

he relies on contracts with the Federal Government for much of his business, and his employees—to whose ranks he has been adding—will be impacted by this potential shutdown, if only the uncertainty it creates. He is not alone. Businesses all over Connecticut and the country will face a tougher economic climate because of the shutdown. The Small Business Administration will stop processing applications for the business loans it provides to tens of thousands of entrepreneurs, risk takers, and job creators around the country. Perhaps the most galling aspect of this shutdown is the direct economic hardship it will cause to families whose jobs will be threatened and whose livelihoods will be at risk.

There are hours to go before the final hour, but the point is, as the President said so well earlier, keeping the government open is not a bargaining chip, it is our job. President Obama said: “You don’t get to extract a ransom for doing your job.”

Families need to be able to plan for their future, businesses need certainty in order to make investments and hire new workers, and the Nation needs both parties, not just one, to be fully committed to the democratic process.

I hope in the time remaining the House does its job, that these extremist demands are rejected—and certainly by this Chamber they will be. My hope is that we can move forward, keep the government open, provide the services people need, and support the economy, which is all too necessary at this point in our history.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the time for morning business, with debate only, be extended until 9:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, and that the majority leader be recognized at 9:30 p.m.

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

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, let me speak for a moment about what we have happening. There is no reason for this happening, and there is absolutely no reason why, first of all, we could not have worked together to put a budget in place. We, months ago, passed a budget in the Senate and have been trying to go to a conference com-

mittee with the House so we could work it out and have a long-term budget that continues to bring down the debt. By the way, the deficit is coming down, which is very positive. But we know we need to continue to do more in a balanced way. That could be happening. It is not happening because the same people now who are putting us in a position where in a few hours there may very well be a government shutdown are the same ones who do not want to negotiate to get a budget for our country, which is very difficult to understand in terms of what the strategy is other than to just obstruct.

We are now in a situation where we have agreed to a compromise that would allow the continuation of funding of public services, from safety to health research, to what we do around education, innovation, small business. We have a whole range of things for 6 weeks. So we are talking about 6 weeks.

The compromise is that while we believe we ought to be reinvesting in education, in innovation, we ought to be creating jobs, rebuilding our roads and bridges and water and sewer systems, and doing a number of things that would strengthen our economy and create jobs, for this 6-week period, we agree to continue the funding level at the lower level the Republicans want.

So the continuing resolution we have sent to the House is a compromise by definition because we are willing for 6 weeks—while we negotiate a broader package on a full year’s appropriation—to continue funding at the level the Republicans have asked to be the spending level. By definition, certainly for many of us who believe we will not have a middle class—that we cannot grow the economy without doing the right kinds of investments and that we certainly should not be cutting back on cancer research and cutting clinical trials for women with breast cancer or cutting back on other possible cures, and that is happening right now at this lower level—but for 6 weeks we have said we are willing to compromise with the House Republicans in order to continue funding the government while the larger issues are worked out.

Instead of that happening, what we are seeing is a fight that, frankly, has been fought over and over. It was fought in the last election. It was very clear we had a President of the United States who ran on and who made a signature accomplishment of his first-term health care—access to affordable health insurance for all Americans—running against someone who said he would repeal that, and the President of the United States won with a substantial margin.

In the Senate, we had Democrats running against Republicans, with Republicans saying: Elect me and I will repeal ObamaCare; Democrats saying: No. We need health reform. We need to create a better, more competitive way to bring down health insurance rates—like in Massachusetts, the home of our

distinguished Presiding Officer. Our candidates—Democrats—won.

So I would suggest that in many places, and certainly across the country, with the President of the United States, the people of America spoke pretty strongly.

Now we are here. We all have seen the intensity of what is a minority opinion. I appreciate that. It is very intense. But it is a minority opinion in this country. So the minority of a minority is trying now to essentially slow down or stop the economy, hurt middle-class families, bring public services to a standstill because—even though they lost in the election, even though theirs is not the majority view—they have decided it does not matter—it does not matter—they are going to shut things down if they do not get their way.

What we are going to see tomorrow when healthcare.gov comes online are more competitive, lower rates for many Americans, young Americans, families, and so on, people who maybe could not get insurance in the past at all, moms-to-be who could not find maternity care—8 million women in this country who have not been able to find insurance companies that will cover them for maternity care because somehow being a woman was a “preexisting condition”—they are going to have a chance to do that, which means we will have more healthy moms, we will have more healthy babies, and this is good for our country.

We are seeing now in health reform that has already taken effect hundreds of dollars a year more in the pockets of senior citizens that they used to pay out for prescription drugs. But they do not have to do it anymore because we are closing this gap in coverage from the Medicare prescription drug bill.

As a caveat, let me say as somebody at the time 7 years ago who voted no on that Medicare prescription drug bill—because I believed and the majority on our side believed it was written way too much in favor of the drug companies as opposed to the seniors in terms of costs, not allowing Medicare to negotiate group rates and so on—when we lost that fight, we did not try to stop funding the implementation of Medicare prescription drugs, we did not do all of the antics that have been done. We said: OK, we lost that fight, so let’s make it work the best we can make it work, and we will fix it later.

We did not stop the funding for the educational efforts for seniors. We did not spend hundreds of millions or—I do not know, maybe it is billions now—trying to scare people, confuse people. We said: Let’s try to make it work. Even though in the May before the prescription drug bill took effect 21 percent of the public said they wanted it, they supported it, 7 years later, 90 percent of the public says they support it.

In health reform we were able to fix one of the things that many of us were concerned about then. Rather than

stopping the ability of seniors to get some help—even though it was not structured the way I would like to see it structured—rather than stopping that, we said: Let's make it work the best we can and look for opportunities to make it better.

Under the Affordable Care Act, we have made it better. We have made it better by closing the gap in coverage, which has been dubbed the doughnut hole, so that gradually under health reform this goes away, which will mean literally thousands of dollars in the pockets of many seniors.

I would suggest to our colleagues in the House and the minority of the minority here in the Senate who want to shut things down because they have not gotten their way on health reform that it would be so much better for the American people if they chose the path we did on Medicare prescription drugs, to try to make it work the best we can, and then to look for ways to make it better.

So instead of doing that, what we have is a situation where we are being held hostage—public services are being held hostage to eliminate something that, frankly, a majority of people already voted to say they wanted to put into place. Fix it, yes. If there are problems, yes, fix it. But they certainly do not want to go back to hundreds of dollars a month for a family for a policy that covers almost nothing, which is what has happened all across Michigan and all across the country.

This was a situation where women get discriminated against on the basis of gender, just because we are women or because we cannot find preventive care or we cannot find maternity care as women. We certainly do not want to go back to a situation where a family has a child who gets a serious illness and then suddenly finds, after spending hundreds of dollars a month on a policy that does not cover anything much, that there is a cap on how much care they can get for their child.

So they end up with thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket expenses, maybe going bankrupt, maybe losing their house, because even though they were paying for insurance, it did not cover what they needed. Then there is a limit on the number of treatments they can get. Oh, by the way, now that their child has a serious chronic illness, they cannot get insurance any more because the child has a preexisting condition.

This is the world in which tens of millions of families have been operating for way too long. We do not want to go back to that. I am certainly not going to be a party to going back to that. So we have said no. Negotiate on the budget. Be responsible. Focus on jobs. Move forward, yes. Take us back to a time of bankruptcy for families when there is an illness in the family? No. Take us back to a time when women were charged more than men just because we are women? No. Take us back to a time when seniors are pay-

ing more out of pocket for prescription drugs because of this gap in coverage? No.

We could go on and on. When we look at this whole approach, I do have to say given the fact that—we as women gain so much under health reform in terms of protection about unfair rates, getting preventive care without out-of-pocket expenses, access to maternity care, many women for the first time, so many other things.

A majority of those on Medicare are women. There are so many ways in which we benefit. We now see the House over and over sending us something that would delay or end health reform. Then today, on top of everything else, they have decided not only do what they want to stop the next stage of health reform, but they want to repeal what already is the law of the land now on preventive care for women, on family planning services, on mammograms, and all of the other preventive services that we know save lives.

The amendment that all of the Democratic women Senators offered under our leader, Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI, which made sure that going forward, preventive care would be available and affordable, no out-of-pocket costs, that was repealed in what was sent to us today. It is also interesting that preventive services for men were not repealed. Only preventive services for women, without out-of-pocket expenses.

We find ourselves now in a situation where we are waiting for the House to send back something else again that will chip away at health care and put in jeopardy the ability for the Federal Government in the greatest country in the world to be able to provide services tomorrow, whether it is safety, whether it is health, whether it is education, whether it is the basics, like traveling with your family and needing a passport or visiting one of our national parks or any number of other things that affect us, protecting the air and the water, and what we do to support our farmers and so on.

So that is where we are. We will once again indicate that we are willing to compromise on the budget issues. This is a budget issue. We will support the level of funding that the House says they want, not what we want, because it underfunds critical investments in services and hurts the middle class. But for 6 weeks, as a compromise, we are willing to operate the government at the level that they want. But we will not take the next step which is to take away the ability of millions of Americans to have access to basic health care.

Tomorrow is an important day for so many reasons. But one of them is that for the first time, citizens across the country are going to be able to begin to get the information they need from healthcare.gov about what is available for them and for their families in terms of new health care options.

From what we have seen so far, the rates are not only competitive but lower than was estimated they would be. In fact, for most families and most individuals, they are going to be able to get much more care. They are actually going to get something they are paying for. They are going to be able to receive that at much less cost than they currently can. So tomorrow is an important day, where as they say in Michigan "the rubber meets the road."

People will begin to find out for themselves, despite all of the stuff that has gone on for the last 3 years, all of the misinformation, the scare tactics, the millions of dollars in horrible ads that have been run, tomorrow, people will be able to judge for themselves.

We certainly expect it will take a while, just as it did for Medicare prescription drugs, for it to fully take effect. People will have 6 months the first time around to figure out what they want to do to be able to sign up for next year. If we find that there are things that need to be improved on, then we need to come together and do that. We are more than willing to do it. But we are not willing to go back to the day where families could not find any care for themselves or their families or could not afford it.

We, in fact, are the greatest country in the world, and health care is pretty basic for each and every one of us. We need to have a system, which begins tomorrow through private sector insurance and competition, to have a way to be able to lower costs for families while making sure they are actually getting the care that they are paying for. That is starting tomorrow.

I hope tomorrow, in addition to that starting, we are going to see a continuation of critical public services in our country and that we will send a message around the world that America really can get its act together, that this Congress can really work together and be responsible and not see the kind of incredible partisan games that have gone on, not by everyone but by a minority of the minority who are right now holding things hostage in this Congress. We can do better than that. I am looking forward to having the opportunity to work with colleagues on both sides of the aisle, in fact, to do that.

I am hopeful that the Speaker will just very simply put a continuing resolution on funding the government before the full body of the House of Representatives and let them vote. We have heard from many House colleagues today, Republican colleagues, saying that if they have an opportunity to vote on continuing the operations of government, they will do that, a clean CR, a continuing resolution that would allow the continuing functioning of services that the public depends on, and those who are providing as well are depending on.

The Speaker just simply needs to allow an up-or-down vote. Just allow a vote this evening. I believe if he does

that, he will see a bipartisan vote in the House of Representatives that will be responsible and do the right thing.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE FARM BILL

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, while I have a moment—I thought that there were others wishing to speak—since there are not, I wanted to take one more moment to speak about something else that is running out today that I am deeply involved in and deeply concerned about.

That is the 5-year agriculture, nutrition, and conservation policy of this country, the farm bill. We have seen the end today of the extension that was put in place last year because of House inaction. Starting tomorrow, we essentially begin to operate on fumes. We will see a time period in a few weeks when we will see the full impact of having no farm bill.

It is incredibly important that we use this time immediately to negotiate a final farm bill that will not only reduce the deficit, as our bill does by \$24 billion, but one that can get a straight bipartisan vote as we did here in the Senate with over two-thirds of the Senate twice voting for a comprehensive reform bill that addresses supporting our farmers and ranchers from a risk management standpoint, while eliminating subsidies that do not make sense from a taxpayer standpoint, strengthening crop insurance, strengthening conservation to protect our land, and air, and water, focusing on regional and local foods, farmers markets, small farmers, to support them as well, new jobs and bioenergy, as well as investing in rural communities all across America through our rural development efforts.

What we call the farm bill really is the rural economic development bill for the country. Some 16 million people work in this country because of agriculture. This is the biggest jobs bill we will pass. Our farmers and all of those impacted have been waiting and waiting and waiting and, frankly, have had enough. They want this to get done.

So I call on our House colleagues again to join with us to be able to finally get this passed into law. This is incredibly important for the economy, for small towns such as the one where I grew up in Clare, MI, all across Michigan, all across the country.

It is incredibly important for our efforts to continue to protect our soil and our forests and our air and our water and to be able to maintain the beautiful outdoors that we do and support for hunters and fishermen and

others that we do through efforts in the farm bill. It is incredibly important that this get done. It is long overdue.

So I couldn't let this evening go by without indicating that on the long list of things that have not been done, the September 30 date is incredibly important for rural America, for our farmers and ranchers who need help when they have a loss, for our families who need help when they have a loss, and for our ability to continue to grow jobs.

Our largest area of exports is in agriculture. It is a vibrant, important part of the economy. There is no excuse for this not having already been done. Again, too many games have been played attacking families who need help and choosing not to proceed in a reasonable, balanced way as we did in the Senate.

I am recommitting myself again, as I have day after day—and tomorrow—to making sure I do everything I possibly can. I call on House colleagues and on the Speaker to do everything they can in order to finally get a 5-year comprehensive food, farm, and jobs bill done so that we may continue to grow a very important part of the economy. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

Mrs. MURRAY. I know many of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle are deeply frustrated this evening. Once again, with only a few hours left on the clock, House Republican brinkmanship has us struggling to avoid burdening our families and our economy with more dysfunction and uncertainty. This pattern is simply unacceptable, and some of us, Democrats and Republicans, have been trying for months to break it.

When the Senate budget passed, I was hopeful that we could move to a bipartisan budget conference where Democrats and Republicans from the House and Senate could all come together, sit down, and try to work out our differences. Democrats tried to begin a budget conference 18 times. Many Senate Republicans agreed with us that we should continue negotiations and begin working toward that deal. Each time tea party Republicans and Republican leadership stood and said no. They made it very clear why: They believed they would have more leverage in a crisis—such as the one we are hours away from—than they had a few months ago when we were asking for orderly negotiations.

Instead of working on a bipartisan budget that would strengthen our economy, tea party Republicans began manufacturing this crisis to defund the Affordable Care Act.

This is a law, by the way, that is helping millions of Americans and beginning tomorrow, shutdown or no shutdown, is going to begin helping many more.

Due to Republican refusal to come to the table, we are now scrambling to avoid a shutdown.

I am confident the American people, including many in my home State, are looking at House Republicans and asking the same questions many of us are. They are asking: What are they thinking, and why would they hurt their own constituents simply to make a point?

Even if tea party Republicans don't want to admit it, a government shutdown wouldn't just impact people in Washington, DC, it would be felt across the country. In my home State of Washington, the impacts could be severe. First, Washington State is home to tens of thousands of Federal employees who will be furloughed or stop getting paid. It is also home to one of our Nation's largest veterans communities. The VA has confirmed this week that if the shutdown goes long enough, disability and GI benefits will stop for veterans in places such as Tacoma, Everett, and Spokane due to some tea party Republicans in Washington, DC, who can't have their way.

That is not all. If the tea party forces this government to shut down, our State's gorgeous national parks, such as Olympic National Park and Mount Rainier, will be closed to the public. Students at the University of Washington and Washington State University may not be able to access student loans to pay their tuition bills. Funds for important public health programs, such as WIC, would be cut for women and children who rely on them. Federal support for dozens of Head Start facilities in Seattle and across our State would be at risk.

The good news is that none of this has to happen. We still have time, and the Senate has passed a shutdown-prevention bill that would avoid all of this harm. The Senate's short-term funding bill would keep the government open at current spending levels with no changes in policies while we continue to work on that important long-term budget bill.

The Senate bill by no means is a long-term solution. It is not even close. But as we work to bridge the gap between the parties on budget issues, the absolute bare minimum Congress should be able to do, the very least we owe to our constituents is to not actively hurt them and sabotage the economy.

Playing partisan games with a temporary stopgap continuing resolution is like trying to take away health care from millions of Americans. Tea party Republicans are doing exactly that. Many of their fellow Republicans believe this is an irresponsible and unworkable attitude. Many Republicans have spoken to discourage their own colleagues from waging this pointless, harmful fight over defunding the Affordable Care Act. They have agreed with Democrats that while we might not see eye to eye on everything, we don't have to abandon our basic responsibilities—like keeping the government open—in order to negotiate.