already incurred. We have Members who are not remembering that President Reagan said: Do not mess with the good faith and credit of the United States of America. They want to mess with the good faith and credit of the United States of America, which increases interest rates, which puts an essential tax on all Americans. So the fact that we don't have momentum of the amount we want in the economy is the result of this deliberative determination to force us to lurch from crisis to crisis.

Our middle-class families are worried about a lot. They are deeply concerned about the cost of college. They are deeply concerned about living-wage jobs. They are deeply concerned about funding for K–12. They are concerned about things that affect the real quality of life and the success of our families in every way. And they wonder why it is that we are lurching from manufactured crisis to manufactured crisis rather than getting a spending plan in place and doing more of the things that make sense.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for an additional minute.

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

Mr. MERKLEY. I will wrap up. Anywhere you look in America, you see problems for public safety, for public education, for college education, for living-wage jobs. These are the pillars of success of the middle class. Let's focus on those problems and do right by the American people and quit the irresponsibility and self-manufactured damage that is happening here on Capitol Hill.

Mr. President, I look forward to the remarks of my colleague, Senator BALDWIN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I have come to the floor today to speak about the divisive and irresponsible path down which some Members of Congress wish to take our country.

Last week my former Republican colleagues in the House of Representatives continued to put their own personal partisan politics ahead of progress for the American people. Some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle here in the Senate have voiced support for a responsible approach and rejected this path. For that, I applaud their independence. But some here in the Senate are committed to playing the same political games offered by the House, and here are the rules of the games they are playing: crisis-to-crisis governing; uncertainty for our economy; and for families and businesses, economic insecurity.

Instead of working together across the party aisle to create jobs and move our economy forward, a minority of extremists are intent on threatening our economic recovery with brinkmanship meant to appeal to a narrow political interests—namely, their own. Instead of working together to pass a responsible budget that invests in the middle class, this political game calls for locking in the sequester cuts and putting up a roadblock to economic growth. Instead of working together to do what is best for middle-class families, moving health care reform forward, this political game of drama and division insists on shutting down the government unless health care is repealed for millions of Americans. And instead of working together to do what is best for businesses and the economy, they are creating yet another manufactured crisis that threatens the full faith and credit of America with a government default, knowing full well that would hurt economic growth and the families and businesses who are working so hard to move our recovery forward. Let's be clear about how they would like to see their game end.

According to independent economists, the damaging cuts from the sequester are slowing down the economy and killing jobs. Locking in these devastating sequester cuts would gut investments in economic development, innovation, and education.

The House Republican budget would cut the National Institutes of Health by \$8 billion compared to the Senate budget, so it would cost 25,000 jobs, compromising the next generation of research in our country and holding back the development of treatments for cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and other chronic diseases.

Repealing the Affordable Care Act would mean children with preexisting conditions can be denied health care by insurance companies. Repealing America's new health law would mean many

young people would not have health insurance coverage because they could no longer stay on their parents' health insurance until they are 26 years old. Repealing ObamaCare would mean women will no longer have free preventive health care and we will go back to the day when women could be charged more than men for their health coverage.

They will shut down the government unless we agree to increase the out-of-pocket costs for seniors on their prescription drugs and deny them wellness programs.

They are threatening a government default which would weaken our economy when we should be doing everything we can to strengthen it. They don't seem to care that even the hint of defaulting on our obligations by a minority of Republicans in Congress had severe consequences for our economy when it last happened in the summer of 2011. The stock market plummeted, and the U.S. credit rating was downgraded for the first time in our Nation's history. Businesses froze hiring in August of 2011, and that was one of the lowest months of job growth over the last 2 years. Consumer confidence dropped, and widespread uncertainty was created for middle-class families.

What we don't need right now is more political games. The last thing we need right now is to create another self-inflicted economic wound in Washington that will hurt middle-class families, small businesses, and those who are working so hard to get ahead. We need to create jobs. We need to invest in the middle class and build an economy that produces shared prosperity.

Instead of protecting tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans and tax loopholes for big corporations, it is time for Republicans to join our efforts and ask those at the top to pay their fair share. It is time for Republicans to join our efforts to continue making smart spending cuts that reduce the deficit without shortchanging our future. It is time for Republicans to join with us in passing a responsible budget that strengthens the middle class while also giving American businesses the certainty they need to grow our economy. It is time to break this destructive pattern of bringing the country to the brink and instead return to making Washington work for the American people.

Chairwoman MIKULSKI has called for a return to regular order so that Congress can pass individual appropriations bills every year, and she is 100 percent correct. I support her efforts because regular order allows us to prioritize key investments that support the middle class and avoid these annual shutdown showdowns.

As I have traveled the State, Wisconsinites have told me that the powerful and well-connected seem to get to write their own rules in Washington while the concerns and struggles of middle-class families go unnoticed

here. They feel that our economic system is tilted toward those at the very top, that our political system exists to protect those unfair advantages instead of to make sure everybody gets a fair shot.

Last week an economic report was released showing that income equality has been worsening and expanding, with almost all—in fact, 95 percent—of the income gains since our economic collapse 5 years ago going to the top 1 percent of income earners. The American people would be right to expect that both parties work together to offer solutions that address the challenge of closing this gap, but it has been ignored by those playing the game of threats and “divided we stand” politics. They are wrong to ignore the gap between the economic security Americans work so hard to achieve and the economic uncertainty they are asked to settle for. They are wrong because if we can't close that gap, we might someday talk about the middle class as something we used to have as opposed to something to which every generation can aspire.

Unfortunately, the “divided we stand” crowd in Congress refuses to be governing partners committed to meeting this challenge and advancing our common good. Worse yet, the threats of a government shutdown and a government default are immensely disrespectful to the hard work of people who get up every day and through their sheer grit and determination have helped to move our country forward.

The American people deserve better. They deserve to have their hard work respected. Our economy demands better. It demands that hard work is rewarded.

Senate Democrats have a plan to keep the government running while ensuring that millions of Americans do not lose access to affordable health care. Republicans should join us so that we end this shutdown crisis and the irresponsible political game of division.

It is my hope that those who choose divisive politics over progress for America's economy reconsider and begin to join us on this bill and work with us to once and for all end the drift from one crisis to the next. This is not a political game, and those who continue to play these games need to stop and get to work, get to work with us to move our economy forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, as the Senator from Wisconsin has so eloquently said, we are indeed nearing the brink of the self-imposed catastrophes of government shutdown or government default or both. Unless Speaker BOEHNER can find a way to restrain his rightwing tea party extremists, find a way to work sensibly with Democrats and steer us back from the brink, then an unnecessary and self-imposed calamity awaits. I should probably be

more specific. It is not just self-imposed, it is tea party imposed.

While we try to find our way around this unnecessary tea-party-imposed disaster, a real disaster is looming. It is a real disaster, it is really looming, and we could address it. Instead, we are having to fend off totally unnecessary disasters cooked up by rightwing tea party extremists. It is infuriating. When the real disaster has fully hit us, folks will look back at this era and they will wonder: What was wrong with them? Who were those people? The warnings were everywhere and they did nothing? Instead, they wasted time threatening each other with cooked-up calamities, rather than deal with the real disasters? That is disgraceful.

They will be right. Of course the real and looming disaster is what unprecedented levels of carbon pollution and unprecedented levels of atmospheric carbon are doing to our weather and our oceans. That is for real. That is Mother Nature. That is not just political gamesmanship and hostage taking. That is what brings me here now for the 44th time to say it is time for us to wake up to the threat of climate change.

While Congress keeps sleepwalking on this issue, I am proud to say President Obama has awoken. Last week his administration announced important new carbon pollution standards for future powerplants. These standards will reduce the carbon pollution that has been wreaking havoc on our oceans, our atmosphere, and our health.

Those of us who believe in science and who are awake to the changes already happening all around us should rally behind the President and EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy to support these proposed standards. Just look at the evidence of what carbon pollution is doing to our planet.

According to news articles, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, will soon announce it is now more certain than ever that human activity is the main cause of the recent climate changes we have seen. This may surprise some of my Republican colleagues who tried pointing to a recent slowdown in surface temperature as evidence that climate change has stopped. According to the IPCC, this phase is, unfortunately, only temporary, as other slowdowns have been in the past.

If you look at the history of global warming and of temperature, you can see that across time you can add steps in because of the variability that is inherent in our climate. But nobody could look at that and not see the constant rising thread that runs through it. No regression analysis, to use the technical term, would not show that global warming is real. The fact that we are at a step is—well, here is what Richard Muller, noted physics professor at UC-Berkeley, had to say in an article that came out today. He quoted himself from 2004 when he wrote:

If we believed that natural fluctuations in climate are small—then we might conclude

(mistakenly) that the cooling could not be just a random fluctuation on top of a long-term warming trend. . . . And that might lead in turn to the mistaken conclusion that global warming predictions are a lot of hokey.

If, on the other hand, we . . . recognize that the natural fluctuations can be large, then we will not be misled by a few years of random cooling.

Which has happened over and over through the progression of climate change.

He followed on today:

The frequent rises and falls, virtually a staircase pattern, are part of the historic record, and there is no expectation that they will stop, whatever their cause.

The land temperature record is full of fits and starts that make the upward trend vanish for short periods. Regardless of whether we understand them, there is no reason to expect them to stop. The current cause is consistent with numerous prior causes. When walking upstairs in a tall building, it is a mistake interpreting a landing as the end of the climb.

Whatever the cause of these recurring steps, even contrarian scientists understand the principle that is operating here: More carbon dioxide leads to more warming. It is as simple as that. It is a 150-year-old established basic principle of physics.

The oceans, which I talk about a lot in these speeches, have a lot to do with it. The deep oceans absorb excess heat, saving us from a lot more heat here on the surface. Researchers say the oceans have absorbed more than 90 percent of the excess heat over the last 50 years.

If the ocean has absorbed this much of the heat, think what a small fluctuation in what the ocean is doing will do to our atmospheric temperature: 93.4 percent, only 2.3 percent. You do not have to wiggle this much in order to create the kind of steps and changes and oscillations that we have seen in the staircase of climate change. Oceans don't just absorb the heat, they also absorb about 30 percent of our carbon emissions chemically, emissions that would otherwise be in our atmosphere, causing more warming. Absorbing those emissions has already made the oceans more acidic, with dangerous consequences for marine life as this continues. But it has spared us even more extreme climate effects here on land.

Environment America recently released a report earlier this month highlighting the power sector's pollution, which creates an enormous amount of this. In 2011, 5.2 billion tons of carbon dioxide were emitted in the United States. The blue circle is the whole country.

Just over 40 percent of that total, 2.2 billion tons, came from the power sector. That is the green sector.

The inner circle, the red one, is the emissions just from the 50 dirtiest powerplants in America. One out of every 8 tons of America's carbon dioxide emissions, the ones that are causing these changes in the oceans—the ones that

are causing these changes in the atmosphere—come from these filthy 50 powerplants, such as Luminant Generation Company's Martin Lake Plant in Texas, emitting the equivalent of 3.9 million car emissions, or Alabama Power Company's H. Miller, Jr. Plant, emitting the equivalent of 4.3 million car emissions, or the champion, Georgia Power's Scherer Plant, the largest emitter of carbon pollution in America, which emits as much pollution as 4.4 million cars.

If these 50 plants were an independent country, that country would alone be the seventh largest emitter of carbon dioxide in the world, just behind Germany, just ahead of South Korea.

From my State's perspective, these out-of-State powerplants are a hazard. It is out-of-State powerplants that emit the chemicals that turn into ground level ozone in downwind Rhode Island. Rhode Islanders pay the price, particularly on bad air days, and we have had six of them so far in 2013. About 12 percent of Rhode Island's children and 11 percent of our adults suffer from asthma, and ground level ozone puts them at greater risk.

We have a lot of good Rhode Island reasons to clean up the power sector. That is why I support the administration's proposed standards for new powerplants. The standards will limit the effects of climate change on future generations by telling polluting industries it is time to clean up your act, it is time to stop dumping toxic carbon pollution, it is time to get responsible about what you are doing to our environment and our health, to our children, our oceans, and our atmosphere.

We can still avoid the worst outcomes of climate change. Some changes cannot be avoided; some are already happening. But if we act now, we can avoid the worst predictions for heat waves, sea level rise, ocean acidification, storms, and other disruptions. That is why we in Congress should support the President's goal to reduce emissions to 17 percent below our 2005 output at the end of this decade and to get emissions to 80 percent of 1990 levels by 2050.

The standard for good powerplants is a good first step, but we also need to clean up existing powerplants, particularly these 50, which I will remind everybody emit more carbon dioxide than South Korea. We should get serious here in Congress and fix the market failure in our power sector that ignores the true costs of burning these fossil fuels. We should pass carbon-fee legislation.

What do we see instead, here in Congress? Here is an example. Last week a House subcommittee hearing on the President's climate action plan brought out these wildly misleading statements, such as: "We can say over 40 years we've got almost no increase in temperature" went one.

"The arctic ice has actually increased by 60 percent" went another.

In reality, surface temperatures are up about 1 full degree Fahrenheit over the last 40 years. That increase in Arctic sea ice is only relative to last year's all-time record low. The National Snow and Ice Data Center reported that this year's summer minimum is the sixth lowest in the 34 years records have been kept, and it is right in line with the long-term rapidly declining ice cover trend.

The Republicans did a lot of complaining at the hearing about the President's climate action plan. To my Republican colleagues who don't like the President's plan, I say come to the table. Let's negotiate climate legislation in Congress. Republicans in Congress should support a carbon fee, as many Republicans outside of Congress do. If you do not like polluting interests having to bear 100 percent of the costs of complying with the carbon pollution standards, let's look at a carbon fee. A carbon fee, by contrast, would give those same companies an opportunity to work with Congress to share in some of the revenue generated by the fee. Or the revenue could be returned to the American people as a tax cut, if Republicans prefer; even as a corporate tax cut, if Republicans prefer. Or we could use that revenue to forgive all Federal student debt in this country—forgive all Federal student debt in this country. What a shot in the arm that would be to our economy. Or we could give struggling seniors a \$1,600 Social Security raise.

There are a lot of wonderful things that could be done, but my colleagues must first come to the table. What they cannot do is deny. To deny is to lie. The time for that has passed. It is time to wake up.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

MR. VITTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this hour of time for the Republicans be divided as follows: I ask for 12 minutes for myself and then Senator HATCH for 15 minutes, Senator PORTMAN for 10 minutes, Senator COATS for 10 minutes, and Senator TOOMEY for 10 minutes.

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

MR. VITTER. Mr. President, I rise again in strong support of my no Washington exemption from ObamaCare amendment. I have refiled it on the CR, which is before us, the spending bill, and it is a germane amendment as I filed it to the CR. It is amendment No. 1983.

We are on a timetable—a collision course—where unless we act, a horrible policy and illegal Obama administration rule will go into effect, and so it is important that we vote, we act, and we do that now. That is why as soon as we came back from the August recess, I brought this to the attention of the Senate and the Congress and the country and I demanded a vote. It wasn't

my choice to be on that tight timetable. It certainly wasn't my choice on the administration issue, a draft illegal rule, but that is where we are, and so we must vote and act before October 1.

After being blocked out of a vote on the previous matter on the floor, the energy efficiency bill, and after being blocked out for 2 weeks by the distinguished majority leader and others, I bring it again in the context of this spending bill as a germane amendment numbered 1983 to this spending bill.

The principle is clear, and to me it is the first principle of a democracy—in our case, the United States of America. What is good for America should be good for Washington, and what is applied to America should absolutely be applied in the same way to Washington across the board and certainly including ObamaCare.

We had a debate about that several years ago during the ObamaCare debate. Actually, that concept won out, and we were able to add a Grassley amendment to the bill, which was passed into final law. I was a strong supporter of that language. I was somewhat amazed that we got it included, but it did go through the democratic process, and it is now part of the law, part of the statute.

That law says clearly and unequivocally that every Member of Congress and all official congressional staff have to go to the exchange for their health care. They have to go to the same fallback plan as is there for the American people under ObamaCare. I advocated for that strongly since the very beginning of the ObamaCare debate. Whatever the fallback plan for America is, that should be the plan for Washington. There should be no other choices, no special privileges or exemptions or subsidies for Washington.

That was part of the statute that passed into law, but I guess it was a classic case of what NANCY PELOSI said—we need to pass the law in order to figure out what is in it—because after it passed, a lot of folks on Capitol Hill read that provision and said: Oh, you know what, we can't live with this. We can't let this stand. We need to "fix this."

So there was furious scheming and furious lobbying to fix that simple concept that what applies to America should apply to Washington. Where that ended up after months of scheming and lobbying was the President of the United States, President Obama, became personally involved. This was confirmed in numerous news reports. He had his administration issue a special rule to save Congress from this horrible fate that is being visited on at least 8 million Americans.

As Congress was leaving for the August recess—conveniently getting out of town and away from the scene of the crime—the Obama administration issued this draft rule. In my opinion, it is clearly and unequivocally illegal because it is in conflict with the language of the statute.

The rule does two things:

First of all, even though the statute clearly says that every Member of Congress and all official congressional staff go to the exchange, the draft rule says: We don't know what official staff is, so we are going to leave that up to every individual Member of Congress to decide who on his or her staff is official staff for purposes of this provision and we are never going to second guess them. So in theory, a Member of Congress can say: My committee staff is part of the official staff; my leadership staff is part of the official staff. In fact, in theory, under this proposed rule a Member of Congress can say: Nobody on my staff is "official staff" for purposes of this provision. OPM has made it clear that they are not going to second guess that. That is ridiculous on its face.

Second, the rule says that for Members and any staff who do get to go to the exchange, they get to take a big taxpayer-funded subsidy with them—a subsidy that is completely unavailable to any other American at that income level going to the exchange. That is not in the statute at all. That is contrary to the statute, the letter and spirit of the law. That is completely contrary to it. Again, that is what provoked me to act with many other Members.

I wish to recognize and thank all of the cosponsors of this important legislation on the Senate side and also Congressmen DESANTIS of Florida and all House cosponsors of identical legislation on the House side.

Our fix is simple, basic, and important. It is, first of all, let's live by the law with regard to Congress. So every Member of Congress and all congressional official staff have to go to the exchange as mandated by law with no special deal, exemption, or subsidy. They can only have what is available to other Americans going to the exchange. The whole purpose of that language was for Congress to feel the dislocation, inconvenience, and experience of millions of other Americans going to the exchange—8 million or more Americans going there against their will. They had health care. They had employer-provided health care. They heard the President say: If you have coverage you like, you can keep it, and they found out that was a big lie. So now they are losing that and going to the exchange. The whole purpose of the language was that Congress walk in their shoes.

This amendment goes further and applies the same principle of fairness to the administration. It says the President, the Vice President, and all of their political appointees will do the same thing—go to the exchange for their health care, just like every other American does, with no special deals, exemptions, subsidies, and no special rules.

Again, this is very time-sensitive because this rule is set to be made final October 1. That is not my choice. I

think the rule is flatout illegal. That is a decision and action by the administration, but it does demand that we vote and act now. That is why as soon as we came back from the August recess and went back into session, I filed the fix and demanded a proper up-or-down vote. Unfortunately, that was blocked out for 2 weeks by the distinguished majority leader. That is why I am on the floor again in the context of this spending bill. It is very appropriate to have the debate on this spending bill. We are talking about spending. I filed it as a germane amendment to this spending bill, and we need a full debate and vote on this matter before October 1.

Interestingly, in the previous bill, after blocking me out of any vote, the distinguished majority leader said he had no problem with this clean up-or-down vote. I guess he said that in theory because it never happened in practice.

This is a perfect and appropriate time to have that up-or-down vote. It won't delay anything. It is perfectly appropriate to have it on the spending bill. This is a germane amendment.

I urge us to vote and act and not block out this debate and not block out this vote. My request is as simple and basic and straightforward as that. I think it is consistent with the distinguished majority leader's promise that we would have a vote. He said that. Again, that must have been in theory because he blocked it in practice.

Mr. President, in that spirit, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendments be set aside and that it be in order to call up my amendment No. 1983.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, reclaiming my time, I think that is very unfortunate. It is very inconsistent with what the distinguished majority leader said. We need a debate and a vote on this matter. It should happen before October 1—and it will happen, I guarantee that. I don't know when. I don't know if it will be before October 1, but it will happen. We will have this debate and vote.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, it is no secret that the so-called Affordable Care Act is a train wreck waiting to happen. Some of it has already happened. We know that. The American people know that. My constituents all over Utah know that. But sadly the President of the United States doesn't seem to know it. In fact, the President is out today trying to convince the American people that his signature domestic achievement is a winner. Few people believe him, however, and no amount of spin on his part will change that.

Frankly, Republicans have been saying ObamaCare would be a disaster since well before it was enacted. Indeed, if we look back at the original debates on ObamaCare, we will find that we predicted virtually all of the problems we are seeing now as the administration attempts to implement this poorly crafted law.

Let's look at some of the predictions we made. We predicted, for example, that in order to avoid the employer mandate, businesses would cease hiring new workers and they would move existing employees to part time. ObamaCare requires employers with 50 or more full-time employees to offer their workers health coverage of a minimum value or pay a penalty. As we predicted, a number of small businesses, which are the main job creators in this country, are simply opting to unilaterally limit their full-time employees in order to avoid the mandate. Just think about that. We have the lowest labor participation rate since the Carter administration, but instead of working to create the jobs American families and workers need, more and more businesses have stopped hiring to avoid the costs that come with ObamaCare.

The law defines full-time employees as those working more than 30 hours a week. As a result of this bizarre definition, many employers have opted to simply cap workers' hours. That is happening everywhere. It is happening in the private sector and among public schools and municipalities. In fact, it is happening so often that even the leaders of big labor, who are among the biggest supporters of ObamaCare, have publicly argued that the law is destroying the 40-hour workweek. That is just one Republican prediction about ObamaCare that came true.

We also predicted that ObamaCare would cause people who currently have health insurance to lose it. We all remember the President's infamous promise that "if you like your plan, you can keep it." Sadly, our post-ObamaCare experience hasn't borne that out. At the time, Republicans said there was no way he could fulfill that promise, and we were right. According to the Congressional Budget Office, millions of Americans are likely to lose their current employer-provided health insurance under the President's health law.

We also predicted that the cost of health insurance premiums would skyrocket as insurance companies struggle to comply with all of the new mandates under the law. This is also happening. Numerous studies have shown that the cost of premiums have continued to go up since ObamaCare was passed and are predicted to go up even further next year as the law is more fully implemented.

The question is: How high are the costs going to go?

Yesterday, the administration released a report claiming that ObamaCare is bringing down the cost

of health insurance premiums. Specifically, the report claims that premiums "will be 16 percent lower than projected." Lower than projected is not the same as lower than they are now.

If we compare the cost of ObamaCare health plans with the cost of plans available on the market today, it is indisputable that costs are going up under the law. The administration is free to cherry-pick data in order to make the best case possible. Indeed, that is what they have done with this most recent report. However, even when they cite the most favorable data available, we see that ObamaCare is making health insurance premiums more expensive in this country.

When we look at the more complete picture of the data, we find it is even worse. As the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research recently found, individual market premiums will increase 99 percent for men and 62 percent for women nationwide under ObamaCare. This, once again, was not unforeseen. While the President was claiming his health care plan would reduce premiums by an average of \$2,500 a year, Republicans predicted costs would actually go up under the law. As it turns out, we were right on that one too.

Republicans also predicted that health care spending would increase as a result of ObamaCare. The President, if my colleagues recall, promised the law would lower the costs of health care. However, health care spending is projected to increase dramatically as a result of ObamaCare.

Republicans also predicted that ObamaCare would increase the deficit. Wouldn't you know it, a former Director of CBO has projected that the health care law will add \$500 billion to the deficit in the first 10 years and more than \$1.5 trillion in the second decade.

We predicted middle-class families would see their taxes go up as a result of ObamaCare. When we look at the law, we see it includes no fewer than 11 taxes and penalties that directly impact the middle class, including taxes on medical devices, prescription drugs, and flexible spending accounts.

In addition, Republicans predicted health insurance exchanges, where people go to sign up for ObamaCare's mandated insurance, and the system of verifying and approving premium and cost-sharing subsidies for people in those exchanges would be a nightmare to manage. This has been confirmed time and time again as the administration has continually missed deadlines and offered only scant details as to how these exchanges are going to work, even as they are set to go live on October 1.

Studies from the Government Accountability Office have confirmed that the exchanges are not likely to be ready in time. In fact, just yesterday, the District of Columbia announced it will be delaying the implementation of its exchange because of "high error rates." Two other States, Idaho and

Minnesota, also might delay their exchanges.

During the debate over ObamaCare, Republicans predicted that despite all the claims that “health care reform is entitlement reform,” the law would not shore up our unsustainable entitlement programs. We are set to spend more than \$10 trillion on Medicare and Medicaid over the next 10 years. The CBO has called our health care entitlements our “fundamental fiscal challenge.” According to the CBO—the Congressional Budget Office—the President’s health care law hasn’t done anything—has not done anything—to diminish the problems facing these massive programs.

As I said, none of the problems we are seeing today were unforeseen. Republicans predicted all of these difficulties years ago. We weren’t psychic; we just know how markets work and, more important, we have learned from experience just how inept government can be when it ventures into uncharted territory.

The Democrats who drafted this monstrosity and forced it through Congress either didn’t understand the inherent problems with the legislation or they just plain didn’t care. I suspect it was a little of both. At the time, they were more concerned with just getting something passed so the President could claim victory on one of his central campaign promises than they were with passing something that would actually work. Now we are all seeing the results and only part of the results. I am only mentioning a few things today.

Nearly every week we learn of another problem the administration is having with implementing ObamaCare. As I said, we constantly hear announcements that certain elements of the law are going to be delayed. We have heard this about the employer mandate, the small business health insurance market, and employee automatic enrollment in the exchanges.

We got the latest announcement just today. Today we found out the Obama administration is postponing online enrollment in some of the small business exchanges that were scheduled to open this coming Tuesday. The administration makes these announcements almost nonchalantly, never acknowledging they are indications of larger problems with the law. Instead, they simply press forward, ignoring the warning signs and pushing our Nation’s health care system even further toward the cliff.

It is clear what needs to be done. It is not complicated or convoluted. On the contrary, it is quite simple. This law needs to be eliminated and Congress should do whatever is in its power to get that done. This has been my position since the day the law was passed, and it continues to be my position today. I have supported repealing ObamaCare, I have supported delaying it, and I support defunding it.

I have introduced multiple pieces of legislation that would repeal the most

egregious parts of ObamaCare, including the individual mandate, the employer mandate, the medical device tax, and the health insurance tax. With days to go before the exchanges go live on October 1, I have legislation backed by 31 of my colleagues delaying them until the GAO can certify that private and personal information of consumers and patients will be secure. I have come to the floor on numerous occasions to call for either repeal or a permanent delay to the implementation of the law. Regardless of how the debate over the continuing resolution plays out, I will continue to do so.

This law costs more and will do far less than was promised when the bill was first drafted, debated, and passed. The Democrats who wrote this law and forced it through Congress may have thought the American people were naive enough to believe all the promises that came with ObamaCare, but from the beginning polls have shown the majority of Americans do not support it and with good cause. That is why I publicly applauded the House of Representatives for passing its continuing resolution that defunds ObamaCare.

Getting rid of ObamaCare is just the first step. Once we do that, we need to work together on a bipartisan basis to find a way to reduce health care costs for the American people while also making sure we cover the American people. We have seen what happens when one party tries to fix health care on its own. What we got was a disaster of a law that has actually increased health care costs, all while imposing new taxes and mandates on the American people and creating chaos of the entire American health care system.

The American people deserve better, and the legislation before us is the first step toward giving them that.

I understand the Democrats are going to peel out the one provision the Republican side supports. Everyone on the Republican side supports the defunding of ObamaCare and starting over and doing it right in a bipartisan way, instead of this partisan way that has wound up with the biggest fiasco I have seen around here in my 37 years in Congress.

I am concerned. We can do better. This has become too much of a partisan exercise and, frankly, I am very concerned that our country is going to suffer because some of our friends think they have to continue to support this dog of a bill, even though day after day after day we find more and more reasons to oppose it.

We have brought up these things before, maybe not some of these because some of them have just occurred, as a matter of fact, just in the last day. Think of the fraud. Think of the open door for scam artists because they are going to go ahead on October 1 with individuals saying they think it is fine. But there has been no independent verification done by this administration, or by anybody, to make sure the pri-

vate information of our individual citizens is protected. It is a disgrace. It is a disgrace that we are letting them get away with it, and it is a disgrace that is going to come back to hammer us as Members of Congress who didn’t do our job right in the first place and who continuously keep supporting a bill that is eating us alive.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, over the next couple of days we will have a chance to vote on ObamaCare. This will be an opportunity for us to allow our views to be expressed on both sides of the aisle. I am glad we are going to have that opportunity. We will see what happens. But I think it is certainly an opportunity for us to have a good debate about why we think it is important for us not just to change ObamaCare but to actually start over and do it right. It is a time for us to undo the mistake this Senate made 3 years ago when that legislation was jammed through the process—without a single Republican vote, by the way—which is something the American people are tired of. The partisanship, on that particular vote, I think has led to a bad result.

ObamaCare was sold, by the way, to the Nation under false pretenses. We were promised that ObamaCare would bring premiums down. You remember those discussions: This is a way to get health care costs down and reduce premiums. In fact, what we are learning—and there is a new report out this week—is that premiums are going up.

We were promised that Americans would be able to keep the insurance they have. That was a specific commitment made. Yet millions of Americans are losing the insurance they have. It is insurance they like, and they cannot keep it.

We were promised that if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor; everything will be fine. In fact, many Ohioans and many Americans are losing their doctors.

We were also told that ObamaCare would help grow the economy and create jobs. Unfortunately, just the opposite is happening. More Americans are looking for work because many of the jobs that are available now are part time, in part because of ObamaCare encouraging more part-time work. There are companies that are not expanding because they do not want to reach that magic number of 50 employees.

As we talk today, we are learning that there are even more problems with the implementation of ObamaCare. One of our Democratic colleagues on the floor said he thought

this implementation was going to be difficult. In fact, one Democrat who was prominent in the legislation said it is likely to be a train wreck. Well, unfortunately, that train wreck is occurring. We see the District of Columbia this week making changes. We see today apparently the administration now saying the small business part of the exchanges is not going to go forward as planned. We have already seen a 1-year delay in terms of the business mandate and on and on. So that train wreck is already upon us as we move toward October 1.

Let me give one example of the impact of ObamaCare. In Columbus, OH—my home State of Ohio—the Wall Street Journal reported that premiums could increase by as much as 436 percent. Some of my colleagues will take issue with that number. Maybe it is not going to be 436 percent, but the point is that we know it is going to be more expensive, we just do not know how much. That is part of the uncertainty the law creates. In other words, sometimes uncertainty is the worst thing, and that is what we are seeing not just in Ohio but around the country. We do not know what the effect is going to be on our families. We do not know what the effect is going to be on small businesses. We do not know what the effect is going to be on our economy.

Throughout this debate over the continuing resolution, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have talked about this uncertainty. They have talked about how a showdown going up to a potential government shutdown creates uncertainty in the economy. I agree. I do not think we should shut down. In fact, I am offering an amendment to say we should never be shutting down government. It is called the no government shutdown amendment. It is bipartisan. In the budget debate we actually had a few Democrats support it, I am sure against the urging of their leadership, and I appreciate that.

Uncertainty is a problem, but, boy, talk about uncertainty—in the implementation you have some things delayed, others things not delayed, a lot of confusion about how the legislation is going to work. Every day it seems as if we discover a new wrinkle in the law that is going to cost more money and cause more problems in terms of people just understanding what their options are.

The effects of ObamaCare, by the way, do not stop at the hospital door, and they are not limited to our pocketbooks. If you ask Americans what is the most important issue to them, they will tell you it is the lack of good jobs—jobs and the economy. ObamaCare kills jobs.

Take the Cleveland Clinic. The Cleveland Clinic, as some of you know, is the largest employer in northeast Ohio. It has been talked about on the floor by other Members. They have about 40,000 employees.

By the way, it is one of the few things that both President Obama and

Governor Romney agreed on in the campaign, which was that the Cleveland Clinic is providing cutting-edge health care that should be a model for the rest of the country. They do a terrific job.

A week ago the Cleveland Clinic announced it is cutting \$330 million from its budget. What does that mean? That means a bunch of my constituents in the Cleveland area are going to lose their jobs. Why is the Cleveland Clinic having to cut \$330 million from their budget? According to their own spokesperson, to prepare for increased costs and decreased revenues because of ObamaCare.

So, look, it is something I have heard about again and again when I visit with small business owners throughout Ohio. I hear it from our employers, who say they have no choice but to freeze growth. I have a friend who runs a small company in the Cleveland area. He has 47 employees. He has confided in me: You know what. I am not going to 50. Even though I have some additional business—he is starting to see a little pickup in his particular sector—I am not going there. I don't want to get to 50 because I simply don't want the uncertainty and the cost associated with the new mandates and requirements I would have to endure because of ObamaCare.

So you have the “49ers”—employers who are sticking at 49 or fewer because they do not want the onerous requirements of ObamaCare when they cross that threshold of 50 employees.

Others, of course, are reducing the hours of folks who already work for them to well under 40 hours because they have to get under the 30-hour-a-week threshold in ObamaCare. It is so very sad.

You go to somebody and say: You know what. You have to come in at 28 hours now because the health care I am going to have to offer under ObamaCare is not something I can afford. It does not fit within our bottom line.

And this person says: I have a car payment or I have a house payment.

This is sad, and it is having an effect in my State, and I know it from talking to people, but I also know it just by looking at what these requirements are doing to small businesses. It is no surprise to me that this “underemployment” figure we see every month in the employment numbers is growing. Those are the people who are not working full time but working part time. Unfortunately, if you look over the last few months, we have seen a big increase in part-time jobs and not full-time jobs.

In 2010, I do not think many of my Democratic friends thought they were voting for a bill that would kill jobs. I really do not. I do not think they would have voted for it. I cannot believe they thought ObamaCare would drive up premium costs and make health care harder to get, as it has, but that is what is happening. That is why

I believe it needs to be repealed and replaced with more sensible reforms.

The current health care system—before ObamaCare—is far from perfect. It cries out for reform. But, unfortunately, the prescription of ObamaCare is not making things better but worse.

I know this is hard to believe, but sometimes Congress makes mistakes. In this case, in my view, Congress made a big mistake. But we can fix it, and we can replace it with real bipartisan health care reform that does foster an environment where jobs can be created, that does provide for health care to be available rather than harder and harder to get. We can get there but only if we start by—in this vote today—saying: Let's defund it, let's repeal it, and let's replace it with something better.

As we learn more about the effects of ObamaCare, we are seeing some courage on the other side of the aisle. I know one of my colleagues today on the Democratic side said he could look to delaying ObamaCare's individual mandate for a year, for instance. That only makes sense. We have already told the businesses they are going to get a 1-year delay, but a woman or a guy who works at that business is told: You have a mandate even though your business does not, and you have to pay a fine if you do not get health care. So 22 House Democrats voted in favor of delaying the individual mandate as well. So I think on both sides of the aisle you are beginning to see some interest in at least having a delay to be able to try to improve this legislation.

But the Senate has the opportunity to speak here this afternoon. We are going to vote on this amendment as to whether to defund ObamaCare. I have heard from my constituents. I am sure you have heard from yours. Overwhelmingly, I say to my colleagues, what I am hearing is they do not want this law to continue. Do they think the health care system is perfect? No. But they think what ObamaCare is offering makes it worse, not better.

Republicans cannot do it alone. We have 46 votes here. You need 60. But in an act of bipartisanship and real political courage, maybe we will have a good result this afternoon and begin this process of moving toward a better system. I urge my colleagues to show that courage so we can turn to a better way to lower health care costs, to increase health care choices, and ultimately to improve the quality of care for all the families we represent.

I yield back my time.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Madam President, I wish to take a moment to reflect a little bit on this impasse where we find ourselves. The Senator from Indiana is going to join me in a discussion here, and I will have a unanimous consent request along the way.

First of all, as to where we are, as we all know, we are at an impasse on how to fund the roughly 40 percent of the

Federal Government that is funded through discretionary spending—the spending that Congress controls, the spending that is supposed to happen through the ordinary appropriations process but does not around here.

As we address this issue, it has become obvious that every single Republican in the House and the Senate wants to defund ObamaCare as a step in the direction of completely repealing this completely unworkable bill. But all the Democrats support ObamaCare, and they want to implement it and they want to fund it and they want to move forward.

The impasse arises, obviously, because the Democrats cannot have their way in the House where the Republicans are in control, and we Republicans cannot have our way in the Senate where the Democrats are in control. So I have a suggestion. My suggestion is, maybe—maybe—there is a third way. Maybe this does not have to be completely binary. Maybe this does not have to be an all-or-nothing proposition in which one side completely wins and the other side completely loses.

Among my Democratic friends—who are big fans of ObamaCare—I would think there is nobody who actually thinks that is a perfect bill. I cannot imagine that when the American public has made clear, overwhelmingly, their opposition to this bill. When you cannot pick up a newspaper in America today without reading a front-page story about the huge problems and costs and negative effects ObamaCare is creating, I cannot imagine that anyone thinks this is all perfect.

So here is my suggestion: Why not repeal a few of the more egregious flaws that have been acknowledged as flaws on both sides of the aisle—those things that are not working that are most problematic—just a few. Couldn't we do that and at least make some progress?

So the three items I have in mind are the subject of my unanimous consent request. One would be repeal of the medical device tax, which is one of the most egregious flaws in this badly flawed bill, and I will speak some more about this tax in a little while. A second would be to delay for 1 year the individual mandate. I think Senator COATS from Indiana is going to speak a little bit more about how important it would be to delay that individual mandate. The third would be to protect the religious freedom of those who object based on deeply held religious views. They object to the contraception mandate that is imposed on them, including faith-based institutions.

So I am going to request that we consider these amendments. That is all—just asking for an up-or-down vote on these amendments. I think that is a pretty reasonable request. Every one of these has had bipartisan support.

By the way, the repeal of the medical device tax was supported by 79 Senators. Two-thirds of the Democratic

Senators voted in favor of an amendment to repeal the medical device tax, and every single Republican. That is not even controversial anymore, to repeal the medical device tax.

They all have some level of bipartisan support. Taken together, they are about budget neutral. Repeal of the Medical device tax would cost the government some revenue, but the delay of the individual mandate would save the government expenses, so it is about revenue neutral.

This could probably speed up the whole process. If we allow these amendments, frankly, they all would probably pass. If they became part of the underlying bill and if Senator REID has the votes to pass the amendment he wants to pass, what would go back to the House would probably pass the House and it probably would not have to get ping-ponged back here and risk a government shutdown. Finally, it would break this impasse, and it would demonstrate that we are at least able to come together on the things where there is bipartisan agreement.

So I think the most reasonable thing in the world is to have the vote. That is all. I do not know for sure how it will turn out. I think it will pass because these items have demonstrated bipartisan support before. But I think it is unreasonable not to be able to have the vote.

So, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendments be set aside and that it be in order to call up the following amendments, which are at the desk: No. 1971, to repeal the medical device tax; No. 1972, to delay the individual mandate; and No. 1973, to protect religious freedom; I further ask consent that each amendment be limited to up to 1 hour for debate equally divided in the usual form; I further ask consent that following use or yielding back of time on each of the amendments, the Senate proceed to a vote in relation to each amendment with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. TESTER. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Pennsylvania for his efforts here. We very much share the same sentiment and the same concerns going forward here. We are going to vote sometime today, perhaps tomorrow, perhaps on Saturday. We have had a week-long effort here undertaking a very important issue, serious to the future of the American people's health and to the American economy.

I think it is pretty clear that there are a couple of hard truths that we have to recognize as we come to this vote. I am still hopeful that we will be able to see at least five of our colleagues from across the aisle come and join us.

For months we have heard about the impact of the health care act and the

mess that it has created, the confusion, and the egregious taxes that are attached to it.

My colleague has talked about the medical device tax. In Indiana, it is one of our key industries which provides high wages and skilled positions for people. These are products that are exported around the world which in turn helps our balance of trade. These products are saving the lives of millions of people. Some of these innovations that come out of Warsaw or Bloomington or other parts of Indiana, and the companies that are in this medical device business, are truly extraordinary.

Yet they got socked as a "pay for" for ObamaCare by a 2.3 percent tax on their gross sales, not on their profits. As a company, say they are developing a new product and they come to a point where they know they are not going to make a profit for 2 or 3 years, but they know they have something that is really going to work, really going to provide life saving or life enhancing benefits.

Say they lose money, but they are selling their product. The sales have not yet caught up with all of the research costs. So they report a loss at the end of year, or maybe they break even. These companies are being taxed 2.3 percent on the total amount of money that they take in, even though that money does not reach a profit.

That is egregious, offensive, unbelievable. I mean, who could think up stuff like this, and who could vote for stuff like this? A repeal of this tax is one of three amendments my colleague from Pennsylvania has offered. I regret that it has been objected to. We will not even have a chance to debate it. We will not have a chance to vote on it. We will not have a chance to put down our yeas or our nays on where we stand.

The real tragedy of this is that a majority of Democrats voted to repeal this egregious tax in the budget.

Mr. TOOMEY. The Senator from Indiana pointed out exactly correctly the nature of this tax. It is extremely unusual that we choose to punish a company based on its sales, irrespective of whether it is making any money at all.

Senator COATS observed that this is a 2.3 percent tax on sales. I want to touch on some of the real world consequences that are happening right now in Pennsylvania because this tax went into effect on January 1. It is happening now. Here is what is happening in Pennsylvania: Fujirebio Diagnostics in Mahler, a world leader in the production of diagnostics that detect cancer, had to put on a hiring freeze. They had been hiring. They were planning on more hiring. They cannot do it now. So there is a hiring freeze there.

Cook Medical in Pittsburgh, PA. They manufacture pacemakers. They had plans to build five new plants over time in the United States. Those plants are all on hold. Everything has been put on the shelf; no new plants as long as they have to contend with this.

Boehringer Laboratories in Phoenixville, PA. They make surgical equipment. No new hires. Hiring freeze at a time when our unemployment is so unacceptably high, so many people looking for work.

B Braun. They make a wide range of medical equipment, located in the Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania. They have a hiring freeze and immediate and drastic cuts in research spending. What else can they do? Such a huge new chunk of their revenue has been taken.

This is an ill-conceived tax. It is costing us jobs. It is costing us innovation. It is costing us in the quality of health care. Finally, everybody gets that, as evidenced by 79 Members of this body voting to repeal it. We are denied the opportunity to have a binding vote.

It is shocking to me.

Mr. COATS. I thank the Senator from Pennsylvania for listing those companies. Many of those same companies have facilities in Indiana. In fact, Cook International was founded by Bill Cook in Bloomington, IN, initially working out of his study in his home. Now it is an international company providing thousands of jobs across the country, in Pennsylvania, in Indiana and other places.

Unfortunately, Bill passed away this year. That company is going forward. But there were five new facilities hiring that are now put on hold as a result of this tax being imposed on their gross sales—not on their profits, but on their gross sales.

So you can take in \$1 million, but it costs you \$2 million because you are developing a new product. You lose the million and the government says: We are going to tax you on every penny that you took in regardless of whether you made a profit or not. It is just unthinkable.

Thankfully, a majority of Democrats have joined us in this effort. We got 79 votes out of 100 to repeal this. Yet we are not able to vote on it. Why are we not able to vote on it? Because the White House does not want to lose that money coming in that is so egregiously taxed to pay for some of the unaffordable care act.

That is one of many things that we would like to debate. We would like to vote on that. We think we can vote on some of the egregious stuff that is in this ObamaCare. The hard truth is this: Despite all of our best efforts—I want to make this point clear: Every one of 46 Republicans, our total here in the Senate, is fully 100 percent committed to the repeal, the defunding of ObamaCare.

Unfortunately, it takes 51 in order to achieve our goal, unless we get some help from the other side. There is no indication of that now. We have gone through several machinations this week. There will be some votes coming up. I want the vote to be clearly a yea or a nay. People go home and they say: “You know, do not hide behind this

procedural process of cloture. We do not even know what that means.” This is a procedural move. Over time, politicians have figured out ways to go back and say: “No, I am really not for that.” Or to say: “I am not really against that. We had a procedural move. I was for this or I was against that procedural move because it denied this amendment or it did this or did that.”

The real vote is when it comes down to it—it is as old as the Bible. Let your yea be yea and your nay be nay. Are you for ObamaCare or against ObamaCare? That is the vote we will have when the majority leader comes down here and offers a motion to strip the defunding of ObamaCare out of this bill.

I do not support a shutdown. I might support a shutdown if it would achieve the goal of actually defeating ObamaCare. But the truth that has not been told to a lot of the American people, by some outside groups promoting this, is the fact that a government shutdown won't stop ObamaCare because a majority of the funding is mandatory not discretionary. Our vote on this matter will not affect that mandatory funding.

All of the taxes will go forward. Much of the implementation of ObamaCare will go forward no matter how we vote on this. So that fact has to be recognized. It also has to be recognized that it does not appear that we have the votes. Certainly we do not have the votes to override a veto by the President.

He is not going to say: “Hand me a pen. I am sorry, this is a terrible idea. I see what is happening here. Yes, we should cancel this program.” I have not heard the White House giving the indication that is what is going to happen. So those who say the vote is on a procedural motion, essentially want to shut down the government, No. 1.

Maybe that would be worth it if it accomplished the goal. But to do it by not accomplishing the goal takes us nowhere. So what we are trying to do is basically say: “Yes, let's vote to defund it. Let's vote to repeal it.” But if that does not work, if that does not pass, then let's see if we can at least do something. I am not ready to give up. I am not ready to say: “If we do not pass this vote on a cloture motion then that is it. We will never have a chance at this again.”

Are you kidding me? I mean, people are just learning about ObamaCare. The public sentiment is building. I commend Senator CRUZ for standing up and highlighting this issue. I could not have stood here for 21 hours. I would not have made it. More power to him. He has brought this issue to us. He has focused the attention of Americans on this particular issue.

But given that attention, that certainly does not mean we are going to give up. Senator TOOMEY and I are going to go forward. We have some provisions here that we think will make a difference. I have offered, and Senator

TOOMEY has also offered, to delay the implementation of this. We delayed it for the employers, big business, but what about the individuals? What about the people in North Dakota, Louisiana, or Alaska, just to name a few? I know for sure Indiana and Pennsylvania.

Why should we impose a mandate on individuals when we do not impose it on the businesses? The President has said: “We cannot get our act together here with the businesses so we will give you a 1-year waiver.” In fairness, let's give that to the individuals. That is exactly what we are about here.

At this point, I would ask unanimous consent that the pending amendments be set aside, and it be in order to call up my amendment No. 1979. I further ask consent that the debate on the amendment be limited to up to 1 hour equally divided in the usual form, and I further ask consent that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to a vote on that amendment with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. COATS. Madam President, I want to yield back to my colleague here. I regret that we are not able to take this up. I regret that we are not able to have a debate or a vote on this matter. We are going to do all we can to continue to address, to work for, and to fight for the repeal and the defunding, however we accomplish it, of the piece of legislation that was jammed through the process without any bipartisan support, that is now unfolding before our very eyes. We see what a colossal mess it is making.

We are not giving up on this process. In fact, we are going forward. This first vote on cloture, that is not the end of this. This is the beginning. As this unfolds for the American people, I think we are going to gain the support on a bipartisan basis to get rid of this, to start over with more responsible, cost-effective, meaningful, worthwhile provisions that address our health care needs and not take this one-piece-fits-all bill and jam it down the throats of the American people.

I yield back.

Mr. TOOMEY. Madam President, I want to commend the Senator from Indiana. I agree entirely. I think this is really an outrageous process. Let's consider where we are and why. We have another manufactured fiscal crisis, manufactured because the majority party that controls this body refuses to bring out appropriations bills.

We had one appropriation reach the floor this entire year. If you do not do appropriations bills, you run into this cliff at the end of the process. So now where are we? We have this giant CR, this huge omnibus, whatever you want to call it, that is going to be here on the floor for a vote.

Senator REID has decided he would use his power to make sure that he gets to have an amendment. Actually, he gets to have a couple of amendments and gets to gut the language that would defund ObamaCare, which will be on a party line vote.

When I ask for unanimous consent to bring up amendments that have broad bipartisan support, including one which has been supported by two-thirds of all of the Democrats and every Republican, I am not allowed to offer that amendment.

We have a completely dysfunctional Senate. It is manifesting itself very clearly today. Frankly, given where this is leading, given the fact that one party here is not given an opportunity to weigh in and engage in this debate and offer amendments, I cannot support cloture on the underlying bill.

I yield the floor.

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

The Senator from Montana.

MR. BAUCUS. For this hour of majority time, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators have 20 minutes each: Senator BAUCUS, Senator FRANKEN, and Senator LEAHY.

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

MR. BAUCUS. On September 26, 1987, 26 years ago this very day, President Reagan faced a Congress playing politics with the Nation's debt ceiling.

Knowing the catastrophic consequences a default would have on America's economy, President Reagan addressed the Nation. Speaking from the Oval Office he said:

Congress consistently brings the government to the edge of default before facing its responsibility.

He warned:

This brinkmanship threatens the holders of government bonds and those who rely on Social Security and veterans benefits. Interest rates would skyrocket, instability would occur in financial markets, and the Federal deficit would soar.

The United States has a special responsibility to itself and the world to meet its obligations.

That was a pretty stern warning. While spoken more than a quarter of a century ago, President Reagan's words, sadly, still ring true today.

I hope my colleagues listen to those words of reason. I hope my colleagues in the House of Representatives heed the warning from President Reagan about using the debt ceiling for brinkmanship.

As we know, the Federal Government hits its debt limit on May 19. For the past 130 days, the Treasury Secretary has been using what are known as extraordinary measures to continue funding the government. We are running, therefore, on borrowed time. But those extraordinary measures will be used up by October 17. At that point we will have exhausted every measure. Default—that is the United States not paying its debts—will occur unless Congress acts to raise the debt limit.

There will be much debate in the coming days on how to deal with the debt limit. The House continuing resolution which we have before us today contains a proposal that some claim would avoid the default. What is it? What do they claim, what is the provision?

It is a dangerous plan that gives the Treasury Secretary the unprecedented power to prioritize payments; that is, the Treasury Secretary decides what obligations should be paid and not paid; that is, once the debt limit is surpassed—in short, the power to pick and choose which bills to pay.

The House CR does, however, identify two specific payments as priorities they have to pay first. What are they? Social Security and interest to holders of U.S. bonds. They are all first in line. Everyone else has to fight among themselves.

We are all familiar with Social Security and its importance. It is a given. But the American people may not be as familiar with the principal and interest on U.S. bonds. This is the payment Uncle Sam makes to various persons and countries that hold our debt. It can be U.S. citizens who hold our debt or it can be countries such as China, Japan, Russia, and Saudi Arabia. I might add that the foreign countries that hold most of the U.S. debt among the countries I listed are China and Japan. They hold the most foreign debt.

The continuing resolution categorizes the interest to these foreign bondholders as a must-pay bill—we must pay those first; that is, Social Security and interest. It leaves all other obligations of the Federal budget to be paid only by the revenue Treasury has on hand on any given day. Some days revenue comes in and some days revenue comes in more than others.

Critical programs will be left fighting for the remaining scraps of funding. In effect, the House proposal to prioritize payments would result in the interests of America's veterans, the unemployed, and students, among others, being left behind the interests of China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia. It is pay Russia first, pay U.S. veterans second—if there is money left over to pay U.S. veterans.

This proposal makes no sense. A few of the programs that would compete for funding under the House plan are veterans' benefits, child nutrition, military salaries, military operations and maintenance, Medicare payments to doctors and hospitals, student loans, highway funding, dollars for air traffic controllers, unemployment insurance, and tax refunds, to name a few. They are all going to have to compete with each other for what is left after interest on the debt and Social Security payments are made under the House measure.

Can you imagine the result? Medicare beneficiaries will be pitted against disabled vets, each fighting the other. Students receiving Pell grants will be up against patients receiving medical

care; doctors conducting cancer research would be pitted against agents patrolling our borders. The chaos that would ensue would be unimaginable. We can't even begin to fathom the chaos. When this scheme was first proposed during the debt limit debate in January, it became obvious what it would be like. I compared it to the movie "The Hunger Games," hunger games where individuals were out scrapping, trying to save their own lives and killing other people to save their own lives. The sequel "The Hunger Games" is not out until November, but we can now see the coming attractions of the House CR. Their plan for a debt prioritization would pit one program against another in a fight for survival.

Under this ill-conceived plan, the Secretary of Treasury would be given unprecedented power to decide which programs are funded and which are eliminated. It is in the Treasury Secretary's hands. He decides, the President decides: Do veterans get paid, do Medicare beneficiaries get paid, does the military get paid? That is up to the Treasury Secretary and the President.

No such power should ever be placed in the hands of any Treasury Secretary, regardless of party affiliation. No Member of Congress who believes in our system of checks and balances can honestly advocate for this idea to stand. In article I of the Constitution, Congress decides what appropriations should be paid, not the executive branch.

Finally, this House proposal is wrong for the country. Why? Because it ignores the progress we have made over the past 2 years to actually reduce America's deficits and debt.

With the adoption of the Budget Control Act in 2011 and the fiscal year cliff agreement earlier this year, debt has been stabilized. Together with interest savings, these actions will cut the deficit by about \$2.8 trillion over the next 10 years. Add in the savings for winding down operations for Iraq and Afghanistan, and the total deficit reduction reaches almost \$3.7 trillion over 10 years. These are real savings. All this progress must not be ignored.

I agree with many of my colleagues that even more can be done to reduce the deficit and promote economic growth. But those actions should be separate from the debt limit debate. It is a different subject.

We are in no position to play games with the economy. It is completely irresponsible to threaten default on the debt. Since 1789, this country has always honored its obligations. We paid our bills. We are known for that. Americans know and people around the world know that America, up to this date, anyway, has always paid its bills. Even when the Capitol burned to the ground in 1814, guess what, America still honored its debts. Yet I heard a Senator say a few weeks ago that failing to raise the debt limit is "no big deal."

No big deal.

I couldn't imagine when I heard those words. It is more than a big deal; it is more than a huge deal. It is a catastrophic deal. It is something that is so bad it is unimaginable.

People have forgotten the summer of 2011. Remember August of 2011? People have forgotten what happened when Congress failed to address the debt limit decisively. I remember what happened. The dysfunctional debt-ceiling debate led to the first ever downgrade of America's credit rating—the first ever downgrade of America's credit rating. I remember the stock market plunged 635 points the day after the S&P downgrade. I remember that 14-day trading period in the summer of 2011 when the Dow plummeted more than 2000 points, about 20 percent. Consumer confidence back then dropped even lower than it did in the heat of the 2008 financial crisis, and it took nearly a year to recover.

Worst was the impact on jobs. During the months Congress was fighting over the debt limit, job creation fell by nearly 50 percent.

Remember, Congress did still raise the debt ceiling without defaulting, but the political brinkmanship did all that damage to the economy. We did raise the debt, but look at what damage the brinkmanship caused to our economy. We cannot let that happen again.

Time is running short. We need to stop playing games. This will to fight is getting us nowhere. Enough with the threat of default; enough of the schemes to prioritize payments. As President Reagan said:

The United States has a special responsibility to itself and to the world to meet its obligations.

It is time we accept our responsibility. It is time for us to work together. It is time for us to get the job done.

I yield the floor, and 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. FRANKEN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. FRANKEN. Madam President, I wish to talk a little bit about health reform.

Soon over 1 million Minnesotans will have the opportunity to buy their health insurance on MNsure, Minnesota's health insurance marketplace. Minnesotans who buy their own insurance in the health insurance marketplace, including Franni and me, will have the opportunity to compare plans and choose the coverage that works best for their families.

Not only will MNsure make the options clearer and more accessible, but the health care reform law is also making sure that Minnesotans feel secure in their health care coverage. That is

because insurers can no longer cap the amount of benefits you can get over the course of your lifetime, they can't drop you if you get sick, and they cannot discriminate against you based on a preexisting condition.

There is a lot in the health care reform law that a lot of Americans don't even know about yet. For example, I championed a couple of key provisions that are improving the quality and the value of health care coverage that we all rely on. I authored a provision requiring health insurers to provide a good value for your premium dollars, and I helped to establish a national fund for health care prevention.

Why is this especially important right now? Because the House of Representatives passed a continuing resolution to fund the budget that also defunds the health care reform law. So before we decide on that measure, I wish to make sure we remember what is in this important law.

First, we are requiring insurance companies to give their customers good value for their premium dollars. One thing many Americans don't know is that millions of Americans are getting rebates from their health insurance companies when those companies don't provide that value. I wrote the provision that does this. It has the catchy name "medical loss ratio," which is sometimes called the slightly more catchy 80/20 rule. Because of my medical loss ratio provision, which is based on a Minnesota State law, health insurance companies must spend at least 80 percent of their premiums on actual health care—not on administrative costs, not on marketing, not on profits, not on CEO salaries. If insurance companies don't meet the 80 percent for individual and small group markets or the 85 percent for large group policies, then the insurance company has to rebate the difference.

The fact is my provision is working. Last year, nearly 13 million Americans benefited from checks from their insurers, and this year about 8½ million Americans benefited from rebates that were sent out in July of this year. That is a good thing—fewer people getting rebates. This year is a good thing because that means insurers were saving you money on the front end instead of rebating you the money on the back end.

That is part of why health care costs have risen in the last 3 years at a slower rate than at any time in the last 50 years. Is that entirely due to the Affordable Care Act? No. But in contrast with what is being put out here and there, we are not seeing the cost of health care spike. In fact, the opposite is true.

I will say it again: Health care costs have gone up less—have risen at a slower rate—in the last 3 years than at any other time in the last 50 years. The bottom line is that my provision is making insurance companies more efficient at helping keep health care costs in check for people, and I am very proud of that.

People also don't know how much we did to improve access to preventive health care in health care reform. Anyone who has ever gotten a flu shot knows an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Along with former Republican Senator Dick Lugar of Indiana, I fought to get the National Diabetes Prevention Program included in the health care reform law, and it exemplifies the benefit of this kind of reform to our health care system.

This program, which was piloted in St. Paul, MN, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, involves structured nutrition classes and exercise at community-based organizations such as the YMCA. It has been shown to reduce the likelihood that someone with prediabetes will be diagnosed with full-blown type 2 diabetes by nearly 60 percent. That is pretty good.

The program doesn't just make people healthier, it also saves everyone money. The Diabetes Prevention Program costs about \$400 per participant, as compared to treating type 2 diabetes which costs more than \$7,000 every single year. That is why United Health, the largest private insurer in the country—that also happens to be headquartered in Minnesota—is already providing the program to its beneficiaries. In fact, the CEO of United Health told me that for every \$1 they invest in the Diabetes Prevention Program, they save \$4 on health care costs later on.

This homegrown program is funded out of the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which is another program in the health care reform law that is designed to invest in evidence-based health care prevention in communities across the country. In Minnesota, the Prevention and Public Health Fund has supported tobacco cessation programs, it has helped to prevent infectious diseases, and it has expanded our desperately needed primary care workforce. Preventing disease while saving money—preventing disease while saving money—is smart reform.

We did a lot of other things in the health care law too. I worked with several of my colleagues to develop a value index which will change the way Medicare pays physicians to take into account the quality of the care the doctor provides—reward quality instead of quantity.

My home State of Minnesota is the leader in delivering high-value health care at a relatively low cost. Yet, traditionally, we have been woefully underreimbursed for it. For example, Texas gets reimbursed almost 50 percent more, on average, per Medicare patient than Minnesota.

This isn't about pitting Minnesota against Texas or Florida. It is about rewarding those States to become more like Minnesota. Imagine if we brought Medicare expenditures down by 30 percent around the country. It would bring enormous benefits not just to Minnesota but across the country because it will bring down the cost of health care delivery nationwide.

I am working very hard to make sure health care reform works for Minnesota. The implementation of any major reform is going to be a challenge, but I don't think Minnesotans or Americans want us to keep looking backward. They want us to move forward and to implement the law as best we can. They do not want the House of Representatives to waste precious time and vote to repeal the law—for the 42nd time.

The fact is, if the law is repealed, a lot of things Americans like will be taken away from them. Americans don't want seniors' prescription drugs to go back up. They do not want children with preexisting conditions to be kicked off their health plans. Those are just a couple of things that would happen if the law were repealed.

Last year, more than 54,000 seniors in Minnesota got a 50-percent discount on their covered brand-name prescription drugs when they hit the doughnut hole in Medicare Part D. This discount resulted in an average savings of \$644 per person and a total savings of more than \$34 million in Minnesota alone and we are not done. By 2020, the doughnut hole will be closed completely. But the closing of the doughnut hole would go away if we repealed the health care reform law.

Thanks to a provision that allows young adults up to the age of 26 to stay on their parents' health insurance, 35,000 young people in Minnesota and more than 3 million young people nationally were able to keep their health care coverage. Those young people would be kicked off of their coverage if we repealed the health care law.

Health care reform also ended insurance companies setting lifetime limits on the amount of care an individual can receive. So if you or a loved one gets sick, you can never be told by your health insurer: That is it, no more coverage for you. Go ahead and file for bankruptcy. Guess what. If Congress repealed the health care reform law, that would go away too.

I am not saying the law is perfect. But if there are problems, the American people want us to work together to fix them, not refight old fights. That is what I hope to do—move forward by implementing the law, making any changes we need to make along the way.

Millions of Americans across the country are already experiencing the benefits of this law. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the implementation of the important provisions I have outlined.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WARREN). The Senator from Vermont.

MR. LEAHY. Madam President, what is the parliamentary situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is currently considering H.J. Res. 59, the continuing budget resolution.

MR. LEAHY. I thank the Chair.

Madam President, I listened this week to the distinguished chairwoman

of the Appropriations Committee, Senator MIKULSKI, make a compelling case for passing a clean, short-term continuing resolution through November 15 of this year so we can get on with the business of debating and passing appropriations bills.

We have a lot of sound and fury here signifying nothing, to quote Shakespeare, but we ought to vote up or down on something. It is easy to give speeches or phony filibusters or whatever and say: Look what we are accomplishing. No. It is not accomplishing anything.

I agree with everything the chairwoman has said, particularly about the bipartisan way the committee has written and reported bills this year. Any one of those bills could be debated and voted on today. Vote yes, vote no—but vote. Conference them with the House, if they pass, and send them to the President.

Actually, there is some precedent for doing that—a precedent of over 200 years doing it that way.

Instead, we are repeating this all-too-familiar drama where we are again in a high-stakes stalemate over simply keeping the Federal Government functioning. What was once the regular business of Congress has again been replaced by political theater and another artificial made-in-Congress crisis that threatens the economy and, in ways large and small, threatens every single family in America.

Don't come on this floor and say you stand for family values when you are willing to destroy retirement plans of families, savings for their children to go to college, and possibly their jobs. Once again, grandstanding prevails over common sense, comity, and cooperation—three values that are vital to the effective functioning of a representative government.

Those who travel around our States—and I do all the time—and listen to our constituents, know the costs of a government shutdown and the devastating effects of sequestration.

Vermont is not unique in having fewer children in Head Start programs, medical researchers at our universities who cannot obtain research grants, seniors cut from Meals On Wheels, or young veterans back from Iraq or Afghanistan who can't find jobs, or families living in shelters or on the streets because there is no safety net housing assistance. But some members of the House and the Senate say we have to cut all of this. Is that who we have become as a country?

The decisions we make have real and serious consequences for our economy, for our children, and for our community—ranging from St. Johnsbury, VT, to Houston, TX.

As chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee that funds the Department of State and foreign operations, I want to speak briefly about the consequences of shutting down the government and a full-year continuing resolution for U.S. national security. It

should make every Senator think long and hard about the role they want the United States to play in an increasingly competitive and dangerous world.

We hear over and over again on this floor the saying, "freedom isn't free." Well, it is not. And the corollary to that is, neither are U.S. security and U.S. influence.

That is what is at stake: U.S. leadership in the Middle East, at the United Nations, in Africa, in South and Central Asia, and in our own hemisphere. If the government shuts down, the impacts will be felt here at home and by our allies, and exploited by our adversaries.

It is the worst hypocrisy, because those same Senators who are toying with shutting down the government want the United States to respond when war breaks out in Syria, or famine in Ethiopia, or an outbreak of the Ebola virus, or a devastating earthquake in Haiti, a terrorist attack in Kenya, the false imprisonment of a constituent in Nicaragua, or the kidnapping of an American missionary in the Philippines.

They expect the United States to solve the problem or to rally others to help solve it, but they are willing to do away with paying the salaries of our diplomats, or our aid workers, or our dues to the United Nations, or emergency food aid, or our support for NATO or the World Health Organization, or the myriad of other programs and organizations that depend on us and that serve our interests around the world. They think that somehow this is going to be paid for with pixie dust. We are grown-ups and this is the real world. When we pull back, when we don't lead, others are only too happy to fill the vacuum.

A shutdown would mean that the Export-Import Bank, which provides financing to United States companies, would immediately stop processing new applications, and would lose \$2 to \$4 billion in monthly income for U.S. exporters, jeopardizing approximately 30,000 American jobs, reducing deposits to the U.S. Treasury by \$15 to \$20 million per month as a result of fees that go uncollected by the Bank.

The Overseas Private Investment Corporation, that provides financing and insurance to American companies that invest overseas, would lose its authority to function. No longer could it make disbursements, it would bring to a screeching halt the activities of hundreds of U.S. businesses that rely on OPIC financing.

The State, Foreign Operations bill that Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM and I wrote that was reported by the Appropriations Committee on July 25 by a lopsided bipartisan vote of 23-7, protects U.S. national security interests and responds to compelling humanitarian needs. Americans recognize that we have a moral responsibility as the wealthiest, most powerful nation on earth. This is who we are.

Senator GRAHAM's and my bill includes \$8.5 billion for global health programs. A full-year continuing resolution means \$389 million less to combat HIV/AIDS and other preventable diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, and pneumonia, and malnutrition. None of us have children or grandchildren that have to worry about these illnesses, but with the relatively small amounts that we spend we can save the lives of countless children in other countries.

A full year continuing resolution would mean tens of thousands of additional deaths from these diseases. It means tens of thousands of additional children orphaned by AIDS. It means millions fewer life-saving immunizations for children resulting in tens of thousands of preventable deaths.

For pennies we can vaccinate millions of children around the world. Are we going to say, instead, that we can't do that because we have a political point to make? We are grown ups. We are not sound-bite aficionados. We should be legislators.

The Senate bill includes \$2.5 billion, which is \$115 million above a full year continuing resolution, for programs in the poorest countries. These have bipartisan support, with Republicans and Democrats, supporting basic and higher education, food security, energy, and water and sanitation programs.

If you don't agree that we have a moral responsibility, then let's just be pragmatic about our own security. Because if we don't do this, the alternative to development and opportunity is poverty, religious extremism, transnational crime, and violent insurgencies. It is a growing reality across the globe, from Somalia to Mexico, and it threatens our economy, our security, and the security of our allies.

A government shutdown is a complete failure of our responsibility as legislators. We are sent here to make decisions—not slogans—to make government work for the American people and for the good of the Nation, including our national security and our interests around the globe.

Over and over again there are those who want to give speeches, but they don't want to make hard choices. They were elected to serve, yet they make a career of blaming the government.

Funding the government by continuing resolution is irresponsible and it is dangerous. It diminishes our standing in the world. It erodes our leadership. It is unworthy of the Congress. It is a betrayal of the people who sent us here.

Let's have, if not the courage, at least the honesty to bring up the appropriations bills and vote on them. Vote yes or vote no. Stand up and be counted. Stop hiding behind the delaying tactics and partisan sloganeering that have become such a tiresome refrain around here.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I am reminded, when I hear the distinguished

President pro tempore of the Senate talk, why the people of Vermont so love him.

Here is a man who has set all kinds of records in Vermont: the first Democrat elected, and on and on, with all the many accolades that he has. I have always admired and appreciated him. Each day that goes by, I understand better than I did the last why the people of Vermont revere this good man.

HELIUM STEWARDSHIP ACT OF 2013

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask the Chair to lay before the Senate a message from the House with respect to H.R. 527.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the House agreed to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 527) entitled "An Act to amend the Helium Act to complete the privatization of the Federal helium reserve in a competitive market fashion that ensures stability in the helium markets while protecting the interests of American taxpayers, and for other purposes," with an amendment.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent the Senate concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment; and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

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

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, we know that in Washington, DC, it is almost as if there is an inexhaustible capacity to manufacture false crises. I am pleased to say that with today's vote Congress avoided a real crisis for scores of American manufacturing and technology companies employing millions of American workers. That is because without the legislation that the Senate just passed, those workers and companies would no longer have been able to get access to helium, which is a critical industrial gas without which these companies cannot operate.

In addition to avoiding an immediate crisis for these businesses and workers, the bipartisan legislation that passed the House of Representatives yesterday and the Senate today can be something of a model for how the Congress can act on must pass bills. Senator MURKOWSKI and I have worked for many months on this legislation in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to achieve a number of goals that members on both sides of the aisle support.

First, our bipartisan legislation gets the Federal Government out of the helium business permanently—something that should have been done long ago. This bill also addresses the need to ensure helium supplies in the short term.

It does this by requiring the Federal Government to shift from selling helium at a government-set price to selling helium at a market-based price.

The bill does this over a 5-year period so that there is no panic, no sudden changes in supply, and American businesses can stop worrying about whether the helium supply truck is going to show up next month. The bill phases out commercial sales over the next 7 or 8 years and then gets the Federal Government out of the helium business entirely within 8 years by selling off the helium reserve. With prices for helium now reflecting their real value in the market place, the private sector will have the incentives it needs to invest in new helium supplies to replace the Federal reserve.

Second, our bipartisan bill ends the Federal helium program in a way that is not only fully paid for but would actually lower the deficit by \$90 million. I particularly want to point out the contributions of two of the members of our committee, Senators RISCH and FLAKE who were instrumental in ensuring that while the helium program gets phased out some of the savings for taxpayers should go to contribute to deficit reduction. So I wanted to point out the Senators' role in shaping the legislation to ensure a significant contribution to deficit reduction.

Contributing to deficit reduction, getting a better deal for taxpayers by transitioning helium sales to market rates and completely ending a Federal program that has gone far longer than it should have are priorities that all senators can support. And today's vote reflects that.

But the benefits of this legislation are not limited to helium users and taxpayers. Our bipartisan legislation also provides one-year of funding for the Secure Rural School program that expired earlier this year. This program provides funding for schools, roads and law enforcement in hundreds of rural counties in 41 States where there are national forests.

The expiration of the Secure Rural Schools Program left rural America out in the cold. The program needed to be extended for a year while the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee works on a longer term approach to meet the needs of forest dependent communities around the country.

This is a more than 100-year-old commitment that the Federal Government made to these counties when the national forests were created and will have to be met one way or another. Our bill pays for a short-term extension of this program without raising taxes or increasing the debt.

The bill before the Senate also includes a public-private program to help address the needs of one of our national treasures—America's National Parks. The bill creates a matching fund to leverage a \$50 million federal investment that must be matched dollar for dollar with non-Federal funding.

The Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing earlier this year on the multi-billion funding backlog that our national parks are facing.