

came to the table and supported legislation to protect veterans programs. I hope we could get some cooperation from our colleagues on the other side to do that today, I say to my colleague from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. May I ask how much time remains?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Three minutes.

Mr. CORNYN. I thank the Senators from South Dakota and from Missouri for making very important points. I know the leaders—bicameral leadership of the House and the Senate—were called to the White House last night, at which time Senator MCCONNELL, the distinguished Republican leader, reported here on the floor, the President announced he was not going to negotiate. Bizarre. Why would the President call the Republican and the Democratic leadership to the White House to say: I am not going to negotiate. Is it for a photo opportunity? Is it to give sort of some false impression that he is actually rolling up his sleeves and is engaged in the business of government to which he was elected?

I hope the President reconsiders leaving town while the government is shut down, in the words of the majority leader, and leaving for a trip to Asia while, as our distinguished Democratic colleagues just pointed out, many federal employees are furloughed during this government shutdown. My hope would be that the President would cancel his trip and that he would stay here in Washington, as we are, trying to solve this problem and break this impasse.

These proposals we have made here today, many of which have been voted on by the House of Representatives in a bipartisan fashion, are designed to do exactly that—to break this impasse. Yet what is the response of the White House to some earlier proposals? They sent out a Statement of Administration Policy saying: If it is passed, I would veto it. That is President Barack Obama. How is that rolling up your sleeves and being engaged in the job you got elected to? He earned it. He was elected twice as President of the United States. But it is not leadership to convene a meeting of Republican and Democratic leadership at the White House and say: I am not going to negotiate. And by the way, I am leaving town on Saturday. Good luck.

That leads me to conclude that the President and his party are actually enjoying this shutdown because they see this as partisan political gain. They read the public opinion polls, just as we do, but I do not think the American people should be fooled and they are not being fooled. House Republicans and Republicans in the Senate have made many reasonable proposals, only to be given the Heisman, and the President is not negotiating and the government remains shut down.

The President needs to stay here, demonstrate leadership, continue to meet with leaders on both sides of the

Capitol, and we can break through this impasse, get the money for children's cancer research, get the money for the troops, and open the World War II Memorial to the Honor Flights coming from Texas and around the country. We can do this. They call it self-government for a reason. We all ought to be working together toward that end.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican time has expired.

IRAQI SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA PROGRAM

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, having received from the House H.R. 3233, which is identical to S. 1566, the bill is considered read three times and passed. The motion to reconsider is considered made and laid on the table.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The assistant majority leader.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, there are two sides to every story. Before he leaves the floor, I would like to say to my friend from Texas—and he is my friend—I was at the World War II Memorial yesterday with an Honor Flight from Illinois. There were no barricades stopping them from going to the memorial, so the characterization on the floor that the veterans were stopped is not true, it is not accurate. I hope the record will reflect that.

The reason there is any question about access relates to the shutdown of the U.S. Federal Government, the shutdown of this government. We have passed a continuing resolution, which is a spending bill, to allow the government to function for 6 weeks. We passed it here in the Senate. The House Speaker, Mr. BOEHNER, refuses to call it for a vote.

There is a majority, Democratic and Republican, ready to vote for it, ready to reopen the government, no questions asked about the NIH, about the barricades at the World War II Memorial which were there originally. All these questions will be resolved. Three times this morning the Republicans have objected to bringing that measure up for another vote in the Senate. That worries me.

Let me say one other thing about the Affordable Care Act, the insurance exchanges. This morning—I am sorry he has left the floor—this morning, this is what the Republican leader, Mr. MCCONNELL, said about the insurance exchanges:

Embarrassing, embarrassing rollout over ObamaCare exchanges on Tuesday. I mean, one of the folks the President had standing behind him at the White House tried to log on and sign on to ObamaCare, and after a couple of unsuccessful attempts, the Post reports, she gave up.

I have good news for the Senator from Kentucky. When you look across the United States of America at the exchanges that have been opened, he

should hold as a matter of pride the fact that the Commonwealth of Kentucky is one of the most successful insurance exchanges in America. Listen to the report we just received this morning from the secretary of the Governor's Cabinet for Health, Audrey Haynes, in Kentucky. The Kentucky insurance exchange, which the Republicans want to close down, has had 117,000 unique visitors, 109,000 prescreenings to determine qualifications for health insurance, and 13,000 Kentuckians—already, in 2 days—already 13,000 have applied for health coverage and 8,000 are now complete.

This is great news. They are leading the country. Kentucky should be so proud. Mr. President, 122 small businesses have begun applications, 3,500 new families have been enrolled, and there have been 15,000 calls to the call center.

Apologize that we have not been able to process these as quickly in any State, but the overwhelming positive public response across America to what they call ObamaCare is an indication of pent-up demand in Kentucky, Illinois, and every State for people to finally get access to health insurance.

I see others are on the floor to speak. I want to say to my friends on the other side of the aisle, please reopen this government. We can sit down and negotiate—we should—about important issues, the issues the Senator from Washington addressed in the budget. Let's address all these issues. Let's do it in a bipartisan, thoughtful, adult manner. Telling 800,000 Federal employees to go home is really unfair to them. It is unfair to this Nation. It doesn't speak well of us.

The last point I will make is this. I left the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing this morning. Wendy Sherman is Assistant Secretary of State. She is widely respected. We were talking about the threat of Iran as a nuclear power. She said to us—and she said it with some regret—that the government shutdown is hurting our efforts to stop the development of nuclear weapons in Iran. How? Ninety percent of the employees at the Department of Treasury office responsible for monitoring Iran so that the sanctions are there and tough and bring them to the bargaining table—90 percent of those Federal employees have been furloughed at the Department of Treasury because the government shut down; and 72 percent—almost three-fourths—of all the men and women at our intelligence agencies in a civilian capacity have been laid off as well because of the government shutdown. These are men and women charged with watching the enemy every minute of every day so we never have another 9/11. This is one of the aspects of the government shutdown that literally jeopardize the security of the United States of America.

For goodness' sake, let's put this government back in business before the end of this day.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Illinois for reminding all of us of the many people and communities and the economy in this country that are being hurt today because of the tea party's insistence, in the House of Representatives, that this government remain shut until ObamaCare is defunded or eliminated. I am frustrated, as is every American today, thinking why can't our government work? Why can't people come together?

As chair of the Budget Committee, I have been out here 19 times since last March saying: Let's go to conference committee and resolve our differences, and 19 times Members of the Republican Party have said no. They have not allowed us to go talk.

Now we find ourselves in a mess. The government is shut down. Families are hurting and communities are hurting and our economy is hurting. What is the response now of the Republicans in the House of Representatives and here on the floor? Oops, we didn't mean to hurt everybody. We have a few friends we are going to take care of.

I have listened to the debate this morning where our Republican colleagues came out and asked unanimous consent to take care of a few of their favorite parts of government so that they can say they helped. I am as passionate as anyone about our veterans. There is not one Member of this Senate who does not fully support our military and our veterans. No one questions that, but I take a backseat to no one in advocating for our veterans—as the former chair of the veterans' committee, as the daughter of a World War II veteran who earned a Purple Heart and was one of the first soldiers in Okinawa.

As a young woman myself during the Vietnam war, I worked in the Seattle veterans hospital with men and women my age who were coming home from the Vietnam war. I have done so much work on this floor, as well as worked with hundreds of thousands of our veterans who are coming home from the current conflicts, and helped to pass legislation to make sure they have what they need, so we don't just say thank you, but we serve them well.

I take a backseat to no one on veterans. I can tell you one thing about our military and our veterans that everyone here knows: They are the least selfish among us. They have volunteered to serve our country. They have given up for every American, and they have a motto that they leave no one behind. I can't imagine that our veterans are out there today saying: Take care of me with this small amendment and leave behind the children who are in our Head Start programs or the moms and dads who are dependent on nutrition programs in this country or the 800,000 employees who are sitting at home today scared to death about

how they are going to pay their bills because this government is shut down.

We have an obligation and a responsibility to solve the problems in front of us. They are widespread in terms of our differences with our Republican colleagues, but we don't do them any favors by shutting off, closing our arms and saying: We are not going to talk about it. We do it by going to conference, and we do it by working together. We don't do it by shutting out the lights across this country on our government.

In front of the House today is a solution. It is the Senate-passed bill that is supported by a majority in the House and a majority in the Senate as well and would pass today if it were brought up. With that vote, we could open our government, put people back to work, and then we would go to conference, work out our agreements in the way our children expect us to do.

Let's be an example as adults to families and young people across this country that when there is a disagreement, all parties involved work together at a conference table and set aside their differences and find a solution for the country. It cannot be done by saying: I'm not going to let anybody go to work until I get my way, which is what the House of Representatives is doing.

We can get this done. As I talked about yesterday, I am a former preschool teacher, and I have seen this kind of activity before. We have all seen our kids make a mess in their room, and then say: Gosh. How did that happen? That is what we are hearing from the other side today: Well, gee, how come we haven't passed any appropriations bills? Wow, if we had a budget done, we wouldn't be here.

Why has that happened? Because time after time—and the chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee is here—when we have tried to get our work done, we have been blocked by the very same tea party Republicans who today have put us into this shutdown and said: My way or the highway; either repeal ObamaCare or this country hurts.

That is not what we should be doing. Let's tell our veterans, our military, our Head Start moms, our 800,000 employees, and everybody in this country: We are a country that can work. We are at work. Let's open our doors, pass legislation in the House, and then we will work out our disagreements. As hard as it is, we can do that.

I hope that is the focus we have today. I say to Speaker BOEHNER: Bring up the bill, pass it, and allow us to get back to work.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise to speak in morning business. How much time remains?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Nineteen minutes.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise today in a twofold role. No. 1, I am

here under my constitutionally designated responsibility as the Senator from Maryland, duly elected and duly certified. I love representing Maryland. We have 5½ million of the most wonderful, patriotic, hard-working, philanthropic, community-oriented people you can have.

I also love representing Maryland because in my State we have one of the largest concentrations of civilian agencies in America. They have wonderful names such as the National Institutes of Health, and the National Institutes of Standards and Technology that helps to set the standards that enable the private sector to be able to develop the products they can sell around the world. We are home to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. We are home to the Consumer Product Safety Commission that looks at a variety of things from children's toys to the safety of our mattresses to make sure they are not flammable. I could go on listing those agencies: the Census Bureau, the National Weather Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, which helps to keep the seafood industry safe and operational.

I have a lot of Federal employees, and they are asking me: What are they doing? What I am telling them is that the other side—one faction in one party in one House of government—is prohibiting a reopening of our government because of their failure to take up the Senate continuing funding resolution, which would reopen government for 6 weeks while we work out our fiscal problems.

Their solution is to do this piecemeal. Piecemeal does not work. We cannot do this one agency at a time.

Weren't we proud of our World War II veterans and how plucky and spunky they were when they essentially broke the line to be able to see a memorial in their honor? Absolutely. When the National Park Service put that ban up around it, they were operating under the orders of what a shutdown is. Now, unofficially, that World War II museum is open. But while we say, aren't we proud of our veterans—Yes. Don't blame the National Park Service for closing the World War II memorial. Blame the others for shutting down government. Our veterans—who wanted to see the memorial which salutes them, the greatest generation who fought World War II—should not have to worry about their own government.

Then the other side says: Well, we are going to fund veterans' benefits. We cannot fund veterans' benefits without reopening Social Security and the IRS. I have looked and investigated and worked with my committee on why the veterans had a backlog for disability benefits. One of the ways claims are processed is they not only have to get what the veteran says, but they have to get paperwork from the Social Security Administration and from the Internal Revenue Service to be able to process the claim.

They can beat the drum, raise the flag, sound the bugle all that they

want, to say they want to fund veterans' benefits, but unless the Social Security Administration and the Internal Revenue Service are reopened, they are still placing our veterans at a disadvantage. We need to reopen the whole government.

While they are doing their piecemeal approach, they are so busy showing off and trying to show their pro-defending America stance—they passed a bill to make sure the military gets paid. Sure, what American would not want our troops in harm's way to get paid? We are for that. But they were so fast and so facile and so showbiz, they forgot the National Guard.

Now they are coming up with a piecemeal approach to add the National Guard. I love the National Guard. We are the home of the fighting 29th. They were heroes in World War II, and they have been heroes in every war since then. I want to see the National Guard helped, but they are kind of Johnny-come-latelies to the piecemeal approach because in their fast-track, showbiz, showoff approach, they forgot the National Guard. Oh, wasn't that a cool thing to do.

I support what Senator REID just did on each and every one of those piecemeal bills, to add the continuing funding resolution to open all of government. Over the last few days we have shamed them into thinking about the National Institutes of Health. I love the National Institutes of Health. It is in my State. Every day people go to work there to find cures for the dread diseases, such as Alzheimer's and autism, not only for the American people here but also around the world. In a few weeks we will be racing for the cure. Let's race to open government.

In their disdain for civilian agencies, NIH was closed down, but now they are coming up with a piecemeal approach to reopen NIH. Do I want NIH open? Absolutely. Over 70 percent of the people who work there have been laid off. Last year NIH announced—because of its research and work with wonderful academic centers and our private sector to develop biotech and pharmaceutical products—that cancer rates in the United States were reduced by 15 percent. With all of that work, they have now been furloughed.

Some might say: Senator BARB, do the piecemeal. I would love to. But if NIH workers were here, they would say: If you reopen us, it is a hollow opportunity unless you open the FDA. We do the basic research at our institutes, but somebody has to take that research and make use of it in other medical devices, biotech products, or pharmaceuticals. They then go through clinical trials because in this country we want to be sure that whatever you put on your body or in your mouth to help you is safe and effective. The Food and Drug Administration does that.

We can do lots of research, and have brilliant ideas that could lead to new and credible solutions for people in pain, agony, and suffering, but unless

we can put it into clinical trials and have it go to the FDA, it is a hollow opportunity. If we're going to reopen NIH, we have to reopen the FDA. And guess what. The Food and Drug Administration is furloughed. We pay a good part of the FDA through fees, such as pharmaceutical fees and medical device fees. But guess what. During the shutdown, the government is prohibited from collecting the fees that it is owed.

What is this? This is showbiz politics. This is not pragmatic solutions.

We need to reopen government—reopen the entire government—so it can do the job we have authorized them to do, and have the men and women who do that job be able to come back to work. That is why Senator REID has—instead of cherry-picking individual items—offered the comprehensive solution that would reopen our government.

This is not only affecting government workers because government workers actually affect the economy. Right this very minute, the President has been in Rockville, MD. I would have loved to have joined him this morning, but I wanted to be here at my duty station. The President was at Rockville Pike, which is a road in Montgomery County that has some of the greatest civilian agencies in the world clustered around it.

He was going to visit the Luis family. They are a minority, woman-owned asphalt contractor. They are a wonderful family and an American success story. They came to this country with just a little money in their pocket but with big dreams in their hearts to have freedom and the opportunity to open a business. They opened an asphalt contracting business which gets most of its business from local, State, and the government for roads. They are the infrastructure people. Not coming up with a way to keep our government open, cancel sequester, and move legislation to fund our physical infrastructure is dramatically affecting them.

Around Rockville Pike, there are several agencies, and I have already said their names: The National Institutes of Standards and Technology, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission. That is affecting businesses up and down Rockville Pike. People aren't buying their groceries, they are not buying gas. I am going to say more about that in a little while.

Remember that Social Security agency I talked about? It is in a neighborhood called Woodlawn in Baltimore. Nine thousand—nine thousand—Social Security workers in Baltimore and around the country have been furloughed. Right near them is the CMS agency which also looks out for our Medicare.

A few blocks from Social Security is the FBI field office. Those FBI agents are on the job—on the job—but they are being paid with IOUs. Do my colleagues know that because of what we have had to do with our budget they

don't even have gas for the FBI cars? In a recent book called "Voices From The Field," the FBI agents have spoken out about what is happening to them; that when they get in their car to chase a bad guy or gal, they have to pay for their own gas. What kind of government is this, with all that pomp and strut, the ridicule of our Federal employees? Now this shutdown is humiliating our country and humiliating the people who work for our government, and so on.

Across this Nation and in my own State, because of thousands of Federal employees being furloughed or paid in IOUs, businesses are hurting. I am the daughter of a small business owner. My father owned a small grocery store. I am the granddaughter of a woman entrepreneur—a wonderful woman of Polish heritage who opened a Polish bakery to be able to help her family. Every day they said, "Good morning, can I help you?" I know what it is like to be in the retail food business, and I understand what it is like when your customers are facing the fact that they are unemployed. All of these, mom-and-pop stores to the larger agencies, are being affected.

The government shutdown threatens our progress. We know in 1995 and in 1996, it cut our gross domestic product. The shutdown can cost our economy as much as \$10 billion a week.

Every week the Small Business Administration, because it is shut down, can't process loans or give technical assistance to small businesses. The International Trade Association, which helps our people sell products around the world—and what is left of our manufacturing sector in Maryland has told me how important our foreign commercial service officers are—is shut down.

The Department of Labor processes applications for visas, for farms, for seafood processors as in my own State. Businesses typically file for visas 2 or 3 months in advance. Because of the shutdown, it is going to affect everybody from citrus farmers in the South to those people who have New England ski resorts. People might say, Oh, that is a Gucci job. A Gucci job in a New England ski resort? I don't think so. It is very important to Vermont and New Hampshire and the citrus farmers down South.

We have to reopen the government. The way we reopen the government is not by a piecemeal approach but by the House taking up the Senate resolution.

I have a lot more to say, and I will say it during the day today. I know my colleague from Rhode Island, Senator REED, is on the floor. He is a member of the Appropriations Committee and a member of the Defense authorization committee. He is a staunch defender of people. He has been so outspoken on the need for student loans. He has also been so outspoken on the need for energy assistance for poor people with the coming winter. He is a defender of America, a graduate of West Point, and he has been a defender of the little guy

and the little gal who should have a government on their side. I want to make sure he has a chance to speak, and I will be back later on to speak on the floor again.

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

Mr. REED. Mr. President, first let me commend the chairwoman for her extraordinary leadership in so many different ways, including her articulate explanation of the crisis we face at the moment and her compelling argument that a piecemeal approach to resolving the government shutdown will not work, since the pieces are so critically interrelated.

I rise to speak about this government shutdown as well. Today is day three of the Republican government shutdown, and it seems increasingly clear that Speaker BOEHNER is trying to drag this out long enough to merge the shutdown with brinkmanship over whether to pay our Nation's bills. This attempt to gut existing law and put the full faith and credit of the United States at risk is no way to run a country. If we are dragged into the commingling of the Republican government shutdown and the Republican proposals to default on our debt, we could be facing a catastrophic financial situation that would affect not just government operations but markets worldwide, and that is not something we should even contemplate. So we have to move very quickly to a resolution of this manufactured crisis.

When I hear a discussion of what is going on, the words I hear used are words such as "reckless," "irresponsible," and, indeed, words much worse than these all across this country. The bottom line is the average American is fed up. They expect government to open, to serve them, to perform its basic function—not selective functions but its full range of functions.

Survey after survey notes two simple things: No. 1, the government should be reopened for business. No. 2, the effort by some to connect the Affordable Care Act to funding the government should be ceased. These aren't the views of one particular political party; they are the views of a very, very large majority of Americans, and I share their sentiment. The government should not be closed. The Affordable Care Act should not be tied to reopening the government.

There is a very simple solution here: Pass the short-term, continuing resolution at current levels of spending so then we can begin the process of resolving the budget impasse. Let me say that again: Pass the bill that funds the government at the current level of spending. Doing so means keeping, in effect, the sequester—something that many on the other side of the aisle have demanded. Frankly, I would hope that having done that, we could then seriously get into discussions with the leader and with the chairwoman on our side about how we create a budget for 2014 that does away with the sequester.

This was inherent in the budget resolution which I supported last March.

Regrettably, the tea party has refused to allow negotiations on the budget, even though we heard day in and day out complaints by our colleagues in a previous session of Congress that we need a budget, we need a budget, we need a budget. Well, we produced a budget, and now we are being blocked.

What is happening instead of moving to meaningful, comprehensive budget negotiations is that we are in a government shutdown, and now the Republicans are trying to extricate themselves from this manufactured crisis, created by their own hands, by sending over piecemeal bills to fund preferred and selected agencies of the government. As the chairwoman pointed out, it doesn't work, because the government is related. NIH can make discoveries, but if the FDA is not authorized and operating so they can approve their use by people, it doesn't work. We can't disassociate these things.

We saw today in Rhode Island about 26,500 women and children might lose their WIC benefits, their nutrition benefits, their support. Ignoring them and helping others is not going to benefit this country. In fact, it will contribute, I think, to decline.

We have looked at the National Guard, veterans' benefits, and national parks. Those are all worthy elements, but they are not the entire range of elements we must perform. I believe the other side is trying to come up with some type of coherent argument for their actions. Is this about the debt? We have made progress in reducing our deficit. Because of actions we have taken, we have reduced projected deficits over 10 years by \$2.4 trillion. Do we have to do more? Yes. But we have to do it in a current, thoughtful way.

Is it about the sequester? Well, let's talk about the sequester. Let's talk about it in the context of a budget and appropriations bills for 2014.

Is it about the Affordable Care Act? Well, it has begun. There has been a huge demand in the first few days and it is working through problems. And there will be problems. There is no major initiative of this kind that is rolled out by any business or any government that doesn't have issues, and those issues will be dealt with.

What is very clear, though, is closing the government and then, in sort of an ad hoc way, opening up parts is no way to operate. It is unfair to the American people who aren't getting services they expect and deserve. Also, it's unfair to furloughed Federal employees at the Defense Department and elsewhere—not just the Defense Department but all Departments—some of them are working without the certainty that they indeed will be paid.

There is a simple way to avoid this situation. The House should stop preventing an up-or-down vote on the Senate's continuing resolution and open

the government. The Speaker can call up that vote in less than an hour, get it on the floor, and go ahead and reopen our government. Then reopen the thoughtful, careful, collaborative discussions about where we are going in terms of our budget, in terms of our deficit, in terms of serving the American people.

I have heard a lot of talk such as: Oh, we have to have a lot of negotiations and compromise, et cetera. I have supported legislation I believe in strongly. I have opposed legislation, but I don't think I have ever stood up and said it is either my way or nothing happens. That is not the way to responsibly represent the people of America. It is the give-and-take of principled compromise. Sometimes there is legislation that reaches this floor that I can't support, but I think in a democracy it is the majority, ultimately—after we go through our procedural convolutions—it is the majority ultimately that prevails.

There is a strong sense, as reflected in the newspapers, that the majority of the House of Representatives wants this situation resolved. They want all government agencies opened. And through the procedural votes on this side, it is very clear that our colleagues were willing to allow a majority vote to come to this floor, which carried. So the majority of the House and the Senate are with the American people. We just have to get the leadership of the House to get with the American people.

We have to talk about some of these serious issues, but I think the best place to do so, in my view, is in the context of budget negotiations, and we have been repeatedly blocked from bringing the budget to conference. In fact, many of our Republican colleagues—and I will give them credit; many of them have stood up and said we have to go to the budget negotiations in the conference. Senator MCCAIN said, for example, "It's not the regular order for a number of Senators, a small number, a minority within a minority here, to say they will not agree to go to conference." That is what is happening. It is happening in terms of a minority of Republican Members in the House who are demanding that this Speaker not relent on this government shutdown, and it is happening here to a degree with respect to the conference committee on the budget. We have to go ahead and do our job.

We have had colleagues on the other side talk about how the closure has detrimental effects. The Member who represents Yosemite National Park was very sad it was closed. I am also distressed that it is closed. I chair the subcommittee that appropriates funding for our national parks. We do our best to maintain the parks, to make sure we support those individuals who work for the Park Service. I understand the impact is not just within the confines of the park, it is the businesses all around the park. That is

what we said a week ago. That is what I said a week ago, asking, in terms of our deliberations, that we pass a continuing resolution. So this should come as no surprise to those people who voted against keeping the government open.

But this is not just about the value of a national park. It is about all the functions the government performs. It is about those women and children who receive benefits through the WIC Program. It is about those Federal workers who are furloughed who cannot perform their duties. We have to go ahead and open up our government. We have to recognize what a democracy ultimately is all about: It is the will of the American people—the majority of the American people—that has to be reflected, ultimately, by the Representatives and the Senators.

Again, I think it is very clear, except for the bottleneck at the House leadership, that the majority of the House and the majority of the Senate want this government to open up. Let's do it. We need a vote. We have to stop relitigating the Affordable Care Act. It passed. It was upheld as constitutional by the Supreme Court. It is open for business starting on October 1, with significant interest by the public. There were 3,000 page-hits per minute in Rhode Island as it opened up on October 1, which I am told by the technologists is an amazing number. There were 2,000 calls to our call center—people who were looking for insurance, to buy it in a private marketplace, which is the core of the Affordable Care Act.

So we have to move forward. If we do not move forward, SBA lending is effectively cut off, so small business men and women, who are struggling to get their businesses going, to keep them going, and hire Americans, will not have that ability to receive support from the SBA.

We need, as they say—and everyone has become familiar with this term—a clean CR that opens everything up. If we do not, then we know the impact is going to be dramatic.

In 2011, economists estimated that a shutdown would cost the economy 0.2 percent of GDP each week. And it accumulates.

Looking back to 1995 and 1996, when a Republican House also shut down the government for 27 days, it reduced GDP growth by roughly 0.5 percent. Those are jobs, not just statistics. Those are lots of jobs and confidence in our economy. If we do not have jobs and confidence, then we are not doing our job and we are not fulfilling what we were sent here by the people to do: grow the economy, give us work, give us confidence that you can at least perform the basic functions of government.

Now we have to move forward. I am uncertain as to how long this will continue to fester. We should do this immediately. As I said, procedurally the House—and I had the privilege to serve there for 6 years—can bring this continuing resolution up on very short no-

tice and get, which I believe they have, the majority votes they need to pass it. That should be done. Then we can sit down and work again—work hard on those issues that face us in the context of budget negotiations and a conference and also recognize that while we are here involved in this manufactured crisis, the world is moving. The world is moving in ways in which we cannot be so preoccupied that we do not sense: foreign affairs issues in Syria, foreign affairs issues across the globe; international economic issues; future competitive issues with other economies. While we are fixated and focused on this manufactured crisis, which is completely unnecessary, we are not doing the important work, we are not anticipating the problems that are developing right now in the world or in our economy, we are not investing in jobs and in job creation, we are not looking ahead. We have to do that also.

I would urge a quick, decisive vote on a continuing resolution so we can get back to the business of leading America.

With that, I yield the floor.

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, let me second the very powerful and eloquent remarks just made by my colleague from Rhode Island: that we must vote, we need to have a vote in the House of Representatives to give moderate Republicans the opportunity to put the Federal Government back to work in the service of Americans and keep America—in the private as well as public sector—at work so they can meet the obligations of their families.

We have developing a situation in America where more and more the ripple effects of this shutdown will affect private employees, not just the Federal and government workers who are told to go home and told they cannot do their jobs.

As I have said repeatedly, we need to end the hostage-taking tactics by one small faction of one party in one House of this branch of government. The ripple effects of this shutdown are beginning to grow across America.

Last night, United Technologies, the largest employer in Connecticut, announced it has been forced to furlough thousands of employees, starting initially with more than 1,500 at its Sikorsky facility in Stratford, which makes Black Hawk helicopters for our Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Special Forces. Thousands of other jobs may be at risk at Pratt & Whitney and at defense manufacturers all across the Nation.

This political gamesmanship and budget brinkmanship has stopped production of the Black Hawk helicopters, an iconic symbol to all our servicemembers that help is on the way. They are the ones that transport troops into combat, rescue the wounded, and deliver supplies to the most inaccessible

and inhospitable parts of the Earth. Black Hawk helicopters are vital to our national defense. Why is the production line at Sikorsky being shut down? Because 45 Federal employees who work for the Defense Contract Management Agency have been sent home as a result of this shutdown—sent home by one small group of right-wing extremist ideologues in the House of Representatives, one part of this Congress, one branch of the government—and those 45 employees who work for the Defense Contract Management Agency cannot certify and inspect the work of the Sikorsky employees. So there is no way the U.S. military can take delivery of those helicopters.

My hope is this situation can be resolved quickly and that we can find a way to get these DCMA employees back doing their vital jobs that contribute so directly and importantly to the success of our military operations. They are civilian employees. They should be back at work certifying and inspecting and making sure those helicopters are the best in the world, as they have always been, and that they can be delivered to our military; that the military can pay Sikorsky, and Sikorsky can keep its people at work rather than furlough them, and so that those Sikorsky helicopters are available to help our troops in the toughest challenges they face all across the globe. They need and deserve those helicopters.

But even if we put those Sikorsky workers back at their jobs tomorrow, the needless chaos and confusion caused by the shutdown is an outrageous and inexcusable dereliction by those small, right-wing extremists who have insisted on ideology over country and fearmongering over job creation.

The ripple effects of Sikorsky shutting down its assembly line will be felt by the suppliers who provide parts and components used in those helicopters. I have visited them, and I have seen those parts and components used on those assembly lines by those Sikorsky workers. If Sikorsky is not using those parts and components, workers in those suppliers will be furloughed as well, or worse.

We are talking about men and women who live—many of them—paycheck to paycheck. They do not have huge savings. They may well, in fact, probably will not be paid for the time they are furloughed. The ripple effect on consumer demand will be felt across Connecticut and, as a result of similar situations, across the country.

All too often, we tend to think of the Federal workforce as a nameless and faceless group, but this shutdown is bringing home what the real impact of their work is—from the NIH employees who do cancer research and provide treatment to people who need it and now will go without it; to the Head Start workers and programs across the country that provide for educational readiness to children who now will go

without it; to the Social Security recipients who encounter problems with their check or payment and need someone to guide them or help them receive those checks that they need to survive and now will go without those checks; and resolving veterans' benefits, other kinds of issues all across the country. The chaos and confusion will ripple and accumulate. These effects are cumulative, and they will multiply.

The damage done by these wounds to our workforce are, tragically, self-inflicted and they dramatize how that cumulative effect will, in fact, increase exponentially.

I warned of the effects on job creation and economic growth repeatedly before and after the shutdown occurred. In addition to the vital services that are imperiled and impacted, these economic effects on job creation and recovery are irreparable. They affect people's lives. They are real consequences to real people.

I have called on this body to let compromise and cooler heads prevail and end those ripple effects, end the shutdown, end this self-inflicted wound before it becomes an economic tsunami.

I hope everyone in this body, everyone in this Congress, will use every ounce of their energy, every minute of this day and the days to come to cause this inexcusable shutdown to end, to fix the train wreck before it leads to other wrecks of other trains that may collide.

We have spent a lot of time in this body talking, and it is time we started listening. We ought to be listening to the American people, who are telling us: Get the job done. Get back to work. We ought to be listening to voices of our local communities which are seeing the harm of this shutdown.

Jim Finley, for example, the CEO of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, said yesterday:

Our poorest communities. They're the ones who are going to feel the hit first.

That is because the Women, Infants and Children's Program and housing vouchers for low-income families are just two of the programs that make the social safety net work and help people most in need. The WIC Program provides food assistance to more than 58,000 low-income pregnant women, mothers, and children in Connecticut.

Listen to Mayor Pedro Segarra of Hartford, who said:

After 30 days it becomes very difficult. We've already been under pressure from the feds because of sequestration to reduce expenses in several categories.

Recently, Newtown and Monroe, along with other Connecticut communities, received Federal grants to hire local police officers. So listen to Monroe First Selectman Steve Vavrek, who said he has no idea whether that money will ever arrive, and he has no way of checking on it, and, of course, he has no way of planning for future law enforcement in his community.

Students from Sandy Hook Elementary School were relocated to a school

in his town of Monroe. Let's listen to those kids. Let's listen to their parents. They have no one to speak for them here, unless we listen to them.

Similar to children across the country, they need those Federal grants for their schools. If we listen to our local leaders, if we listen to America, we will put the Federal Government back to work. We will avoid that train wreck and tsunami that will result from the spreading ramifications and ripple effects of the loss of income and service that results from this shutdown.

Finally, let me just emphasize one of the very important unintended consequences of actions that we have taken or failed to take. When Congress passed the resolution to pay our troops, we intended to cover all of the men and women who wear the uniform, all who serve in our military forces, including all categories of National Guard service.

Unfortunately, some are not covered in actual practice. I am committed to ensuring that everyone in uniform is paid for their service and sacrifice. Regardless of the numerous diverse categories of service that may exist in the National Guard or in other branches of service, every man and woman who wears the uniform, every man and woman who serves in our military should be paid and paid on time now.

I am committed to making sure our Department of Defense and our government recognizes that obligation. So let's think about them. Let's keep in mind the brave men and women who are serving and sacrificing to keep us free, to make sure our democracy functions in the service of people. Let's keep faith with them as well as with the American people. Let's do our work by making sure we put the American Government back to work and make sure the country is at work. Let the House vote.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— H.J. RES. 72

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate receives H.J. Res. 72, making continuing appropriations for veterans' benefits for fiscal year 2014, the measure be read three times and passed; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MURPHY. Reserving the right to object, Madam President, my understanding is that the Senator is proposing to allow for appropriations to move forward for a portion of veterans funding. Let me just say a few things. It is clearly a hardship that the shutdown is going to result in a diminution of benefits to our veterans. I appreciate the Senator coming to the floor to try to address that today.

But as my colleague from Connecticut just mentioned, it is also an

unacceptable hardship that there is about to be 4,000 workers at Sikorsky Aircraft who are going to be furloughed on Friday because of this shutdown. It is also an unacceptable hardship that thousands of Head Start children are going to show up to their preschool being closed. It is an unacceptable hardship to millions of frail elderly who are going to have their nutritional benefits compromised.

So I think we can all agree that the consequences of the shutdown are unacceptable to our veterans. They are unacceptable, though, to a panoply of other families and individuals across the country.

I would note also that I believe the resolution the Senator is offering and suggested be passed provides only partial funding for the VA. There is no funding here to operate the national cemeteries. There is no funding for the Board of Veterans' Appeals. There is no funding for constructing VA hospitals and their clinics. There is no funding, actually, to operate the IT system that the entire VA needs in order to continue going forward.

So I would actually offer and ask unanimous consent that the Senator's request be modified; that an amendment which is at the desk be agreed to, that the joint resolution, as amended, then be read a third time and passed, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

This amendment is the text that passed the Senate. It is a clean continuing resolution for the entire government and something that is already over in the House and reportedly has the majority support of the Members of the House of Representatives. This would solve the problems I am sure the Senator is going to talk about with respect to certain veterans but would also solve all of those other problems and would make sure we continue to have funding for the national cemeteries, continue to build hospitals that need to be built for veterans, continue to service the IT needs that underlay the foundation of our veterans systems, and also make sure Head Start kids do not get turned away from their classrooms, make sure Sikorsky Aircraft workers get to go back to work, make sure our food still gets inspected, we get meals to our frail elderly.

The CR is in front of the Senate. If the Senator would agree, I propose we move forward with this modification to his request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator from Utah so modify his request?

Mr. LEE. I object to the proposed modification.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the original request?

Mrs. BOXER. Reserving the right to object, I just want to say I so strongly support my colleague from Connecticut. I so oppose what is going on here with the Republicans. Time and time again they have had a chance to