

the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees with a ratio of seven to five on the part of the Senate, all with no intervening action or debate.

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

The Presiding Officer appointed Ms. STABENOW, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. BROWN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. BENNET, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. BOOZMAN, and Mr. HOEVEN conferees on the part of the Senate.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period of morning business for debate only until 6 p.m., with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees; that Senators be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each for debate only; and at 6 p.m. I ask that I be recognized.

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

The Senator from Florida is recognized.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. NELSON. As I understand what the majority leader has just done, the Senate has appointed conferees on the farm bill. That is an example that when there is a political will, we can get together and get things accomplished.

The National Institutes of Health, NASA, and all of the intelligence agencies—72 percent of all the civilians in the intelligence agencies, including the CIA, are furloughed. We are in a war with those people who are trying to do harm to us. We are having these people furloughed all because of a small group, the tea party, in one House of one branch of government who are intent on their agenda. It is irresponsible and reckless.

The truth is, if the Speaker would just bring up what we call the continuing resolution, which is all of the appropriations bills put together up to a date certain, November 15, it would pass overwhelmingly with Democrats and Republicans both voting for it, not the extremist small group down there, but the Speaker doesn't bring it up.

What I see happening—if this lasts for more than a day or two—is that the American people will be so irritated and upset that their lives are disrupted because they can't get government services they are going to insist that their government open once again.

I have an example. The fine work the people I have the privilege of working with and what they do for the people of my State never ceases to amaze me. It is not unusual when I am going into a meeting or airport or walking down the street when I am in the State of Florida, it is commonplace for people to come up and say to me: I want you to know that I appreciate so much what you did to help me or my mother or my son or my brother who is a veteran.

When they say those things, they are talking about all of these dedicated people whom I have the great privilege of working with to help the people of our State on the day-to-day necessities of their daily lives, such as an emergency situation, they realize their passport has expired or they lost their passport or didn't get their veterans payment or need help getting their brother into a veterans hospital or something happened to their Social Security payment or they need information about this particular piece of legislation or they are concerned about somebody they saw whom they thought was doing things and they need them to be referenced to the correct agency on a security matter. It goes on and on.

These wonderful people we have working with us—some young, some old—many of the ones who have been with me for years are so dedicated and work day and night. They work their fingers to the bone. They know exactly whom to call or to e-mail to get things done for people back home in need. We know what is going to happen. When they call any one of our offices in Florida, they are going to get a recording of my voice, telling them what has happened and how all of these folks have been furloughed and giving them an emergency contact as the one lifeline we can provide.

What happens next? If reasonable people were doing this, we would have never shut down in the first place—people who are bipartisan, who have some common sense, who recognize we can't have it our way all the time but in the best of American tradition respect the other fellow's point of view and then work out differences to achieve a consensus in order to gain a workable solution. If those kinds of reasonable folks had been operating, then we would never have shut down in the first place.

We have heard about this over and over in the speeches today: I voted for, in the Budget Committee, a budget. It came out of committee and came to the floor. We had over 100 amendments. It took hours and hours. We finally passed a budget which was the outline for the appropriations for the next fiscal year. We passed that in the Senate 6 months ago. The House did the same. They passed out a budget. But when we asked to go to a conference committee to get agreement for working out the differences between the two, that small group would not let the conference not only not convene but even be appointed.

I think the majority leader of the Senate will tell us we are ready to meet right now, but they have to open the government again. We have to put back to work these people who are trying to serve the American people and to protect the American people. Hopefully, if the American people hear these messages, they will get sufficiently agitated and insist that, once again, the crowd that has shut us down instead should open the government.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to call for an end to the senseless government shutdown and urge Members of the House to set aside political games for the betterment of the country.

The American people are tired of our country being held hostage and our economic recovery threatened just to score political points, and justifiably so. There are real consequences for this irresponsibility.

Shutting down the government for 3 or 4 weeks would reduce real gross domestic product by 1.4 percentage points in the fourth quarter alone, and a shutdown longer than 2 months would likely precipitate another recession.

But my colleagues don't have to take my word for it. Here is what the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said in a letter on this very topic: . . . "it is not in the best interests of the U.S. business community or the American people to risk even a brief government shutdown that might trigger disruptive consequences or raise new policy uncertainties washing over the U.S. economy."

David Cote, the chief executive officer of Honeywell, stated that if you want to create economic disruption and uncertainty for businesses, then a government shutdown is a great way to do it.

I couldn't agree more.

The truth is we simply can't afford another self-inflicted wound to our economy, especially not at a time when things are finally turning around. We had big news in our State this month. The unemployment rate is down to 5.1 percent. National unemployment is at 7.3 percent. That is the lowest point since December of 2008. The housing market is bouncing back with existing home sales reaching a 6½ year high in August. Retail sales are up, and so far this year we have added 1.5 million private sector jobs. We are not where we need to be, but we are moving in the right direction and it is clear that now is not the time to take a step back. Yet here we are again, right in the middle of another manufactured crisis.

On Friday, the Senate passed a bill to keep the government running that is free of any ideological policy provisions. The Senate bill would fund the government at the same level as last year through November 15 and would give Congress and the President time to negotiate a balanced deficit reduction plan.

The commonsense next step would be for the House to take up and pass the Senate's bill. That is democracy. They should put the bill before the House and, by most beliefs, it would pass and it would end the shutdown. Instead, the House has sent us four separate versions of the legislation with full knowledge that the Senate would not agree to them and the President stating he would veto them. Each of the House proposals would have delayed

implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

So here we stand with the Federal Government shut down just so the House Republicans could again attempt to relitigate a law that both the House and the Senate passed, the President signed, and the Supreme Court upheld.

That doesn't mean there will be no changes to the law going forward. I know the Presiding Officer, the Senator from the great State of West Virginia, has some ideas and I have some ideas, but they must be made in a rational manner, not as part of poison pill partisanship.

House Republicans don't seem to understand or they choose not to care about the negative impact on businesses and families that a government shutdown would have. Here are some examples of how my State will be impacted, and I know the Senator from Delaware, Mr. COONS, is here, and I know he has some examples as well. This is the story in Minnesota: According to the Small Business Administration, in 2012 their loan programs approved 53,847 applications and supported 571,383 jobs for an average of just over 1,000 applications per week. What does this mean for Minnesota? Well, my State is home to 115,000 small businesses, and I wish to ensure that the SBA loans keep coming through.

All lands managed by the National Park Service in Minnesota would be closed. They are closed. These include Voyageurs National Park, the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, the North Country National Scenic Trail, the Pipestone National Monument, and the Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway. Closure of the parks would result in the loss of tourism revenue. Last year, more than 600,000 visitors enjoyed these parks, an average of more than 1,600 visitors per day. According to the National Park Service in 2011, visits to these parks in Minnesota contributed \$37 million in economic benefits and generated 665 jobs in my State.

In a State such as Minnesota, where tourism is our fifth largest industry and the source of 11 percent of our private sector revenue, we simply can't afford for this to happen. We simply cannot afford for this critical industry to be hamstrung by political posturing.

In the shutdown, the Food and Drug Administration will furlough 7,000 people, roughly 55 percent of the agency's workforce. That means the process for approving life-saving drugs and treatments and devices—something that matters a lot in my State—would grind to a halt, and shipments arriving at our ports from overseas will no longer be monitored by the FDA.

The shutdown also has the potential to slow down research at the Mayo Clinic. The bulk of Mayo's funding for research comes from the National Institutes of Health grants.

In the government shutdown, 70 percent of NIH staff is shut out, as Senator MIKULSKI has said on this floor

many times, 70 percent of the National Institutes of Health staff. That represents about 19,000 American scientists, researchers, and others who are working to develop a cure for Alzheimer's, working to develop a cure for muscular dystrophy, working to develop a cure for autism.

Staff from the Mayo Clinic said if the government shuts down, the NIH will not be reviewing new grant proposals, and that is starting today.

In addition, it means funding for recently approved grant projects won't be released, and new patients will not be admitted to the NIH Clinical Center or allowed to begin new clinical trials.

We must also be willing to do the right thing for the safety of our people. That is, all in all, in my belief as a former prosecutor, the No. 1 duty of government—to keep our people safe. When it comes to homeland security, counterterrorism, and Federal law enforcement, rest assured those protections will continue, but in the event of a shutdown, the Federal officers who continue going to work protecting the public from violent crimes, gangs, and terrorists won't be getting a paycheck. Instead, they will be getting an IOU. So basically what we will be saying to these people, and what we are saying as of midnight last night, is: Thank you for putting your lives on the line but we can't pay you right now because there are some people in the House who want to delay the Affordable Health Care Act, and if you are lucky, maybe you will get backpay when all this is sorted out.

My colleagues in the House like to talk a big game about how uncertainty is hindering real economic growth. I believe uncertainty hinders economic growth. So it is quite ironic that they are now creating this economic uncertainty and are willing to threaten our economy on a political gamble.

Shutting down the government is not a negotiating tactic. If the House were to take up the Senate bill to fund the government, it is expected to pass and the shutdown would end. During that time, over the next 6 weeks, it will give us that time to truly negotiate a long-term debt deal done in a balanced way. Instead, critical services and the economic recovery are being threatened with poison pill partisanship.

To my colleagues in the House and in the Senate, I say this: Let's get this done. We owe it to the people we were elected to serve. We owe it to the country. Let's end this government shutdown now.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, today is October 1. Today is the day that has long been known as the day when the Affordable Care Act will first come into force and exchanges across the country will begin to be open to citizens of all different backgrounds and walks of life for them to seek afford-

able, accessible insurance on these exchanges, the next step in the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. On one level, it is a good day, because tens of millions of Americans are today gaining access to quality affordable care. I am told that since midnight, nearly 3 million people visited healthcare.gov, 80,000 or more have called a hotline, and 60,000 have requested live chats for applications, and enrollment in these marketplaces is moving forward at a record pace. So, on some level, this is an important day, because millions of Americans across dozens of States are getting access to quality affordable health care.

On the other hand, as the Presiding Officer well knows, this is an embarrassing, difficult, and disappointing day. The Federal Government of the United States is shut down. As of midnight last night, the President, the Office of Management and Budget, directed all the different executive agencies and offices to begin shutting down. As a result, 800,000 Federal employees are spending today at home—not helping small businesses with loans from the SBA; not helping move forward grants that invest in improving our infrastructure; not moving forward federally funded research that might find a cure for cancer or for MS or for autism; not helping applicants get college loans; not helping disabled veterans get access to the benefits they earned through their service to our country. We could go on and on about all the different ways these Federal employees—these public servants—are today not able to help our constituents, our fellow citizens.

I have gotten a fair number of contacts today—phone calls to my office, e-mails to my office, folks connecting with me on Facebook or through Twitter, or directly or indirectly, to convey how frustrated and upset they are.

I want to try to put all of this in some context for the folks who might be watching. What is it we are fighting over? As best I can understand, a few Members of this body and a few Members of the House of Representatives have shut this government down in an effort to try to stop the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. That is what this is all about. They have refused to take up and pass a bill that would fund the continuation of the U.S. Federal Government. In so doing, they are doing about \$10 billion a week in damage to our economy. They are doing all of that damage I referred to in terms of hundreds of thousands of Federal employees not able to help improve our communities or keep us safe or move our country forward.

So why are we doing this? I think it has been said for many years that the definition of "insanity" is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Well, the House of Representatives has tried to repeal the Affordable Care Act I think 42 times now.

As best I understand, this bill, which was passed by both Chambers and

signed into law and then challenged at length in the Supreme Court and upheld and then was the central issue of the last Presidential election, which was not particularly close, this law of the land, which is moving forward in its implementation today, will not be stopped by shutting down the Federal Government.

This is a strategy that never really had a serious chance of success. Despite very long, quasi-filibuster speeches on this floor, despite all sorts of public pronouncements, this strategy has no chance actually of working. So what is the point? Why is this Federal Government shut down? It seems to me that it is simply a demonstration of a temper tantrum, a fit by a small number of folks who promised people back home that they will not allow this government to go forward with the Affordable Care Act.

I think what we should be doing instead is working together across the aisle to improve the Affordable Care Act. It is not perfect. Of course it has blemishes. There will be hiccups and there will be inconsistencies and issues that need to be worked out as this law is implemented. We ought to be working together across the aisle, the Senate and House together, to make sure it is done in an affordable, sustainable, and positive way rather than a small minority digging in their heels and imposing all of this wreckage for their own partisan goal.

Let me share some of the thoughts I have gotten from folks at home who are not exactly happy about our having a Federal Government shutdown today.

First, Ray White of Ellendale, DE, wrote:

I am a veteran and a US government employee. The furlough and sequester we already went through back in August of this year cost me 20 percent of my paycheck for over a month, causing my bills to get out of control. I would like to know how to make ends meet when I have no money to pay my bills, and lawmakers in the Capitol want to put me out of work again.

To Ray and your family, I am sorry. I am sorry for the fact that we have a few folks in the House of Representatives who will not take up a bill to keep our government open. As the Senator from Minnesota recently related, if the Speaker of the House would just let that bill get to the floor, it would pass. There are more than enough Democrats and Republicans in the House to pass that bill if the House would just take it up. I don't think there is any question who caused this shutdown and why.

CWO2 Christopher Slicer of Newark wrote me to say:

As a federal technician and Army National Guardsman, I find it ridiculous that those we have elected as our representatives cannot do their jobs. If I wasn't doing my job, I would be fired or reprimanded. There is no excuse. I don't care which party it is for not passing whatever it is that needs to be done to have a budget. For our government to shut down shows how incompetent our government is to the world and worse its own

citizens. There are thousands of us federal employees who have had to endure furloughs already, and you are telling me that we may have more.

Well, to CWO Christopher Slicer, I apologize that this Congress is unable to come together across this partisan divide and that we have another needless, manufactured crisis that just a few irresponsible Members insisted on to make a partisan point.

I think CWO Christopher Slicer makes a particularly important point: that this government shutdown shows our weaknesses in our inability to get together across this partisan divide not just to our citizens but to the world. At a time of real instability and real threat to our national security around the world, I think this government shutdown is not just harmful to our communities, our families, and our economy, but to our country and its standing in the world.

Last I will read, if I might, a note from Laurie Tonkay of Dover. Laurie wrote me to say:

It seems like we just got through the government furloughs and now there is a good chance you're going to shut down the government.

This came yesterday.

My husband is employed with the Civil Service on Dover Air Force Base. This makes it difficult for ordinary families to make ends meet. I am getting discouraged with the way things are being done in Washington these days. America is in debt because we overspend, then you make your average hard-working employees pay the price for it repeatedly.

She concludes:

Morale is low, and frankly, I have lost confidence in the bureaucracy. I wonder if things would be different if this were an election year. Would you shut the government down? I think not. Show you care and get something done now.

Well, to Laurie, I am sorry for the impact this shutdown has had on you and your family. But it is the result of a few irresponsible Members of the House of Representatives. If the Speaker would just put on the floor for a vote what has been passed here in the Senate, we would have a government reopened today and we could get back to the business of this country. We could get back to conference on the budget and make progress on investing in making our communities safer, our families stronger, our schools and our students better educated, and doing the investment in our infrastructure and research we need to move our economy forward.

Let me conclude by sharing this. I have a number of wonderful folks on my staff who work in my offices in Delaware and in Washington whose real focus is constituent service. If folks call my office and they have a problem or an issue at home that we need to help with, they do an amazing job.

One young man, Brendan Mackie, recently joined my staff. He is a two-tour veteran of Afghanistan and Iraq. He works tirelessly to make sure the vet-

erans who contact my office get the help they need.

A staff sergeant recently contacted us. He was wounded in Baghdad in 2007 by an IED. He lost the documentation for his Purple Heart. Well, Brendan dove right in and did all sorts of work—collected sworn statements and medical records, submitted everything to the relevant Army review board—and has managed to get his Purple Heart reissued.

That is the kind of case work my folks do day in and day out, making sure that whether it is accessing veterans' benefits or disability benefits, Social Security, or medals earned in service to this Nation in combat, the men and women of Delaware who contact my office and rely on me and their services for great constituent support can get that help. Sadly, Brendan is home today and not able to serve the people of Delaware, not able to do his job.

If I might, I would close by saying this: This is the latest in a series of manufactured crises, of completely senseless, self-inflicted wounds. It is up to the Speaker of the House and to the folks in the House of Representatives to take up and pass the bill we sent them days ago that would allow this government to reopen and allow the leaders of this Chamber and the other Chamber to move forward on dealing with the real issues facing our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it appears the Republicans understand finally that the government is shut down, but now they are focusing on trying to cherry-pick some of the few parts of government they like. They do not like it all, but they like a few parts of it. Just another wacky idea from the tea party-driven Republicans. You can tell that the tea party Republicans still want to keep the government shut down. If they wanted to reopen the government, they would simply reopen the government by bringing the Senate's bill to their floor and letting it pass with a majority vote. We could reopen the government in a matter of minutes if Speaker BOEHNER had the courage to stand up to the tea party.

I said the word "we"—they.

We support veterans and parks. We support the FBI. We support the Federal Government. That is our job. That is what we do. But we cannot and we will not be forced to choose between parks and cancer research or disease control or highway safety or the FBI or, as we have heard here today, on and on with examples from the National Security Agency, which has cut by more than 70 percent its personnel. The Republicans seem willing to fund veterans, but what about the rest of the government?

First, we need to end the government shutdown and then Democrats will be happy to agree on funding for specific items. We would be glad to do that. We

would be happy to agree to fund priorities as soon as Congress enacts legislation to reopen the government.

The Republican plan is not a serious plan. It is not a plan to run the country. It is not a plan the American people sent us here to do. This is just as clear as the Presiding Officer seated before me—wide-shouldered, Former Governor of West Virginia, someone who has been in government for many decades. It is so clear, here is what it is all about. They have it in words.

Here is their plan. Some of the rabble-rousers over there have said what they want to do, which is take little bits and pieces of the Federal Government, send something over for veterans today, parks tomorrow, maybe security agencies tomorrow and the next day, and this will go on for weeks. Well, what will not get funded? ObamaCare. Now, it is so obvious. In fact, one of the Senators said this. In fact, I am paraphrasing part of this. This appeared in the Salt Lake Tribune.

It is obvious we cannot end ObamaCare, so we are going to have a different approach.

In light of the fact they cannot end ObamaCare, here is the quote: "In light of that, let's leave ObamaCare for another day and not hold hostage the vast majority of government functions."

The Utah Republican has claimed credit for kick-starting the effort to use the Federal budget as leverage to halt funding for ObamaCare—a move that led to the impasse and the government shutdown. So they could not do that, so now what they want to do is nitpick these little things while the government is shut down and wait until the end and there is nothing for ObamaCare in spite of the fact that millions of people now have health care today that they did not have yesterday because of the exchanges coming online.

We need to reopen the government. The key to that still remains over in the House of Representatives. It is the Senate-passed clean bill for the whole government. If Republicans were serious, they would pass that bill. Doing anything else is just sour grapes. This is not serious. The government is shut down. If they think they are going to come and nitpick us, it will not work. It will not work.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the latest Republican proposal is a cynical one that pits important priorities against each other. People should not have to choose between health for our veterans and cancer research. We should not have to choose between keeping our highway projects going and cleaning up toxic waste areas. We should not have to choose between visiting our national parks and enrolling our kids in Head Start.

As we said a thousand times, we are happy to discuss how to fund the government but not with a gun to our

head. Open up all of the government, and then we can have a fruitful discussion.

You know, it gets a little tiresome. It is game after game, gambit after gambit from the other side of the aisle. They keep trying new things, new tricks. Some of them have to do with ObamaCare, and some of them are unrelated to ObamaCare. They are trying as they might, Speaker BOEHNER, to wriggle out—Speaker BOEHNER is trying to wriggle out of the box in which he has put himself. On the one hand, he knows shutting down the government is highly unpopular and hurts America. On the other, he is so used to giving obeisance to the hard right that he is afraid not to. He is betwixt and between.

But I will tell you, today was a bad day for Speaker BOEHNER and those who want to shut the government down. Polling data is overwhelming. Americans 3 to 1 support opening the government even if it means keeping ObamaCare going.

Americans think that the Republican Party is being irresponsible and not living up to what it should be doing. Americans are telling Republicans in the House: Vote now. Open the government by putting a clean continuing resolution funding bill on the floor.

They will have new games, but we are not going to go for them. Sooner or later, they are going to have to say: OK, we will fund the government. Then we will discuss things, but—as has been said over and over—not with a gun to our heads.

Democratic unity is as strong as ever, from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue to just about every Member of the House of Representatives and to all 54 Members of this united Democratic Caucus. This is great because it means that there is hope.

The bad news about today is, of course, that many innocent people were hurt. There are 800,000 Federal workers who depend on paychecks to feed their families and they were told they can't come in to work. They are dedicated to their jobs. They want to come in to work. They can't and, of course, they are not getting paid.

Millions more are affected as well. We had furloughs at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station in Buffalo of defense employees, many of them civilian. We fought hard to keep that base open. Now we are telling the people: Go home, you can't work today—as important as that base is to the security of America.

Senator FEINSTEIN was here earlier. Three-quarters of our intelligence people at the NSA are not working. That is an abstract concept, but it relates to every single one of us and our security.

The idea of shutting this government down may sound good to the hard right in the abstract, but even when their constituents learn of what specifically it means, they are going to run away from that concept.

To my colleagues, particularly from Texas, the junior Senator from Texas,

who has evidently come up with this new plan, face it. The Senator is not going to get us to give in to extortion. The Senator is not going to take as hostage millions of innocent Americans and succeed in getting us to do something that he wants but we don't and they don't.

I saw in the Salt Lake City paper that the junior Senator from Utah said: Maybe we should forget about ObamaCare and look to spending cuts.

Well, good morning. That is what we have been saying all along. We may not like the spending cuts in certain areas that they proposed, but we are willing to discuss them. That is how a budget works, how appropriations works, and how our government is run. But to take an extraneous issue and to say unless we get rid of it, they are going to shut down the government, no way.

I wish to tell my colleagues if they think they are having a rough time here on shutting down the government in terms of the politics, in terms of where people are, and in terms of their base of support, wait until they try to shut down the debt ceiling.

Senator CRUZ, Senator LEE, it is going to be 10 times worse. The dangers are even greater to America. The pressure on all of us will be even more severe, and that will not work either.

I have a simple suggestion. Let's in one fell swoop fund the government, allow the government to pay its bills, and begin debating the spending issues that we should justly debate instead of putting America through these paroxysms because they know, we know, and the American people know they will not succeed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we were notified just after lunch of the new strategy that is coming out of the Cruz control that we are facing on Capitol Hill.

It turns out that Senator CRUZ is going to pick and choose those departments of government that he wishes to open. That's right. The junior Senator from Texas is going to go through his priority list of Federal agencies that he thinks should be open and funded.

We closed down virtually all of them at midnight and, sadly, some 800,000 Federal workers have been furloughed across the United States, some of them going home without a paycheck for as long as this goes on.

The height of irresponsibility is that the junior Senator from Texas now wants to pick and choose those agencies he wishes to reopen. One of those agencies, not surprisingly, is the Department of Veterans Affairs. Of course, we owe that obligation to our veterans. They wish to open the Department of Veterans Affairs, but perhaps not other departments.

Let me remind the Senator from Texas of a couple of realities. They may fund the Department of Veterans Affairs with a short-term appropriations bill, but this bill will not help

bring back the paychecks of the 546,000 veterans who currently work for the Federal Government—546,000, over half a million.

To help the Department of Veterans Affairs, they are ignoring half a million or more veterans who are Federal workers. More than one in four Federal workers is a veteran and more than a quarter of veterans employed by the Federal Government are disabled.

The Senator from Texas is picking and choosing those veterans he wants to help. The disabled veterans working for our Federal Government are not going to get the help. Those working at the Department of Veterans Affairs will.

This is the height of irresponsibility, and it is the height of arrogance. Then, of course, he decides, since he has heard all the speeches about all the national parks that have been closed, we are going to open the national parks. That is a good thing. I would support that.

But let me ask the Senator from Texas—who is now deciding what is important in our Federal Government—does he think maybe the medical research at the National Institutes of Health is important? Does he think maybe the efforts that these scientists and doctors are undertaking to find cures for diseases, the next drug, the next medical device, the next surgical technique to save his life or the life of someone he loves is important? You bet it is.

The list goes on and on. It is reckless for the junior Senator from Texas to decide: Well, OK, tomorrow veterans and national parks. Then maybe later on we will get around to medical research, or maybe we will get around to criminal administration in the Department of Justice.

Maybe we will get around to bringing the people back to the intelligence agencies who are monitoring terrorists all over the world who threaten the United States.

I sure hope we make the wish list of Senator CRUZ when it comes to our national security. To think that this Senator has the nerve to try to decide what is really, really important for America—I will state what is important for America. It is important to end this irresponsibility and this recklessness.

It is important to realize these are real lives and real people doing work for the United States of America. Using them as political pawns is an embarrassment. It is an embarrassment to this institution and those who are pushing this agenda. We know this problem can be cured and solved in a matter of moments.

If Speaker JOHN BOEHNER would have the nerve to put the spending bill that passed the Senate on the floor of the House of Representatives, it would pass in a minute. The Speaker knows it would. That is why he will not call it.

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

Mr. DURBIN. I yield to the Senator.

Mr. REID. Through the Chair I say to my friend from Illinois, during all this prioritization that they are doing, this agency and that agency, the government is closed, isn't it? The government is closed.

Mr. DURBIN. That is correct. As of midnight, the notice went out that the government agencies were closed. There are some that are doing important jobs that are absolutely essential—air traffic control, for example—but the agencies of government have been closed.

Please listen to Senator MIKULSKI of Maryland. I wish Senator CRUZ would come to the floor and spend a few minutes listening to her about the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control, which due to this reckless strategy by the Republicans, have closed today. Really? Closing the doors on medical research in the United States of America. What a moment of great pride for the tea party to be able to claim they closed down the National Institutes of Health.

Now they are going to pick and choose. Maybe it will make the list. Perhaps not this week but next week we will get back into the business of medical research. On the greatest Nation on Earth we are facing this. It not only makes the Nation look bad around the world, it harms our economy. Think about it for a moment.

How much confidence would you have in the United States of America if its government is capable of shutting down, over a political squabble that is totally unnecessary, shutting down the government of the United States of America. What a source of pride for the tea party Republicans but not for the rest of America.

The rest of America knows that we need to roll up our sleeves and solve our problems. We have to stop these doomsday scenarios, these threats, this irresponsible, reckless strategy from the tea party Republicans.

It is time for the Speaker of the House of Representatives not only to lead the Republicans in the House but to be a leader for America. It is time for all of us to come together, to fund this government, and move it forward today—not tomorrow, not next week, not beyond and more.

When it comes to the debt ceiling, it is the full faith and credit of the United States that is at stake. The question is very basic. Will America pay its bills?

These same Members of Congress who voted for the spending now refuse to pay the bills. As Congressman Obey of Wisconsin used to say: They want to pose for holy pictures. Oh, yes, we voted for the spending, but we don't want to pay for it. We are not going to vote for a debt ceiling. My goodness, the word "debt" scares us and it may scare the voters.

They would see the United States default for the very first time in our history on our debts, fail to make payments on our debts.

What is the practical impact of that if families decide not to pay their debts, to skip a mortgage payment. They are going to meet their banker. They are going to call them and say: Pardon me, Senator, did you notice that you didn't make your mortgage payment? If you didn't notice, we did. It is going on your credit report. The next time you try to borrow money it is going to be at a higher interest rate because you are not very creditworthy.

Now multiply that into a nation of more than 300 million people. The next time we start to borrow the money after we have defaulted on our debt for the first time in history, what is going to happen to America's credit rating? Interest rates will go up.

Well, so what. A slight tick up in the interest rate paid by America for its debt consumes billions of dollars that could be spent on education, on research, and on building America's infrastructure. This is wasted money because of this wasteful strategy from tea party Republicans.

Over and over Speaker BOEHNER has sent us these bills to defund ObamaCare. Why were they so desperate to stop health care reform? Because October 1, today, is a big, big day across America. For the very first time we are providing Internet access to uninsured Americans so they can have, maybe for the first time in their lives, a chance to buy health insurance. Some of them have never, ever been protected by health insurance. Now they may have a chance at affordable health insurance. In the State of Illinois, 1.8 million uninsured people get a chance, a chance to buy health insurance that they can afford.

I heard at lunch today that more than 2 million people visited this Web site in the State of New York this morning. Do you think there is a pent-up demand for health insurance? It also is an indication of why tea party Republicans are in a fevered state over ObamaCare coming online.

This is going to work. It is going to finally give peace of mind and health insurance protection to people who have lived a lifetime without it.

I have met them, folks who have a child with diabetes, a child with a mental illness, a child with asthma. This is fairly common. These are people who can't get health insurance because some member of their family has a preexisting condition. ObamaCare finally wipes that off the slate and says they can't discriminate against people because of preexisting conditions. Well, you listen to Senator CRUZ and others, and they say we want to do away with that protection.

I hope the Senator never has to face that in his own family. Some of us have. And once you have faced it, you realize what a heartbreak it is not to be able to buy health insurance because of a preexisting condition of someone whom you love in your family.

We are going to change that with ObamaCare. We are going to give people a chance to buy health insurance, and that is what frightens these Republicans—the notion, as that program takes root and grows in America, and people have the confidence and peace of mind of health insurance protection, it is going to be a program they cannot wipe away with the back of their hand.

So all of the things we are seeing, the political gymnastics coming from Senator CRUZ and the tea party Republicans notwithstanding, we know the bottom line is this: This is a good, strong Nation, where Democrats and Republicans need to work together to solve our problems together, not with threats, not with guns to our heads, but with a common purpose of serving this great Nation.

I am troubled that now we are going to get the Senator CRUZ list of his favorite agencies. He starts with the Veterans' Administration. Let him start with the Federal workforce, where over 500,000 members are actual veterans and a quarter of them disabled. If he really cares about veterans, have him call the Speaker. Let's get this government up and running again tomorrow. We can reflect on what happened during the last 24 hours if we do, but let's not continue this embarrassment to the United States. It is irresponsible, it is reckless, it is damaging to our economy and a lot of innocent people. We need to put an end to this government shutdown.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I regret also we are now experiencing a partial shutdown of our Federal Government. Through no fault of their own, some citizens who are visiting Washington are also being denied government services and access to memorials that their tax dollars support. I hope we can soon eliminate any inconvenience that is being caused by this shutdown for visitors and citizens who planned trips into our Nation's Capital.

The effects of the shutdown are real and they are being felt in practical ways, well beyond the Nation's Capital. But certainly here in Washington we witnessed an example of the unintended and sometimes absurd consequences of the Congress and the President's inability to reach an agreement.

Today, for example, a large group of World War II veterans from my State of Mississippi caught an early flight from Gulfport to Washington as part of the Honor Flight program. These flights allow veterans who might not have the ability to come here on their own to visit the national World War II Memorial that was built to honor their brave service—service that saved the world from some of the greatest evils ever known. Confronted with barricades, however, that were erected this morning around the open-air memorial, as a part of the shutting down of the

Federal Government, the citizens from my State carefully removed the barriers and made a path so they were able to walk on to the memorial and lay a wreath beneath the memorial's Mississippi column.

I am very pleased the visit of these veterans to Washington was not ruined by the government shutdown, even though there were some obstacles. But I hope their experience reminds all of us—Federal agencies, Members of Congress, and others who live here in the Nation's Capital—to not make this situation more difficult than it has to be for veterans or other visitors who are coming to the city. For some this may be the only time in their life they will be able to do that.

So I take this opportunity to thank the veterans from our State for their calm, cool, and collected demeanor during what could have been a frustrating experience, and I salute all veterans for their service to our Nation and the access they have even on a day where the agencies are "closed." There are certain premises that should remain open and available for visitation and visibility.

I thank the Honor Flight volunteers for their calm, cool, and collected demeanor and their support for the freedoms of our country. I am sure they will all receive a very warm welcome tonight when they return home to Gulfport.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, let me thank the distinguished Senator from Mississippi for his remarks about these Honor Flight veterans. We just had a group come down from Rhode Island, including one gentleman who was 100 years old. It was so meaningful for them. In Rhode Island, it is particularly the fire chiefs and the firefighters who have been helping to organize these honor flights, and Chief George Farrell and others took immense pleasure and meaning out of having brought these gentlemen down and enabling them to have this recognition.

The tide of time is sweeping that "greatest generation" into its dying years, and while they are still among us, it is a wonderful thing to do. So I thank the Senator from Mississippi for that.

I came to the floor to, I guess, say: Welcome to tea party shutdown, day 1. We do not know how long this is going to go, but it is already having, I will say, miserable impact in Rhode Island.

We have as many as 7,000 Federal employees facing furlough. We just got word that at Naval Station Newport 800 men and women have been furloughed. Our Rhode Island National Guard let us know they are anticipating 300 furloughs. These are people who work hard for our Federal Government. They do important jobs, particularly with respect to the National Guard and Naval Station Newport. They support our troops. It is not fair to them that

the tea party extremists over in the House would insist on putting them out of work in order to force a way around the constitutional process of government here in Congress.

The key to putting those 7,000 Rhode Islanders, the 800 Naval Station Newport, the 300 civilian guardsmen employees, back on the job is a very simple one, and it is in the hands of Speaker BOEHNER. All he has to do is call up the continuing resolution. All he has to do is take the measure the Senate passed and put it before the House for a vote. Just give it a vote. That is all it takes.

Why does he not do that? He doesn't do that because there is this peculiarity over in the House called the Hastert rule. It is not a real rule; it is just called that. It is a practice. It is a practice named after former Republican Speaker Dennis Hastert. The practice is that if your own caucus won't agree on a bill—if the Republicans, all by themselves in a room with no Democrats present, won't agree on a bill—then the Speaker won't even give Democrats a chance to vote on it. It will never come to the floor. It is the most partisan rule or practice that exists in this body, in my estimation, and it has been a problem for the Republicans before. There have been times when Speaker BOEHNER has had to use that key he has to simply put a measure before the body without clearing that partisan prescreening by his Republicans. He has done it over and over to protect the Republican Party from itself, when they were going to force choices that would be terrible for the country and terrible for the party, ultimately.

The first was on the fiscal cliff. Remember the hair's-breadth antics that led up to the fiscal cliff? Well, finally, Speaker BOEHNER put the fiscal cliff bill to a vote in the House and it passed 2 to 1. The Republicans voted against it in the caucus, so we know it flunked the Hastert rule test. But it passed the House with a bipartisan vote of Republicans and Democrats, and it spared us then from going off the fiscal cliff.

That was the right call for the Speaker to make. It was the right call for the country. It was the right call for his party because they didn't want to own that debacle and he made a good decision at that time.

The next was the Violence Against Women Act. Over and over we have passed the Violence Against Women Act in bipartisan fashion in the Senate, and it has been passed in bipartisan fashion over in the House. We passed it again in bipartisan fashion in the Senate, but it was going to fail in the House. Well, how do you go back to your voters, if you are a reasonable House Member, and say: We refused for the first time to pass the Violence Against Women Act? It came over in bipartisan fashion from the Senate. It had strong support here, but we refused to pass it.

Well, they couldn't.

So once again Speaker BOEHNER waived the so-called Hastert rule—this practice of having to have his caucus have a pre-veto on anything that comes to the floor—and he brought the Violence Against Women Act to the floor, and once again it passed. It passed with Democratic and Republican support.

The third time was the disaster bill for Sandy. Many of our States were hit darn hard by Sandy. New York and New Jersey took really crushing blows. But the House Republicans didn't want to fund this particular disaster recovery. In fact, they voted 3 to 1 against it—3 to 1 against disaster recovery for their fellow Americans. That is how they voted over there. But Speaker BOEHNER knew how much trouble he would be in with, among others, Governor Christie of New Jersey, so he called it up anyway. He violated this so-called Hastert rule and he brought it up for a vote, and it passed again in bipartisan fashion.

Today, tonight, tomorrow, the next day—any time he chooses—Speaker BOEHNER can turn the key and unlock the government tea party shutdown. He can do that. He has done it three times before. Of course, that got all his tea party folks all excited and they started making new threats and new challenges and new demands, so he is reluctant to go down that road again. But he has done it before, and it remains in his hands. I would submit it is the right thing to do for our country, and that he should put that first.

The first way they fouled up the continuing resolution was to try and stall the Affordable Care Act on it. Well, we voted that down over and over, and cooler heads may be beginning to prevail. But I would remind everybody there are two pretty distinct, I guess we will call them ObamaCares now, since that is the word that is being used—two ObamaCares out there. One, to use Majority Leader REID's phrase, is a punch line. It is the punch line "ObamaCare" that revs people up at rallies, that sends that rightwing e-mail chain into vibrations, but which is mostly a product of a fertile and overheated imagination.

The real ObamaCare, at least the real one we see in my home State of Rhode Island, is actually something we like a lot. Seniors are getting protection from the dreaded doughnut hole and are saving over \$1,000 each on prescription medications, on average. They see the Affordable Care Act as something that is having a real benefit in their lives right now.

Parents, such as myself, who have kids out of college and under 26—and I hear this from everybody across Rhode Island—are saying: Thank gosh the Affordable Care Act is there, because my daughter is out of college and she hasn't been able to find a job yet that has a health care benefit, so I can keep her on my policy and I don't have to worry if she gets sick the whole family could be bust. Having her on my policy

makes me feel so good. Thank you for that.

That is what I hear. That is a real and good thing for actual Rhode Islanders. It is not the imaginary ObamaCare. It is the real ObamaCare.

Families who have a child with a pre-existing condition—what do you do about that? You could spend down and give up all your resources, everything you have worked for and earned, so that your family can go on Medicaid—that is one way—or you could stay in the same job forever because the minute you try to move from your employer's health care plan to a new employer's health care plan, your child's preexisting condition doesn't get covered any longer. So you are trapped. Across this country, people are spared that agony by the Affordable Care Act.

We had Peter Orszag in the other day to talk to our caucus. He said that if you extend out the cost of Medicare to the future, it is already down \$1.2 trillion from the savings we see from reforms that are happening in red States, in blue States, in Massachusetts, where the Presiding Officer is from, in Utah, in Pennsylvania, in Wisconsin, in Minnesota, in California, in Rhode Island—all across the country. It is not political. It is about a better health care system, and we are already seeing the savings.

That is what they want to take away. That is what they want to stop. One thousand dollars out of the pockets of seniors and back to the pharmaceutical companies—that is what the result would be; parents having to lose the protection for their kids at 26; families trapped with a child with a preexisting condition never able to leave the company they work for; and the savings that we are already seeing beginning to evaporate. Why do you shut down the country and harm people in those ways? It makes no sense. The tea party shutdown has to stop.

I ordinarily come to the floor at this time to discuss the appalling way the Senate and the House are blissfully ignoring the evidence all around us of what carbon pollution is doing to our atmosphere and oceans. There is a clear connection between the problems we are in today that have caused this tea party government shutdown and our inability to face the facts about carbon pollution as a Congress. There are some similar characteristics between those two problems, and I would like to discuss them briefly.

One characteristic is an inability to face and address present or looming problems—real ones. In the case of the tea party shutdown, they have actually created a massive artificial problem—a government shutdown for our country—at the same time that the tea party members prevent us from getting together to take the Senate budget and House budget and bring them into conference and agreement in the ordinary process like adults. It is all in the service of the pretense I just discussed: that the Affordable Care Act isn't actu-

ally good for our country. It is a triple phony-problem whammy for our country. This inability to face and address real problems is the first characteristic.

The second characteristic is that inability is based on opposition that stands on false or fanciful arguments based more on propaganda than facts. In the case of climate, the fanciful argument—the falsehood—is that the jury is still out. The evidence is not only real, but it is overwhelming right now.

The third characteristic is that the opposition that gives rise to this inability to face and address real problems is fomented by small interest groups wishing to exercise undue influence without due regard for the harm they cause to their fellow Americans.

That is our DC trifecta these days. We can't deal with real problems. We have an atmosphere of phony arguments and propaganda that foul things up, and it is based on opposition that is driven by small but powerful special interests.

I hope and pray the American people will send a strong message to the tea party to knock off the tea party shutdown that is closing and fracturing our government. I hope the response of the American people is a wake-up call to them. As one faction of one party in one House of Congress in one branch of our separated powers of government, they don't get to have everything their way. That is not the way the Constitution was structured. And that is particularly true when the public doesn't agree with them—and the public doesn't agree with them. They just lost an election on this exact issue.

We are going to have other disagreements, and if we just roll through this one and then bang right up against the next hostage scenario—very likely on the debt limit, which, if we blow that and go into default, will be even more catastrophic than the accumulating economic harm of a government shutdown—if we keep going into one hostage scenario after another, then we won't have solved the real problem: We cannot work like responsible adults when a minority—a faction of one party in one House in one branch of government—is having the procedural equivalent of a tantrum.

And true as science and real as Mother Nature, we have the problem of carbon pollution bearing down upon us. Will the polluters prevent action on that? Will we fail to do our duty as representatives of the American people? Will we be unable to face and address this real problem because we are opposed by false and fanciful arguments, with the strings pulled by special interests, instead of us looking plainly at the problems and coming together for a reasonable solution?

This has been a different day than my usual "time to wake up" speech. It is time to wake up to the problems of carbon pollution and climate change. It is also time to wake up to the peculiar

way that special and narrow interests are able to tie this body in knots and do damage to the American public for their own benefit. That larger problem is something we are going to have to reconcile ourselves with. If we just look at this as one problem—the tea party shutdown—and we get through it, we will simply go on to another unless we have decided that our Constitution matters for something, that the structure of government the Founding Fathers put together gave us a procedure to work out our differences and that we should follow that constitutional procedure even when we have strong feelings about something. That is the legacy of the men and women who founded this country. It is the legacy for which men and women have fought and bled and died. It besmirches that legacy to have a tiny faction of one party in one House of one branch of government break the whole mechanism just because they want everything their own way.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I think the Senator from Rhode Island had it exactly right calling it a tea party shutdown. It is unnecessary, it inflicts pain on far too many Rhode Islanders and people from Massachusetts and Ohioans. It is all so needless. It is so simple: Open the government.

I think Speaker BOEHNER needs to make a decision: Does he want to be Speaker of the far right wing of the Republican Party or does he want to be Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives? If he chooses to do the latter, it will mean putting what is called the continuing resolution to reopen the government on the floor in the House of Representatives down the hall, allowing all 430-something Members of the House to vote—Members of both parties, all duly elected in November, all sworn in on January 3 of this year—allow them to vote. If they vote, I am confident that Democrats and Republicans together will reach a strong majority, that legislation will then be sent to the White House, the President will sign it, and the government shutdown will end. It is irresponsible not to let the House of Representatives vote.

Yesterday or earlier today the President said: One faction of one party of one House of one branch of government shut down the government. This whole lurching from one crisis to another by design, by sort of a manufactured crisis that we have seen over and over, is something that simply doesn't work for the American people.

I come to the Senate floor from time to time and read letters from constituents. I won't read letters today because the Senator from Arkansas will be speaking in a moment, but I will tell a few quick stories.

A number of working Ohioans—from the small business owner in Lima, in western Ohio, waiting for a loan, to the farmer in Chillicothe looking for help

from the USDA, to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, employees on the base and contractors off the base—are all affected by this.

Ninety-one World War II veterans who stepped off an Honor Flight in Washington, DC, on Tuesday to visit the World War II memorial—their memorial—are affected.

I have been to those Honor Flights when they visit. They visit Arlington and the World War II memorial, which is a fairly new memorial on the Mall. Many of those soldiers and sailors and air men and women who have come from my State have never been to Washington before. This is their first trip. They are often in their eighties.

Those 91 World War II veterans—many in wheelchairs, many with walkers—came anyway even though they heard the place was shut down. They weren't letting a government shutdown prevent them from paying their respects to their brothers and sisters who died during World War II or fought in that war and have died since. They persevered just as they had fighting in World War II.

These organizations give back to the men and women who gave so much to our country.

These 91 World War II veterans prevailed even though the memorial was shut down. They pretty much forced their way in, with help from a number of others.

But too many Ohioans will be hurt.

Sharon Purdy of Spencerville, OH, wrote to me, concerned about the status of this weekend's National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service held each year in Emmitsburg, MD. Her husband Lee was killed in the line of duty in the year 2000 and was memorialized there 12 years ago. Sharon goes back every year to pay her respects. Two Ohio firefighters killed in the line of duty will be honored this year—Michael Burgan from the Sugarcreek Fire Department and Rocky Duncan from the Niles Township Fire Department. Thousands of firefighters and their families will be coming from across the country to pay their respects, but presumably the gates will be closed. That is how government is repaying them for their sacrifice because some people want to score political points instead of doing their job and are irresponsibly shutting down the government—the so-called tea party shutdown.

I received a letter today from Judith Cowan, the president of the Ohio Energy and Advanced Manufacturing Center. She is building a state-of-the-art manufacturing center in Lima, OH—investing in new electromagnetic forming technology. She has been partnering with the Economic Development Administration to build the center.

She received a notice today that her reimbursement check from EDA is on hold due to the shutdown. EDA is not allowed under the law to do that. Because they can't pay the bills, they must stop because of this irresponsible

tea party shutdown of the government. Her project is in midconstruction, supplies have been purchased, concrete has been poured, and workers' time has been set aside. She told my office she makes an effort to hire local contractors and use small businesses in her supply chain. She is concerned that these small businesses that live paycheck to paycheck depend on her. Think of the people who poured the concrete. Think of the small companies that did the ironwork. Think of the other companies that have sold to her for this EDA-financed project and you realize some of these small businesses are going to face very hard times, again because of this hard-headed, far-right tea party shutdown which was simply unnecessary.

Contrary to the political games the far right in the House, the radicals, are playing, this is not a game. These are real people facing a real and devastating impact. They do not deserve to be punished for the political ideology of a few.

Remember, one faction of one political party in one House of one branch of government has held hostage the whole rest of the government and these hundreds of thousands of Federal employees and the millions of people affected by them. This is not about whether we will or will not agree to go to conference on the budget. This is about whether Congress in this country can continue to govern.

Senate Democrats have compromised on funding levels. According to reports, the Senate-passed resolution comes at a level 18 percent below what the President proposed 5 years ago. It is 17 percent below what the Democratic Congress proposed 4 years ago. It is 10 percent below what Republicans proposed 3 years ago and 3 percent below the debt ceiling of 3 years ago. This is not about spending. This is not about fiscal issues. This is about attaching one party's—in this case the Republicans'—political platform—presumably out of the 2012 Republican Convention—to simple legislation to make the government work, to keep the government going.

It is a waiting game they are willing to play. The American people are not willing to play. For some it is OK to hurt 1,000 small businesses as the SBA loan program is furloughed. For some it is OK to put 50,000 Ohio Federal employees and hundreds of thousands more around the country out of work. For some it is OK to deny senior citizens, in Mansfield or in Ravenna or in Youngstown, a new Social Security benefit.

It is not OK with me. It is not OK with most of the Members of the Senate. It surely is not OK with the American people. It is time to stop these political games. It is time to put the American people first.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. PRYOR. Madam President, I rise to say I have disappointment and frustration and that is what is causing me

to speak today, because this is the day I worked very hard to prevent. I think many in this Chamber, on both sides of the aisle but particularly on this side of the aisle, have worked very hard to prevent this day from happening. Our government has shut down. It hurts our economy just when we are turning the corner, and this is something I think the economists are talking about. When we talk to our colleagues, not just in this Chamber but around the country, when we talk to Governors and talk to State legislators and businesspeople, people we know from all around the country, they are so disappointed that it has gotten to this point.

I think most people express what I heard about 10 days ago when I was in Arkansas. I was at a big dinner to raise money for cancer research at the University of Arkansas for medical sciences. By the way, they raised about \$1 million that night. It was a great evening. They honored my parents, which was very nice. But nonetheless, when we were there, I bet I had a dozen people come up to me and say: What is wrong with the House? Have these people lost their minds? What are they doing over there?

This is back about 10 days ago when they voted the way they voted recently on the farm bill. That was on a Thursday. On Friday, they took that step that was leading to where we are today on shutting down the Government.

What I tell the folks in Arkansas is: Look, hyperpartisanship has taken over here. This is one of those situations where if we look at the track record of the Senate—I know it is not true in every single case—but if we look at the track record of the Senate in our Chamber, we try to work in a bipartisan way. Because of the nature of the rules, because of the size of the body, because of the traditions, quite honestly because of the Constitution, because of our DNA, we tend to work together in this body. That has been a key to the Senate for years and years.

What it has led to in this particular case is we have passed four what I think of as very responsible measures to keep the government open. These are four responsible measures we voted on fair and square. They came to the floor. The votes were not all 100 to nothing, but nonetheless people are working together to try to get this resolved.

You go down the hall to the House and what you see down there is “my way or the highway” politics. My fellow Americans know it is true that these are dead-end politics. It is leading us nowhere.

We have to think of where we have been in the last few years. Think about how bad things were in the great recession. Think about the progress we have made since then. Look at our housing market. It is so much better today than it was 5 years ago. Consumer confidence is back, headed in the right direction. It is good. It is getting strong-

er all the time. Look at sales of trucks and cars in this country. They have reached their fastest pace since November of 2007, before the crash.

In the private sector, month after month they continue to add jobs all around the country. Those are good results. Why in the world does the House want to put this all in jeopardy? I have been concerned because in the last few days I have had reporters who kind of stalk us out in the hallways on our way in and out of the Capitol or when we are voting—I have had more than one stop me and say: You realize when we go down and cover the House, they talk about red State Democrats. They talk about your race in Arkansas.

It is going to be a very sad day in this country when we learn this is all about politics. I sincerely hope it is not all about politics. I hope we do not have people down in the other Chamber who have elevated politics above what is best, what is right for our country.

When I hear those questions from reporters, there certainly are people down there who are talking a lot about politics when this Nation is in crisis. I think we should all be concerned about that. I think we should make sure that is not the case. If they have a legitimate philosophical issue, that is one thing. But if this is all about politics, if these irresponsible set of votes to shut down the Government is all about politics, then shame on them. Because when we look at the impact this is going to have—the Social Security Administration will be forced to reduce staff. That causes delays for our seniors as they file for benefits and as they apply for replacement Social Security cards. The progress we have made with the VA—I have been very involved in trying to cut back the VA backlog of claims. That progress we have made there is going to stop. It is going to force our vets to wait even longer to get the benefits they have earned.

When we look at small businesses with the shutting down of the Small Business Administration, we are going to have hundreds and hundreds of small businesses that are going to lose their access to capital just in the next few days. The national parks, wildlife refuges, recreational areas—it is a terrible thing for American families who want to take their children out and want to take their families out to explore and experience the great outdoors here in America, some of the raw beauty America has to offer. But it is also bad for business. We have a lot of businesses in my State, we have a lot of businesses around the country that are around these areas. They thrive on things such as canoe rentals, camping equipment, et cetera. It could be bicycling, could be hiking boots, whatever it is. These businesses depend on that type of activity. They depend on those facilities being open, and they depend on Americans having the ability to go out and see and experience the great things in this country.

I am also chairman of the subcommittee on agriculture appropriations. I know firsthand the devastating impact this shutdown will have on our agricultural industry. It is going to have negative ripple effects all around the Nation's economy.

One thing I have learned the hard way in Washington in the last 10 or 11 years, there are a lot of people inside the beltway who do not understand agriculture. They do not get excited about agriculture. They do not care about agriculture. Sometimes they take it for granted. But the truth is agriculture is one of the core strengths in the U.S. economy. It is something we do better than everyone else in the world. Everyone else in the world wants to be like us. It is something we can be proud of. It adds a lot to the Nation's economy. It is also great for our trade.

If we take my one State of Arkansas, it is our largest industry. It supports one in six jobs in my State. It also creates about \$17 billion of economic activity, and overall, when we look at the State's economy, it is about 25 percent of the economy of Arkansas. That is going to be true—maybe those numbers are not exactly the same—that kind of ratio, those kinds of numbers are going to be true in every State in the Union.

I know Senator STABENOW is chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. She talks about how everybody thinks about Michigan as heavy industry, the auto industry, et cetera, and all that is true. But the second largest industry in Michigan is agriculture.

It is just like if we go to a State such as Massachusetts. The mix of agricultural products in a State such as Massachusetts is going to be very different than what we have in the State of Arkansas, but it allows Massachusetts to utilize its natural advantages, natural resources. Things such as specialty crops are going to be very important up there. We have some of that in our State. But every State has a different mix and it is important that every State be very strong in agriculture.

One of the newer areas in agriculture, which is good, is organic farming and the like. Certainly, that is part of the future. That is something in the Senate farm bill. It is something we want to see get done. We don't want to see that brought to a halt or hampered in any way.

We don't want to see our food supply and fiber supply jeopardized by rank politics down the hall in the House of Representatives. The House has already created turmoil in this vital industry by shutting down the government. But to complicate matters, they have also taken another very irresponsible set of actions in the last few weeks; that is, they have allowed, because of their own problems down the hall, they have allowed the 2008 farm bill to expire.

Last night at midnight we went from the 2008 farm bill to the 1949 law. The United States of America is currently

under the 1949 agriculture law. The problem is there is no solution in sight.

God bless DEBBIE STABENOW. Senator STABENOW has been an amazing champion for agriculture. I mentioned her—agriculture is the second largest industry in Michigan—but she has worked so hard in the last couple of years to try to get this Chamber to do right on agriculture, and it has.

Last year we passed a farm bill. It went down the hall and died. This year we passed a farm bill. It went down the hall and they blew it up.

We see us working in a bipartisan way. By the way, that farm bill in the Senate got something like 66 votes, a good, solid bipartisan vote. But the House Members, they continue to wreak havoc with this economic powerhouse.

Right now, think about agriculture, one of the core strengths, one of the pillars of the U.S. economy. We see it facing a double whammy. They got the slowdown. Now they have the expiration of the 2008 farm bill.

What does that mean? If you are a farmer, you will know what this means. The Farm Service Agency, Rural Development, the Natural Resources Conservation Service—the county offices will all be closing. We had farmers today call us and say: Can I get this payment? I can make this happen? Can I apply for something? A lot of times the answer to that is going to be, no, because those offices will be closed. When they need help, there is not going to be anyone there to help them. When they go there, basically they are going to knock on the door and it is going to be locked up. They are going to be closed for business. This means that new USDA loans and grants are being stopped. This means the cutting-edge agricultural research that America is famous for is going to stop.

It also means that when it comes to food inspection and those workers, that is going to be in jeopardy as well. That is something we fought very hard on. I was allied with many of my Republican colleagues on that matter.

The worst part about this—and maybe the saddest part about this—is that it was all so preventable. We can still prevent it from happening. We can do something today to make this go away. But, nonetheless, here again the House refuses to compromise. It is this “my way or the highway” attitude, as I said before, that is leading us to a dead end.

About 2 weeks ago, several of us were fortunate enough to listen to TOM CARPER come and speak to us about some things that were on his mind. It was a bipartisan group. There were 15 or 20 of us there. Tom singled out one of our great colleagues, MIKE ENZI. MIKE ENZI has been a stalwart conservative, red rock Republican, but he is someone we all know, trust, and respect.

He talked about when MIKE ENZI and Ted Kennedy were paired up as chair and ranking member of the Senate

HELP Committee. That is a very unlikely pair. They don't get any different than that in philosophy, personality, background or regions of the country. Nonetheless, those two Senators adopted what they called the 80–20 rule. They knew they didn't agree on everything so they said: Let's find 80 percent of the things we can agree on. Let's work on those and let's get it done and that is what they did. It is a great example of bipartisanship.

Senator Kennedy, as liberal as he was—he was a great liberal lion, and everybody knows that. He was very staunch in his views and very serious about how he took those views, but he was also very much willing to reach across the aisle. That 80–20 rule is what is missing down the hallway. We still have it in the Senate, to some extent but not as much as we used to. We need to make sure we reestablish this 80–20 rule and find areas of common ground where we agree so we can work with each other in every single situation we possibly can. But down the hall, that is gone, and that is the problem right now in Washington.

There are a lot of people in the Congress—some in the Senate as well but in the House and Senate generally—who say: I want 100 percent or nothing. If I can't have 100 percent, you get nothing. They will do everything they can to stop it, and that is exactly what happened. That is why we have this crisis today. It is completely manufactured by the U.S. House of Representatives.

I feel that I am elected by my people to make the hard decisions, do what is best for the country, do what is right, and use my best judgment. All of these are judgment calls, and they are tough calls, but that is what governing is about. It is about making those tough calls and showing some leadership.

So tonight I urge our colleagues in the House, all 435 of them, to stop the hyperpartisanship, especially those on the Republican side of the aisle who just can't seem to say yes when it comes to a bipartisan solution. I urge them to stop the hyperpartisanship and work with the Senate to reopen our government.

I will be working very hard to find a responsible agreement, and I sincerely hope we have a sufficient number in the House who will join me, and let's get this done.

With that 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. 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. HARKIN. As chair of the HELP Committee—that great committee upon which the Presiding Officer also

sits and a valuable member of that committee—I was just informed by our staff that as of this last hour, over 2.8 million people have gone on healthcare.gov to get information and sign up for the Affordable Care Act.

In fact, there were so many people online that at different places in the country, the Web site froze. Then I heard some of my Republican friends were saying: See, we told you it wasn't ready. The Web site is not working right. If very few people had signed up, they would have said: See, we told you no one is going to sign up for it. They are trying to have it both ways.

There were 2.8 million Americans on the first day logged on to healthcare.gov to get this information, and, again, to sign up. By tomorrow we will have some data and some statistics on how many people who not only inquired but have actually signed up on the Web sites. We will have some more information on that tomorrow. Obviously, the interest is there, and we knew it would be.

Leader REID told a story today about how years ago he went out and visited Google in California. At the time they were telling him that when they first started Google, they didn't realize how many people would be using it, and they kept crashing and freezing. So they had glitches of their own. There are some glitches in this system because a lot of people are coming on and wanting the information and wanting to sign up. That is the good news, and it is what we always knew.

We knew that when we passed the Affordable Care Act, if we approached it in a diligent, forthright way but cautiously and in an orderly manner, it would work, and that is why it has taken us almost 3 years to get to this point because we wanted to do it right. We wanted to do it in a way that would work.

I think today is a remarkable day in the history of our country in that we are now going to have affordable health care insurance for every American that cannot be taken away if you get sick. They can't deny it to a family because somebody had a preexisting condition. Everyone will have health care insurance that will be affordable and can't be taken away, and we will have a whole new suite of preventive care measures and wellness programs to keep people healthy and to prevent illness in the first place.

We have turned the corner on bringing health care to every American regardless of their health status, regardless of their economic status, regardless of whether they have a job or don't have a job, no matter how old, no matter how young, and no matter the circumstances. Everyone will be able to be covered by health care insurance.

I guess I might also say it is another red letter day because of the closedown of the government. We have the House of Representatives that, again, will not even put the bill on the floor of the House for a vote that will keep the government running. Think about that.

They will not even put it on the floor for a vote because they know if they put it on the floor, they will get enough Republicans and Democrats to vote for it, and it will pass.

So the tea party extremists in the House—instead of putting it on the floor and passing it tonight so the government could be back in business tomorrow—are trying to make a little deal. First it was to defund and delay ObamaCare. Now they have something they are doing on the House floor where they are going to fund some little TV programs. It is nonsense. This is not worthy of a great country.

I had a nice conversation with Secretary of State Kerry this morning—not necessarily just about this, but, of course, we talked about the government shutdown. I asked him: Secretary, you are close to this. How is this playing in other countries? Secretary Kerry said: It is painful for us in the State Department—representing the government of the United States in a nonpartisan way—to have other countries look at us, scratch their heads, and wonder why we are doing things like this. He was just pained, not for himself but for all of his wonderful diplomats and ambassadors all around the world who represent our country and what they must have to go through to have other countries see what we are doing and question our judgment.

That is what the tea party people are doing. They are driving this country down. What they are doing is very dangerous. It is ideologically driven obstructionism, and it has taken a dangerous turn.

Again, despite the efforts to pass a continuing resolution to fund the government, the House Republicans have shut down the government because we will not submit to defunding or delaying ObamaCare, or the Affordable Care Act, whichever you call it.

It seems as though we see this crisis differently. I was reading a newspaper report that one Member of the House Republican caucus said with a big smile: We are very excited. It is exactly what we wanted, and we got it. This is exactly what they wanted, a government shutdown and they got it? We are excited, she said.

The article also notes the reaction of another representative who reportedly said: It is wonderful. We are 100 percent united. Again, that was from another tea party Republican.

What are they excited about? Are they excited about the hundreds of thousands of Federal workers who are on furlough today? Are they excited about the closed monuments and the national parks? Are they excited about the delayed veterans' benefits, Social Security, loss of economic activity and jobs?

After more than three decades in Washington, it is difficult to shock me, but the sheer cynicism and fundamental lack of decency we are witnessing right now is nothing short of breathtaking.

As I understand it, this is just the first step. The tea party Republicans continue to threaten that if the Senate and President Obama don't submit to their demands, they will create another economic crisis by causing our country to default on the national debt in the middle of the month.

Who pays the price for this recklessness?

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

Mr. HARKIN. I would be delighted to yield to my friend from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. The Senator from Iowa has the special responsibility of the authorizing and appropriating committee that deals with health and education and the National Institutes of Health, and so he understands medical research better than most.

I am sure he is aware now that the junior Senator from Texas, Mr. CRUZ, is making a list of those agencies of government which he and the tea party Republicans believe should be reopened. The first cut on that list includes the Veterans' Administration, but it doesn't include the 564,000 employees who are also veterans, one-fourth of whom are disabled veterans. He has included the National Park Service because of the embarrassment of international visitors coming to the Statue of Liberty and finding it closed, and he included the District of Columbia.

I note he has not included the National Institutes of Health.

I wonder if the Senator from Iowa has read the Wall Street article today. It says, as follows:

At the National Institutes of Health nearly three-quarters of the staff were furloughed. One result: director Francis Collins said about 200 patients who otherwise would be admitted to the NIH Clinical Center into clinical trials each week will be turned away. This includes about 30 children, most of them cancer patients, he said.

My question is this: Would the Senator from Iowa join me in writing a letter to the junior Senator from Texas and the tea party Republicans begging them to include the National Institutes of Health on their list of agencies that they may consider reopening?

Mr. HARKIN. I say to my friend from Illinois, I would be delighted to sign on to that letter because I am acutely aware of what is happening at NIH, but I might also tell my friend from Illinois that I would also like to include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Mr. DURBIN. We shouldn't push our luck with the junior Senator from Texas.

Mr. HARKIN. But I must say to my friend that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is out there keeping diseases from spreading, containing them where they break out, putting in prevention measures all over this country. They too are furloughing people. Just think what would happen if, God forbid, some virulent bacteria or virus were to break out and they

have—as my colleague knows, the CDC is very good at containment. They know how to handle these situations. What if they don't have the people to do that?

Mr. DURBIN. I would say to the Senator from Iowa, we better not push our luck asking for both the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control from Senator CRUZ.

In all honesty, we are not sending any letters. This is reckless and irresponsible, to threaten the lives of people going for clinical trials at the National Institutes of Health. To quote from a distant past in this Chamber, in this Congress, "Have they no shame?" Have they no shame, to shut down the Government of the United States of America, endangering the lives of individuals over a political temper tantrum?

Mr. HARKIN. I say to my friend, it is shameful. It is not befitting a great nation. Maybe they would like us to be a Third World country.

I see this and I don't understand. The Senator from Illinois is right: Where is their shame? But where is their sense of responsibility? Where is their sense of being responsible to the people of this country, to have a government that works to protect them, to keep them healthy, that does the medical research that the Senator spoke about? I see that, and I don't understand why they don't grasp the kind of damage they are doing to our country. I don't understand it.

Mr. DURBIN. I will respond to the Senator from Iowa and then yield the floor back to him, and I see the Senator from New Hampshire waiting.

Our last best hope in this debate is that moderate Republicans will step up and say, Enough. This is not what the Republican Party is about. This is not what America should be about.

We need to be solving these problems on a bipartisan basis. If enough moderate Republicans would come to that empty side of the floor, which we have been witnessing all day today, and speak out, we could bring an end to this national embarrassment.

I thank the Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I thank the Senator for his input and his questions. I think the Senator has highlighted the kind of situation that begs credulity. People around this country must wonder, Have we taken all leave of our senses here?

People say we should sit down and negotiate. We are always willing to negotiate. We are always willing to talk about issues. But when the tea party Republicans in the House say, No, we won't even keep the government open unless we defund ObamaCare, which is the law of the land, that is trying to nullify a law by holding a gun at our heads and saying we are going to shut down the government unless we get rid of a law—not a bill, not a proposal before us, but the law of the land upheld by the Supreme Court, this is not the way to govern. It is the way to take

hostages, maybe. It is the way to commit blackmail, but it is not the way to run a government.

So I hope the moderate Republicans—and believe me, there are a lot of good moderate Republicans. On my own committee, I deal with good people who work together to get bills passed and to get them out of our committee. We just need them to say to the tea party: You are wrong. This is not good for us, it is not good for the country, and it is not good for the Republican Party, either.

I will have more to say about this later as well as tomorrow when I will bring some more figures to the floor on how many more people are excited about the Affordable Care Act and are going to healthcare.gov.

If I might, I wish to take one extra minute here to say that I was down at the World War II Memorial this morning to greet some Iowans who were coming in on an Honor Flight and I saw the barricade up there. I talked to one of the park officers and I said, This doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense because it is open. I have come down here at midnight and walked around. It is out in the open. I could understand it if it were a building where you had to go through a device and security. I could understand that because the government is shut down. Then some buses came from Mississippi. I had to leave before the Iowans could arrive. They went behind the barrier. They went in and everybody was fine. I heard this afternoon that the Park Police came down and now we are moving people out again and putting up the barricades.

Why are there barricades on the Jefferson Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the World War II Memorial, the Vietnam Memorial, or any of those where people walk around? It doesn't make sense to put up barricades around these outdoor memorials.

While this whole shutdown of government is nonsense, I don't think we ought to respond to nonsense with more nonsense. So I call upon the Park Service and the Department of the Interior, on those instances where it is open 24 hours a day, such as the World War II Memorial, the Korean War Memorial, or the Lincoln and Jefferson Monuments, why put up the barricades? People are there, they go there 24 hours a day. This doesn't make sense. I hope by tomorrow, whoever gave the orders to put those barricades up will have those orders superseded by someone higher up and get those barricades down. As I said, I can understand if it is a building where we have to have security, where we have to have guards and machines and equipment. I understand, with a government shutdown, that is not accessible. But for something that is open, as those monuments are, where people wander in and out 24 hours a day, it makes no sense to put up barricades. I call upon the Park Service to get rid of those barricades.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I came to join my colleagues on the floor this afternoon to talk about and to call on our colleagues in the House—those Republicans who have been taking this irresponsible action—to stop what they are doing and help us resolve this government shutdown.

We are involved in a completely manufactured shutdown of our government. This is something that didn't have to happen. Right now, there is a majority in the House ready to pass a bill to keep our government open, to start it back up again, to end this crisis. But here we are. We are in the midst of the first government shutdown in 17 years because a small minority of the minority party in the other House is holding this government hostage so it can pursue its agenda of trying to end the Affordable Care Act. I don't know why they don't want to make sure that people in this country can get access to health care. I am not going to talk about that this evening.

This is irresponsible. We are already seeing the effects of this crisis in New Hampshire and across the country. We have thousands of Federal employees in my State of New Hampshire who could face furloughs. That includes workers at our Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. Those folks are from Maine and New Hampshire, but they are looking at furloughs.

We have already heard from over 300 civilian technicians for the National Guard in New Hampshire who were notified they are going to be furloughed. I have started hearing from constituents whose lives are affected by our inability here in Washington to address keeping this government open.

I heard from one of my constituents in Portsmouth, a man named Robert Cody. He writes:

Dear Senator Shaheen,

Please do not allow a government shutdown to occur. The consequences to individuals and the economy will be catastrophic.

He goes on to say:

To put this on personal terms, my daughter just finished graduate school and began work as a consulting doctor at a Veteran's Administration hospital providing care to wounded veterans. If a shutdown occurs, she will lose her job and be faced with crushing student loan debt and no way to pay back the loans or her living expenses. The veterans who will be deprived of her care will be victims of the shutdown as well. Her situation is just one of many.

Robert, you are certainly right about that.

Hard-working individuals must not be forced to suffer to make a political point.

He goes on to say:

Please do the right thing! The consequences to the economy and unemployment will be far-reaching, and you will be blamed if you contribute to this looming disaster.

I say to Robert: I couldn't agree more with what you have said. I think we need to work together. We need to try

to avoid any further harm to people who depend not only on the jobs—the people who are going to be laid off—but also those people who benefit from the services the Federal Government provides.

Salaries for our Federal workers aren't just important for them and their families; they are also critical to their local economies. When hard-working New Hampshire citizens aren't able to get their paychecks, they stop making their mortgage payments, they stop paying their utility bills, they stop shopping at local stores. That is what we are going to see if this shutdown continues. It will inflict serious consequences on the economy.

New Small Business Administration loans are not being originated. SBA loans are critical for job creation in New Hampshire. Our small businesses represent 96 percent of all employers. In 2012, SBA helped 630 small businesses in New Hampshire get access to over \$130 million in loans. Now, because of this shutdown, businesses are not going to have access to those loans.

The Federal Housing Administration loans are slowing. Our housing market has really just begun to recover, but it is still fragile. Now, because of the shutdown, we are going to be holding up home sales because much of the FHA staff is furloughed.

Of course, this is terrible timing for the tourism industry in New Hampshire. We are just beginning our fall foliage season. It is a spectacular time to travel around New Hampshire. We have tourists who come from all over the world, who spend money in our local restaurants, who stay at our hotels, and visit our attractions. Many of our small businesses rely on this time of the year to provide the revenue they need to continue operating all year long. We know the tourists who come from overseas stay longer and spend more money. But if the shutdown in government means we are going to be turning away many of those customers, applications for visas are going to come to a halt. According to the Congressional Research Service, during the 1995–1996 shutdown, approximately 20,000 to 30,000 applications for foreigners for visas went unprocessed each day, and U.S. tourism industries—the airlines, the hotels, the restaurants, all of the affiliated businesses that depend on tourism—lost millions of dollars.

We also have a visa center in New Hampshire that works on those visas. They are shut down as part of this government closure. We have a lot of small businesses in New Hampshire and across the country that rely on Federal contracts as they grow and create new jobs.

I talked to one of those small business owners today—a man named Lou Altman with Globafone. I have known Lou for a long time. He has worked in New Hampshire and around the world. He called to express his deep frustration about our failing to pass a continuing resolution to keep this government open.

Globafone's satellite technologies help Federal agencies meet critical needs, in addition to providing technology for many developing countries. But with the shutdown, everything is up in the air for Globafone. They are not certain what this means for their government contracts. As a result their cash flows are uncertain. Since their cash flows are uncertain, their line of credit with the bank is uncertain. I do not blame Lou for being frustrated for wanting to know why we cannot work together to get this done.

I would say to my colleagues in the House, you cannot take this government hostage and expect that we are going to be able to negotiate. This government shutdown is bad for our economy, bad for middle-class families, bad for our country. Unfortunately, what we have seen this week is that some have decided they want to inflict another manufactured crisis as a tactic to prevent health care reform from going into effect.

The people that I talk to in New Hampshire do not think this is a good approach. They know that a government shutdown is serious, that it has consequences for our economy and jobs. Considering that impact, it is no surprise that economists have forecast that our failure to deal with this crisis will have a significant impact on our economy.

Even a 3- or 4-day shutdown could slow growth by 0.2 percent, according to economist Mark Zandi, and an extended shutdown could reduce growth by 1.4 percent. So holding the economy and critical services hostage to score political points is reckless and it is irresponsible. With the economy showing signs of improvement, this is the last thing we should be doing.

It does not have to be this way. I was a Governor for 3 terms. In two of those terms the other party controlled both chambers of our legislature. But we were always able to enact a budget before the fiscal year ended. We had a lot of differences along the way. But both sides understood that in order to reach an agreement, in order to pass a budget, in order to keep government operating, we had to compromise. It would have been impossible to imagine the New Hampshire legislature not getting a budget to my desk because they wanted to play political games or that they would have sent me a budget that they knew I was going to veto.

This Congress can certainly do better. We must do better. My colleagues have pointed out that the Senate in taking up the bill to keep the government funded, the continuing resolution, agreed to accept the dollar amount that the House wanted us to pass. So we compromised on this continuing resolution. What we saw for our willingness to do that was the House decided they were going to put all kinds of amendments on this bill to keep it from getting passed.

I certainly hope that we can pass this bill, that the House will take it up. All

the Speaker needs to do is take up the clean bill that the Senate sent them because they have the votes to pass it. If he is so sure that the votes are not there, then let people vote on it and see what happens.

But we know that is not the case. We know that the votes are there to pass this bill. Because it is being held hostage to a small minority in the Republican caucus, this government is shut down and tens of thousands of people across the country are experiencing difficulties as a result. I certainly hope that we are going to see some action soon. I am going to continue to work for that. I am sure all of us in the Senate will try to see that something gets done so we can reopen this government.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, let me concur with much of what my colleague Senator SHAHEEN has just said. But let me begin by doing something we do not do enough and that is to say thank you to the 2 million civilians and 1.4 million men and women in the military in all of our 50 States, including some 5,000 in my own State of Vermont. So we have 2 million civilians who are working for the Federal Government and 1.4 million men and women in the military. We owe them a deep debt of gratitude. The work that they do is enormously important for our country.

They work to make sure that our drinking water and the air that we breathe is safe. It is not an accident that in many parts of this country, the air that people are breathing, that our kids are breathing, is a lot cleaner than it used to be. It took a lot of work to make that happen. We thank them for that.

We have Customs people patrolling our borders. We thank them for their work. We have Federal workers to protect the health and safety of working people all over the country. We have Federal workers who are working to educate kids with special needs. We have Federal employees who provide food to low-income pregnant women, infants, children, and senior citizens. We have Federal employees who are working in VA hospitals, and we have nurses and many other staff doing a great job for our veterans.

We have Federal employees who make sure that children receive needed care and services so that their parents can go to work. They repair our roads, bridges, dams, culverts, and sewers. They sweep the floors. They clean our bathrooms and make sure the places we work in are not infested.

Americans who work for the Federal Government are part of the backbone of this country. I personally thank them for what they do. But it is no secret that in recent years there has been a huge assault against the Federal workforce. For the past 3 years, the pay of Federal workers has been frozen at a time when the costs that they are

incurring in terms of gasoline, heating oil, prescription drugs, and of everything else have been going up. But their pay has been level.

As a thank you for all of the work that Federal employees do here in Washington and Vermont, in Massachusetts and all over this country, our thank you to them has been to shut down the government and to tell some 800,000 Federal employees—these are single moms trying to raise kids, these are proud people, civilians in the military, people in our National Guard; these are people who are doing important work, who have families to raise, and who are dedicated to their jobs—we are saying: Sorry, you have to go home. They are going home, and they are not even sure whether they are going to be paid or when they are going to be paid.

So you are looking at tens of thousands of lives that are being radically disrupted because of this shutdown. I can tell you that in Vermont, we are very proud of the Vermont National Guard. The Vermont National Guard men and women served very heavily and bravely in Iraq and Afghanistan.

They helped us when we had the terrible Irene floods a few years ago. The thank you that the Vermont National Guard is getting today—this is true all over the country—is that in Vermont some 450 workers at the Vermont National Guard are going to be furloughed. I know many of these people. They are good people. They are hard-working people. They do not deserve this type of behavior from the Federal Government.

This affects people from all over the State, people who are trying to get homes, people who are trying to start businesses. That is not something that should be happening.

Let me just very briefly explain the dynamic of what is going on right here. It is not complicated. The Republicans in the House are dominated by a relatively small group of rightwing extremists.

What the Speaker there has said is that instead of bringing to the floor the bill that we passed here in the Senate, what is called a clean CR that will continue funding the government, instead of putting that bill on the floor of the House and allowing the entire 435 Members of the House to vote on that bill, what he has done is said to the House Republicans: OK, what do you want? The extreme rightwing has dominated that. What they have said is: We want to defund ObamaCare. That is the only legislation that you, Mr. Speaker, can bring to the floor of the House.

This is a moment of enormous importance for the Speaker of the House. He has to determine whether he is the Speaker of the Republican Party or the Speaker of the House of Representatives, whether he is going to be dominated by a minority of one party in one part of the government or whether he will allow the entire House to vote.

What many of observers have made clear is, if he puts that bill on the floor, it will pass and the government will reopen. I hope that he will do that. My political view, my progressive political views are pretty well known. My views on this issue are well known in Vermont and maybe elsewhere in this country. But what I want to do is very briefly to express what some Republicans are saying, people who are not rightwing extremists, who, in fact, have very strong disagreements with the Affordable Care Act but who understand that they cannot hold the American people hostage and they cannot blackmail the government in order to get their way.

So this is not BERNIE SANDERS talking. These are conservative Republicans, but people who are not rightwing extremists. Let me quote some of my colleagues. These are the public statements they have made. SAXBY CHAMBLISS, a Republican Senator from Georgia, this is what he says:

I'd love to [defund ObamaCare] too. But shutting down the government and playing into the hands of the president politically is not the right thing to do. Plus, it's going to do great harm to the American people if we pursue that course. We've been there. It didn't work.

Senator DAN COATS, Republican from Indiana:

Here's the hard truth: President Obama will not overturn his signature legislation so long as he is president and the Democrats have control of the Senate. Along with these political realities, refusing to pass legislation to keep the government funded will not stop ObamaCare from going into effect.

Senator TOM COBURN, Republican from Oklahoma:

It's not an achievable strategy. It's creating the false impression that you can do something when you can't. And it's dishonest.

Republican Senator BOB CORKER from Tennessee. The Washington Post reports that CORKER compared shutting down the government to the way buffalo were slaughtered in the Old West. "I know when you get led into a box canyon what that means . . . Box canyon, here we come."

Representative PETER KING, Republican from New York.

We should not be closing down the government under any circumstances. That doesn't work, it's wrong, and you know, ObamaCare passed. We have to try to defund it, we have to try to find ways to repeal it. But the fact is, we shouldn't be using it as a threat to shut down the government.

Republican Senator ORRIN HATCH from Utah.

My personal belief is the only way to get rid of ObamaCare is to be intelligent and smart about it and gradually just work on it, work it through . . . to expect the government to shut down is not the way to do it.

MARK KIRK, Republican Senator from Illinois:

I am one of those who says, let's not shut down the government just because you don't get everything you want.

Senator JOHN MCCAIN, former Republican candidate for President of the United States:

In the United States Senate, we will not repeal, or defund, ObamaCare. We will not. And to think we can is not rational.

Senator ROB PORTMAN, Republican of Ohio:

I do think we need to deal with the underlying problem of overspending and we have to deal with the problem of Obamacare, but those ought to be handled outside of the context of a government shutdown.

Senator JIM RISCH, Republican of Idaho:

There isn't anybody that thinks that ObamaCare is going to get defunded. It cannot happen . . . We were elected to govern—you don't govern by shutting down the government.

I can go on and on.

There are many Republicans in the Senate and Republicans in the House who do not like ObamaCare. They understand that we don't shut down the government only to make a point. We don't throw 800,000 workers who work for the Federal Government, whose lives depend on a paycheck, out on the street in order to make a point.

I think JIM RISCH—Republican Senator from Idaho—had it right. I will repeat what he said:

There isn't anybody that thinks that ObamaCare is going to get defunded. It cannot happen . . . We were elected to govern—you don't govern by shutting down the government.

Senator RISCH is exactly correct.

Where we are right now is that there are many Republicans in the Senate, there are Republicans in the House, and there are millions of Republicans all over the country who say they have disagreements with ObamaCare, but it was passed by the Congress almost 4 years ago and signed by the President. When it was challenged by the Supreme Court, it was upheld as being constitutional. We had a Presidential election where the Affordable Care Act was one of the major issues being debated. President Obama won by 5 million votes. We had Senate races, and Republicans lost two seats in the Senate. They lost seats in the House.

There are sensible Republicans all over the country saying: Look, there are ways to deal with this issue, but don't shut down the government. Don't punish 800,000 workers. Do not deny benefits and services to tens of millions of Americans.

I would like to go to another area and suggest—although I think the Presiding Officer well understands this—that what we are seeing today in terms of the attack on ObamaCare is not only some isolated act on the part of rightwing Republicans. I think many Americans are not aware. People may like ObamaCare or may not like ObamaCare. As we well know, today was the first day the exchange was open. Guess what happened. Millions of people went to the Web site. Guess what. When we have 48 million Americans who have no health insurance and millions more who are in need with high deductibles and copayments and they are given the opportunity to buy insurance, shock of all shocks, many of

them are now going to the Web site. Our Republican friends are saying: No, no, we don't want to see that.

My point—and I hope everybody understands this—is that this attack on ObamaCare is only one small part of a rightwing extremist ideology which is incredibly reactionary and which really intends not only to repeal ObamaCare but to repeal virtually every major piece of legislation passed in this country in the last 80 years that protects the interests of the elderly, the children, the sick, the poor, women, the environment, and people who are vulnerable. That is what their agenda is.

I will give a few examples. The Environmental Protection Agency works hard to make sure the air we breathe is clean. There are many rightwing Republicans who don't want only to cut funding for the EPA, they want to abolish the EPA.

We have a major crisis in this country in terms of millions of American workers being forced to work for very low wages. People are working for 8 bucks an hour, 9 bucks an hour. They can't raise a family working for these very low wages. Many of us believe it is important that we raise the minimum wage. Do people know what the rightwing agenda is, the agenda funded by a family like the Koch brothers, a family worth \$70 billion that is pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into these rightwing extremist groups? Do you know what they say about the minimum wage? They say: Let's abolish the minimum wage.

People think I am kidding. The view now of the majority of the Members, the Republican Members in the Senate and the House, is not only not raising the minimum wage, it is to abolish the concept of the minimum wage. What that means is that if you are living in a high-unemployment area and the wages that are being offered to you by an employer are 3 bucks an hour or 4 bucks an hour, those are the wages you will have to accept because there will be no Federal floor. The Federal floor is \$7.25, and that is much too low. Get rid of that, and we will have people working for \$3 and \$4 an hour.

One of the most significant pieces of Federal legislation ever passed was passed in 1935—Social Security. Today we have over 50 million Americans who are benefiting from Social Security. If you go to the Texas Republican Party platform—their recent platform, and they are one of the most powerful Republican parties in the country—they are pretty up front about what they believe. They want to end Social Security. They want to privatize it. That is their goal.

The Veterans' Administration—and I speak today as chairman of the Veterans' Committee—today we have quite good VA health care through 152 medical centers run by the VA, 900 community-based outreach clinics, many vet centers. VA does, most veterans consider, a pretty good job in providing

health care. Do you know what some Republicans want to do? They want to privatize the Veterans' Administration. Check it out. This is the Texas Republican Party platform, which speaks for Republicans all over this country.

It is not only the VA and it is not only Social Security, it is many other programs. We recently saw our friends in the House cut food stamps by some \$4 billion this year. That is what they believe. Meanwhile, we have more people living in poverty today than at any time in the history of the United States. Many want to make devastating cuts in Medicaid, food stamps, and many other programs that people in this country are living on.

I will conclude by saying that we could end this crisis in a very few minutes. All that needs to happen is the Speaker of the House has to bring up the clean bill we passed here in the Senate and give all of his Members a chance to vote on it. If he does that, this crisis will be over.

It is morally wrong and it is extremely dangerous from a precedent perspective to allow this government and our President to be blackmailed or for the American people to be held hostage. If we were to succumb to that blackmail today, I can absolutely guarantee that in 2 weeks, when the United States is going to need to pay its debts, and we don't, for the first time in the history of this country, have the money to pay our debts, and when the economists are telling us that if we don't pay our debts, there could be an international economic crisis leading to huge amounts of job loss all over the world, not only for the United States—if we surrender to them now on this issue, they will be back. They will be back and they will say: If you don't cut this and don't cut that, we are not going to allow you to pay the debts the United States owes. It will go on and on. Next year they will come back and they may say: Well, we are not going to fund the government unless you end Social Security or unless you cut Medicaid drastically.

This is not the way a government in a democratic, civilized society can operate. We have our disagreements. God only knows we have that. We have debates. But there is a process.

What the Republicans have not yet recovered from is the simple fact that they lost the Presidential election, they do not have control over the Senate, and they only have one body. They think that from controlling one body they have a right to control the U.S. Government. This is not how it works.

I hope that people all over this country, whether they are conservatives or progressives, Democrats or Republicans, will listen to what some of the sensible Republicans are saying. In essence, what they are saying—and I have read many of the quotes from JOHN MCCAIN and others—is this: Yes, we have differences of opinion, and, yes, some of them disagree strongly

with ObamaCare, but there is a process you go through to make those changes. Do not shut down the government, impact the entire economy, throw 800,000 people out of work, and deny services to millions of Americans. That is not the way to run the government in a democratic society.

Let me conclude by hoping very much that the Speaker of the House will recognize that he is the Speaker of the entire House, not only of the Republican Party, and that he will let all of his Members vote on the legislation we passed in the Senate.

Mr. REID. Before the Senator yields the floor, I would ask permission to direct a question to the distinguished Senator from Vermont.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Is the Senator from Vermont aware of the fact that Dr. Francis Collins today announced that scores of people are being turned away today from the National Institutes of Health clinical trials, 30 little children from clinical trials. Is the Senator aware of that?

Mr. SANDERS. I am aware of that.

The point the leader is raising, what the question speaks to is that this is not a game we are playing when we are dealing with whether kids and others get treatment for cancer. What we are dealing with are life-and-death issues. When the government is shut down and agencies such as the National Institutes of Health end cancer research—this is taking life away from people.

Mr. REID. I ask through the Chair, is the Senator aware that this new gambit across the hall in the House of Representatives is only another effort to defund ObamaCare?

Mr. SANDERS. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Let me make a point for the majority leader. Today was the first day people could go onto the exchanges. Maybe the majority leader would like to explain to the American people that, in fact, some of these Web sites actually crashed because so many people came on board.

Mr. REID. In response to my friend from Vermont, I had the good fortune of spending an hour several months ago with one of the founders of Google. He, with a twinkle in his eye—a young man still—and a big smile, talked about when they were trying to get Google started. They couldn't believe the people who wanted information. Their Web sites kept crashing because so many people wanted the information to which they thought they were entitled.

Around America today millions of people, in the first few hours of the opportunity to sign up, rushed and overburdened a number of places—the Web sites. This is good news for America.

I also say that these are the same people—I read a direct quote at an event earlier today. I am sorry I don't have it with me. In 1961 Ronald Reagan talked about Medicare. I am paraphrasing, but this is pretty close. If

they do not stop Medicare, then his children and his children's children will look back at the day when America used to be free.

Can you imagine that?

Mr. SANDERS. What I would say to the majority leader—and I was on the floor the other day reading quotes—when Social Security was first created, we had quotes from Republicans who were talking about the end of life as we know it, slavery coming to America. It is the same thing with Medicare. It is interesting.

I would say to the majority leader that despite all of the anti-Affordable Care Act rhetoric we hear—you would think nobody would be interested in getting into the program—the first day out, over 2 million people went to the Federal Government's Web site. I am not quite sure why our Republican friends think that millions of Americans on the first day should not have the right to take advantage of a program that was passed by Congress.

Mr. REID. I appreciate the advocacy of my friend from Vermont for all Americans. This good man, the chairman of the Veterans' Committee, Senator SANDERS, is like me. I don't have a military record, nor does he, but that doesn't take away from the effort. We try to make sure veterans are taken care of. What this good man has done to protect American veterans already in a short period of time as chairman of this committee is outstanding. It is really remarkable how much he cares. I express my appreciation to the Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. I wish the American people also to understand that we are going to win this struggle because of the determination of the majority leader, who is standing for tens of millions of Americans who not only want access to affordable health care but do not want to see our government blackmailed by a small number of rightwing extremists.

I thank the majority leader very much for his comments.

Mr. REID. Madam President, we are going to go out in a few minutes, but this is my message to the House of Representatives, to the Republican leadership in the House of Representatives: Stop the games. The government is shut down. More than 70 percent of our intelligence community has been sent home. The National Institutes of Health has hundreds and hundreds of people home when they should be looking at their microscopes trying to cure diseases in America and around the world. Everyone in the world looks at the National Institutes of Health with jealousy, it is such a remarkably good institution.

The President has said as to these games they are playing now—he sends these little bits and pieces over here—he will veto them. We won't allow them to pass here anyway. We want the government open. If they will pass the legislation to reopen the government, we will then talk about anything they

want to talk about. We will have conferences on anything they want to talk about. And one of the things we would like to have a conference on is Senator MURRAY's budget that we have been trying to get to conference on for more than 6 months.

The American people deserve more than they are getting from the House of Representatives, the so-called people's House.

IRAQI SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA PROGRAM

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I am proud that the Senate unanimously passed legislation late last night to extend the Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa—SIV—Program. This program offers nothing short of a lifeline for the Iraqi men and women who risked everything supporting the U.S.' mission in Iraq. Despite the fact that there are thousands of Iraqis still waiting for their paperwork to be processed, the program expired last night, and we must take immediate action to renew it. Given all that is on the line, I am hopeful that even in this difficult political climate, the House of Representatives will take up and swiftly pass this bill and we can send it to President Obama for his signature later today.

Congress created the Iraqi SIV Program in 2008 to allow some of the tens of thousands of Iraqis who served alongside U.S. troops the opportunity to seek safety and a new beginning in the United States. They were our translators and our guides. They were a critical resource to our troops, helping them navigate complex cultural, political, and geographic terrain. They literally risked their lives for us. Now, 5 years after the original legislation passed, less than 6,000 of the 25,000 available visas have been distributed, leaving many well-deserving Iraqi allies in danger and American credibility on the line.

As chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and chairman of the Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on State Department and Foreign Operations, I worked hard to see that a reauthorization for the Iraqi SIV Program is in the National Defense Authorization Act. Unfortunately, that reauthorization will not pass in time to renew this vital program. We also made significant efforts to include that extension in the continuing resolution passed by the Senate last week, but a congressional stalemate has eroded that path. The only option that remains is for the House to take up and pass the bipartisan stand-alone bill immediately.

I am hopeful that we can do just that. I have joined with Members from both sides of the aisle in the Senate, including Senators SHAHEEN, MCCAIN, GRASSLEY, and GRAHAM, as well Members in the House, to resolve any concerns. We have compromised on the length of the extension and have covered any costs associated with it. Pas-

sage should be quick and straightforward. Lives are on the line. Our word is on the line, and it is time to act.

Among the many lessons of the Vietnam war is that we must not abandon those who risked their lives to help us. We made a commitment, and we must honor it. We must renew this critical program.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF STARR COMMONWEALTH

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, it is a great pleasure to join my colleague DEBBIE STABENOW in honoring Starr Commonwealth on a century of distinguished service to children and families across Michigan. Fittingly, they will mark this milestone with a Founder's Day celebration on October 6 in Albion, MI. This impressive community-based organization is, indeed, 100 years young.

"There is no such thing as a bad child." This simple yet profound belief, held fervently by Floyd Starr, the founder of Starr Commonwealth, has served as the guiding principle for everything Starr Commonwealth has accomplished from the very beginning. A century ago, Floyd Starr sought to create a place where troubled youth could find shelter, peace and the assistance they need to grow. He understood then, as we do today, that it is important to ensure that all young people, regardless of their circumstances, have an opportunity to flourish. Today, Starr Commonwealth is stronger than ever, and their strength-based approach to transforming the lives of young people has proven successful time and again.

Situated on 350 acres in Albion, MI, Starr Commonwealth has nurtured an environment steeped in natural beauty to serve as an oasis where troubled youth can begin the process of comprehensive, constructive change. This nonprofit, multiservice organization currently reaches more than 1.5 million people annually, including families across Michigan, around the United States and in more than 60 countries throughout the world. Starr Commonwealth operates dozens of programs with a focus on helping young people reach their full potential. These programs include residential care services, a therapeutic boarding school, community-based and home-based programs, a public access charter school, and an international learning network for professionals working in positive youth development, trauma-informed care and racial healing, among many others.

Organizations such as Starr Commonwealth play an invaluable role in communities across our Nation. They provide young people with the tools they need to succeed and become productive members of society. Helping young people face adversity and overcome challenges in a caring, positive way is a blessing Starr Commonwealth has bestowed not just on the young

they nurture, but on the future of our State.

Success stories can be found in communities across our land. The lives of countless young people have been transformed; their families are healthier; and the communities in which they reside are stronger as a result of Starr Commonwealth's work. Senator STABENOW and I are delighted to congratulate all who have contributed to the success of this fine organization. Our young people, and our State, have brighter futures because Starr Commonwealth is there to help them along the way.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 9:33 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, without amendment:

S. 1348. An act to reauthorize the Congressional Award Act.

The message also announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 3174. An act to authorize the Secretary of Transportation to obligate funds for emergency relief projects arising from damage caused by severe weather events in 2013, and for other purposes.

The message further announced that the House insists upon its amendment to the amendment of the Senate to the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 59) making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2014, and for other purposes, and asks a conference with the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints the following as managers on the part of the House:

From the Committee on Appropriations, for consideration of the Senate amendment and the House amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Messrs. ROGERS of Kentucky, FRELINGHUYSEN, CRENSHAW, and CARTER.

For consideration of the Senate amendment and the House amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Messrs. CANTOR, CAMP, RYAN of Wisconsin, and GRAVES of Georgia.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 12:53 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

S. 1348. An act to reauthorize the Congressional Award Act.

The enrolled bill was subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

ENROLLED BILL PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate reported that on today, October 1, 2013, she had presented to the President of the United States the following enrolled bill:

S. 1348. An act to reauthorize the Congressional Award Act.