

these judges to the places where they are really needed and to prevent the stacking of this court and this reckless power grab.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

SUPERSTORM SANDY

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I rise today in recognition of the 1-year anniversary of Superstorm Sandy's landfall in the Northeast and the destruction it brought on a ruinous path through Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Rhode Island. I will be joined today on the floor—and I ask unanimous consent that we be permitted to engage in a colloquy—by my colleague from New York, Senator SCHUMER, and from Rhode Island, Senator WHITEHOUSE, if there is no objection.

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I can scarcely capture in words the awesome, monstrous power of this storm as it hit the Northeast as I traveled there. I was near the coastline of Connecticut, traveling some of the roads in the midst of this storm as it ripped through my State, tearing apart communities along the coast, destroying homes and businesses, displacing families, and forever altering the shoreline itself. Anybody who questions the power of nature at its most destructive should have seen this storm as it unfolded and the damage it left in its wake—in fact, in Connecticut, \$770 million in damages.

What I remember from touring Connecticut is not only the size and magnitude of the destruction but also the resilience and strength of Connecticut's people as they struggled through the pain and anguish of coping with this devastation, wondering how they would ever rebuild. In fact, they have rebuilt with the courage and relentless strength and fortitude that have so marked the character of Connecticut and New England and New York as they rallied around one another and exhibited that sense of optimism and hope. It was as important as any material resources that were brought to bear. They rallied around each other with gratitude and with hope because they had each other, and they have succeeded in clearing the debris, reconstructing, rebuilding in a way that is inspiring.

I only wish Congress's response was as effective and courageous as that of the citizens of Connecticut that I viewed in the storm's aftermath. The Senate was slow to act, but it was before the House in passing the \$60 billion recovery package for the Northeast. The effort was stalled in the House, quite bluntly, with bipartisan politics of the worst kind and trivial obstruction.

There are lessons to be learned. No. 1 is that partisanship and politics should have no role in our response to disasters, whether in Oklahoma or Colorado

or Louisiana or the Northeast. We are all in this effort together when disaster strikes. We should rally around each other as the people of Connecticut rallied.

Our response has to be quicker, smarter, stronger than it was in this institution. We owe it to ourselves as well as to the people who suffered the financial and emotional loss. For many of them, there were physical injuries as a result of this natural disaster.

Those two lessons are reinforced by a third, which is that these superstorms have become a new normal. We can no longer regard the once-in-a-century storm as once every hundred years. They are coming once every year because climate disruption is increasing their frequency and force in a way that is awesome and alarming and astonishing. So another lesson is that there has to be preparation to prevent damage and to mitigate the effects of these storms when they strike, and the investments—and they are investments—have to be smart and strong, with means such as storm barriers, breakers, better shoreline resilience.

Eventually, the Federal Government provided aid, and Connecticut has put to good use the \$200 million that was distributed through the National Flood Insurance Program to homeowners and business owners. Cities and towns around my State have used \$42 million in FEMA assistance, and more than \$10 million has gone toward health services and facilities. As our Governor announced yesterday, an additional \$65 million has been granted to the State to supplement the initial \$72 million from the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the form of community development block grants for disaster relief. These new Federal dollars are critical to the effort of rebuilding, and I will continue to fight not only for additional funds but also against the bureaucratic logjams and redtape that have prevented so many from receiving more timely aid.

This aid has come too slowly, it has been too small, and it has been behind the efforts—in time and strength—of the people of Connecticut. I will continue to fight for increased aid, including from the \$100 million that was announced yesterday and today—today's announcement of the U.S. Department of Interior of \$100 million in the coastline resiliency project. I will support all qualified applicants from Connecticut securing some of this competitive funding. We will fight for a fair allocation of this money to benefit the important work Connecticut is doing to strengthen our coastline so that we can prevent and reduce the effects of these storms in the future.

I had the privilege to travel the State as a leader of a listening tour for the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force this past May, just over the half-year mark from the time Sandy hit.

The progress made with this help from the Federal Government, combined with the good will, drive, and

sense of responsibility toward one another—exemplified by the people of Connecticut—has been remarkable. We must resolve to do better at the Federal level, and I hope that not only the storm itself but the shortcomings of the relief effort will be a teaching moment for the Nation.

The evidence is irrefutable that climate disruption is impacting our oceans and atmosphere and leading to an increasing number of severe weather storm events across the country that we cannot control. We will see more of such monstrous storms here and in other parts of the country.

I thank my colleagues, Senator WHITEHOUSE and Senator SCHUMER, who have been strong and steadfast leaders in this effort to recognize the effects of climate disruption and prepare for them.

Connecticut is in the process of upgrading our infrastructure to strengthen our resiliency among the most vulnerable communities. We are investing in microgrids, often powered by hydrogen fuel cells manufactured in our State, to provide backup power for hospitals and senior communities in towns such as Preston and Franklin, which I visited in the aftermath of the storm.

In Milford, residents are using HUD funding to elevate their homes so they can guard against these storm surges. Other coastal towns are employing green infrastructure with marsh grass to slow surging waters during storms.

In Stamford, CT, my hometown, the city is using Federal aid to upgrade a 17-foot hurricane barrier by replacing manual pumps to ensure against damage to the city's communities in future storms. I visited the shoreline of Stamford, as I did up and down the coast of Connecticut, and I have since, to see how Connecticut is learning these lessons so we can reduce dollar costs as well as human costs. The improvements taking place across Connecticut speak volumes to our strength of will and mind and the determined character of our people in Connecticut.

I express appreciation to colleagues, such as Senators SCHUMER and WHITEHOUSE and others in this body, who helped us in a time of need. They came forth to provide encouragement and support. They assured the people of Connecticut that they are not alone.

No one in the United States—whether it is in the Presiding Officer's State of West Virginia or in the western most part of Hawaii—should be alone after being struck by a natural disaster. We need to rally together.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Before I join the colloquy with Senators BLUMENTHAL and SCHUMER, I have two bits of housekeeping.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 5 p.m. today all postcloture time on the Griffin nomination be yielded back, and

the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate; the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, this is my 48th trip to the floor to remind Congress that it is time to wake up to the threat of climate change.

I am joined by Senators BLUMENTHAL and SCHUMER because 1 year ago today Hurricane Sandy struck our States with frightening force. Now, a year later, communities across the Northeast have dug out and are rebuilding, but Sandy left a permanent mark on our coasts and on our consciousness.

To be sure, we cannot say that this devastating storm was specifically caused by climate change. However, Sandy showed the many ways we are vulnerable to the undeniable effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels and warming oceans—effects that can in turn load the dice for more damaging storms.

As evening fell on October 29, 2012, a storm surge from the largest Atlantic hurricane ever recorded swept against Rhode Island's shores about 5 feet above mean sea level. A few hours later, waters peaked around New York City—about 9 feet above mean sea level. A harrowing night followed for victims of Hurricane Sandy. It was a night that took more than 150 lives and caused \$65 billion in physical damage and economic loss.

Hurricane Sandy, or Superstorm Sandy as many remember it, hit 24 States with direct effects. Floodwaters invaded homes and swept out roads. High winds knocked out power to 8.5 million homes and businesses, cutting a swath of darkness that could be seen from space. An entire New York neighborhood was gutted by fires that emergency personnel could not reach through the storm.

Sandy flooded nearly the entire coastline with beaches and dunes driven down by the waves and wind. Displaced sand and stone covered roads like here on Atlantic Avenue in Misquamicut, RI. Houses were swept off their foundations in Rhode Island's southern coast communities like Matunuck, shown in this photo. Here we see Governor Lincoln Chafee, a former Member of this body, surveying the damage to these homes.

President Obama granted Governor Chafee's request for a Federal disaster declaration covering four of Rhode Island's five counties. More than 130,000 Rhode Islanders lost power. Eight cities and towns implemented evacuation actions. Nearly one-third of all Rhode Islanders were directly affected one way or another. In a close-knit State

such as ours, nearly everyone was touched by Sandy.

Rhode Islanders are resilient and we are recovering. Over \$30 million has been paid out to Rhode Islanders for more than 1,000 Federal flood insurance claims. FEMA has approved more than 260 projects for reimbursement. Over \$12 million has been put to repairing our State's parks, wildlife refuges, and historic sites. Individuals and families received more than \$423,000 in grants to meet their immediate basic needs for housing and other essential disaster-related expenses.

The Federal Government will always play a central role for communities such as ours, picking up after a disaster like Sandy. So it would make sense for the Federal Government to learn from these events and be smart as we plan for future risks.

The Government Accountability Office recently reported on the risks to U.S. infrastructure posed by climate change. Roads, bridges, and water systems are designed to operate for 50 to 100 years. Well, 50 to 100 years from now, our climate and our coastline will be very different. Sandy threw at Rhode Island's shores Atlantic seas that had risen almost 10 inches since the 1930s, against a shoreline that had already retreated more than 100 feet in some locations. As climate change progresses, more and more infrastructure will be exposed to more and more risk.

Earlier this year GAO added to its High Risk List the United States financial exposure to climate change. GAO, our congressional watchdog, now warns that it is fiscally irresponsible to ignore the signs of climate change. The President's Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force, and his Climate Action Plan, both call for adaptation to this risk from climate change—particularly for better coastal resiliency and preparedness.

Here is an example of doing it right. When hurricane Katrina hit the I-10 Twin Span Bridge that crosses Lake Pontchartrain near New Orleans, it twisted and toppled the bridge's 255-ton concrete bridge spans off their piers and into the lake. The bridge was rebuilt by using Federal Highway Administration funding, but they built it stronger, better engineered, and in some sections they built it more than 20 feet higher.

It makes sense to make sure that our agencies repair American infrastructure to the commonsense standard that it is ready for future risks. Rebuilding to the specs that failed is not common sense. Being deliberately stupid in order to deny climate change is a losing proposition.

Congress can do something smart right now. We could pass the Water Resources and Development Act with the resiliency and restoration provisions that were in the Senate-passed bipartisan bill. Congress could support the President's Climate Action Plan, using our wise Earth's natural protections for our coastal infrastructure.

Of course, even robust climate adaptation won't let us off the hook in some places. New England can build levees and dams to hold the waters back, but the vast low areas of southeastern Florida are porous limestone. Even if you built a giant dike, the water would just seep in through the underlying limestone.

A study last year found that 3 feet of sea level rise, which is what we presently expect, will hit more than 1.5 million Floridians, and nearly 900,000 Florida homes—almost double the effect on any other State in the Nation. So Florida should want to prevent as much climate as possible, and that means cutting carbon pollution.

Ultimately, for the open market to work, we need to include the full cost of carbon pollution in the price of fossil fuels. Anything less is a subsidy to polluters. What Florida should want is for Congress to enact a carbon pollution fee to correct the market, and then return that fee to American families.

Ultimately, inaction is irresponsible, and Americans get it. Eighty-two percent of Americans believe we should start preparing now for rising sea levels and severe storms from climate change.

Young Americans, in particular, see through the phony climate denial message. Three-quarters of independent young voters and more than half of Republican young voters would describe climate deniers as "ignorant," "out of touch," or "crazy." Let me repeat that. The majority of Republican voters under 35 would describe climate deniers as "crazy," "ignorant," or "out of touch." Continuing the climate denial strategy is not a winning proposition for our friends on the other side. Even their own young voters see through it.

Congress should wake up to the alarms that are ringing in nature and to the voices of the American people. One of the loudest alarm gongs was Hurricane Sandy. Voltaire said: "Men argue, nature acts." Well, nature acted, driving epic winds and seas against our shores, and she will continue to act if we continue to tip her careful balances with reckless carbon pollution and shameless subsidies to the big polluters.

We need to wake up as a Congress and take responsible action to protect our homes and communities. We need to remember Sandy and learn her lessons.

I yield the floor for my distinguished colleague from New York.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, the Senator from Rhode Island, for calling Senator BLUMENTHAL and me and others together and for taking action on climate change. There has been no one in this body who has done more to sound the alarm about climate change.

I have enjoyed his regular "time to wake up" speeches. I guess this is number 49—excuse me, 48. One of them was

so good I read it twice. He has been relentless on this issue in a positive, articulate, and superb way.

There could not be a better day to talk about climate change than today because we are at the 1-year anniversary of Superstorm Sandy. Senators WHITEHOUSE and BLUMENTHAL and I remember it vividly. We each visited our communities on the days afterwards and saw the terrible blow that Sandy delivered to New York and the whole east coast. It created such damage and upheaval to communities and lives. Sandy was a horrible event, but the one silver lining in this large awful cloud is that people take climate change more seriously. I think most Americans agreed that climate change is real, but there was not a sense of urgency about climate change pre-Sandy. People said, well, it is happening 25 years from now or 50 years from now. Unlike Senator WHITEHOUSE, who has a sense of passion and a sense of urgency daily and immediately about this, most people said we can let things wait.

Unfortunately, despite the efforts of the Senator from Rhode Island and others, our bodies are not doing enough on climate change. But when Sandy occurred, a sea change occurred. Americans understood—those of us in the Northeast probably more than anybody else—that we cannot afford to wait. It took 10 years to get the American people to accept the fact that climate change is real. It took one storm to get them to understand that we had to move immediately.

Sandy was awful. In the days after the storm, I toured places such as the Rockaways and Long Beach, Staten Island, Lindenhurst. Whole neighborhoods were leveled and thousands of New Yorkers were homeless. To see an elderly gentleman, Mr. Romano, sitting in front of his lot in Great South Bay in Lindenhurst, his house totally destroyed, sitting in one of his few possessions left, a little lawn chair, was devastating. I asked Mr. Romano: Are you going to move?

He said: Look at the view.

Two days after Sandy, the skies were peaceful, the Sun was beautiful, and it was reflected off of Great South Bay. He said: Every year I have had 364 good days and 1 bad day. I am not moving.

That story can be repeated, but the devastation was real. To drive down the streets in the Rockaways or the streets of Long Beach or of Staten Island, the South Shore of Staten Island, and see house after house with piles in front of the houses of not just furniture, although that was a problem—we all have our favorite chair, a favorite place to sit. But people's lives were out there: heirlooms that had been in the family for generations, pictures and albums gone, like that.

This is an example of one of the places hurt the worst: Breezy Point, a hardy community of cops, firefighters, teachers, EMT workers; the heart of New York City's middle class. They are the very same people—many did from

Breezy Point—who rushed the towers on 9/11, and some lost their lives. They were the people who were devastated here. A fire erupted, 120 houses—it looked like Dresden after the bombings in World War II—and all that was left was this religious shrine. I will never forget that scene and having the local firefighters showing me what had happened.

Of course, our local infrastructure was terribly damaged as well. Here we have the R train, which Secretary Fox and I just announced is going to be up and ready in 1 year. The tunnel had millions of gallons of water—brackish water, salty water—that not only ruined the infrastructure of the tunnels, but the signals that depended on electric functioning—gone. These scenes are repeated over and over.

What Sandy did is make climate change real to New Yorkers in a horrible way. The same is now happening across the country. So what Sandy did was not alert us to the fact that climate change exists but alerted us that it was a call to action. While climate scientists try to avoid blaming any single weather event on climate change, we know that a warming planet can load the dice for more frequent and extreme storms. As sure as we all are sitting here, there will be other storms, unfortunately, and God forbid but in all likelihood, of Sandy's devastation that will affect different parts of the country. As I and others have said in the days after Sandy, we have had far too many events over the past 3 years in New York, including Irene, Lee, and then Sandy, to think we can ignore the impact of a warming planet and the impact that is having on our communities.

Even if one denies the scientific reality of climate change, there is little dispute over the stark challenge facing our country. The weather is more dangerous than ever and threatens our economy. According to recent polling, Americans now support taking action on climate change to protect our children and grandchildren.

So we need to do two things at once. We need to decrease our reliance on fossil fuels to slow down the warming of the planet, and we have to start investing in real climate adaptation projects in the most vulnerable parts of the country.

My colleague from Rhode Island talked about the devastation in Florida. He is right. The Florida delegation should be up in arms. I know some of our colleagues—they tend to be on this side of the aisle—are, but we hear silence from the other side of the aisle on climate change. In just a generation, a good percentage of Florida will be out of commission. Miami, one of the largest cities in the country, is virtually unprotected when it comes to climate change.

So we have to do both of these things. One year after Sandy, I am pleased we have made some progress.

First, the Hurricane Sandy relief law we passed earlier this year provided an

injection of billions of dollars into mitigation for the east coast. When we rebuild this subway line, the signals are going to be higher up so if, God forbid, there is another flood, they will not be out of commission. At the entrances to the various tunnels—hundreds of thousands of people take these every week—there will be gates or a certain kind of airbag that can instantaneously prevent the tunnel from being flooded. We are elevating homes and building new floodwalls and dunes to prevent damage from the next Sandy.

So one thing we are doing is mitigation. Those of us—Senator WHITEHOUSE, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and others from New Jersey and Maryland and Pennsylvania and Delaware and New York and Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island delegations made sure in this legislation there is ample money for mitigation, so that if or when, God forbid, another storm such as Sandy occurs, we will be better protected.

Second, the President took a bold and important step in releasing his climate action plan, a critical blueprint for reducing carbon pollution. The plan also lays out a framework for implementing new mitigation plans for Federal, State, and local governments by tying Federal funding to new standards on climate adaptation. We now know a simple economic truth from many years of investing in mitigation projects: They save money. According to research, for every \$1 we invest in mitigation, we save \$4 down the road because of what will be protected and taxpayers will not have to shell out the same dollars again and again and again.

So it doesn't matter what side of the climate change debate one is on when it comes to investing in mitigation. Being promitigation makes good fiscal sense for the Federal Government.

A recent study found that Federal taxpayers spent \$136 billion on disaster relief in just the 3 years of 2011, 2012, and 2013—\$400 per household. The only way we can shrink this burden for the American people over time is to make critical mitigation investments at the same time we fight climate change by cutting carbon pollution.

I wish to specifically mention one piece of legislation which my colleague from Rhode Island also mentioned. He is on the EPW Committee and he has championed it with many of our colleagues. WRDA, the bipartisan Water Resources Development Act, got 83 votes in the Senate and will be a real boost for investment in climate adaptation.

In this bill, there is a new program called WIFIA. The very successful TIFIA Program which, for instance, without the local taxpayers spending a nickel, will bring our subway system all the way over to the far west side. I look forward to opening it with the mayor soon. Modeled on that program is WIFIA. It helps local governments

invest in mitigation projects by providing low-interest loans and a new banking design to attract private investment into these projects.

There are also new authorities that will allow the Army Corps to expedite and prioritize hurricane protection studies and project recommendations. I thank my colleagues, led by Senator BOXER, of the EPW Committee for working with us to draft some of this language.

These new policies are very important for New York and the States affected by Sandy. I urge our colleagues in the House to work with us to include these items in the WRDA conference.

We need to use the tragedy of Sandy to learn how to make our cities and towns stronger for the next storm. We know it is coming. We have to work at the local level in terms of mitigation. We have to work at the macro level to reduce the amount of carbon that has poured into our atmosphere that will just devastate the planet if we continue to sit on our hands.

I will close my remarks by borrowing a simple refrain from my friend from Rhode Island. As his poster says, it is time to wake up. Superstorm Sandy was New York's wake-up call. Let's honor the thousands of victims of that event by investing in our future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, before I depart the floor, and while Senator SCHUMER and Senator BLUMENTHAL are still here, I wish to add a point that is a personal observation of mine as a Senator; that is, first the Senator from New York is widely and properly regarded as one of the more formidable presences in the Senate. Having witnessed the difficulties that Senator BLUMENTHAL discussed at getting the Sandy disaster relief out and done, I will say we learned Senator SCHUMER has an even higher gear when it comes to the urgent needs of his home State and of his coast. When his New York City lies battered and drowned by storm, the work that he did to make sure a reluctant House passed this relief for us was an exercise in legislative craftsmanship and personal vigor that many of us will long remember.

Of course, I have seen Senator BLUMENTHAL fighting for his people in Connecticut, both after Hurricane Sandy and, of course, after the terrible tragedy that Connecticut experienced when a crazed gunman went into an elementary school and began to murder its children. So Senator BLUMENTHAL, in responding to those cares, concerns, and crises of his home State of Connecticut, has been truly exemplary. It has been a privilege for me as a Senator to see these two Senators in action in their causes I just mentioned.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I yield the floor.

Mr. SCHUMER. I am sure Senator BLUMENTHAL joins me. I wish to say to

my dear friend from Rhode Island—and he truly is a dear friend—that his generosity of word and spirit is only equaled by his intelligence, his diligence, and his foresightedness, not only on this issue but on so many other issues on which we are working. In fact, we are going to make a call in a few minutes—he and I and a few of our colleagues and I think Senator BLUMENTHAL as well—to talk about another of his issues. He is just such an intelligent thinker, and he is thinking ahead of the curve on climate change. But delivery system reform in health care is another issue on which the Senator from Rhode Island has taken leadership.

So I thank him for his kind words and just say “right back at you, baby.” I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I thank both of my colleagues. I am not sure I can match their eloquence in describing their gifts and their contributions on this issue and so many others, but I hope they and others will join me in meeting with the present Sandy task force in seeking to remedy or correct perhaps some of the logjams and redtape and deficiencies in process that led the people of our States to wait for so long before they saw relief in practical terms.

I thank them for their eloquence today and for their truly formidable contribution on the issue of climate change and global warming and to thank them also for the very powerful contributions they have made on the response to Superstorm Sandy that affected so many people in Connecticut.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

BUDGET CONFERENCE

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise to talk about an opportunity—actually something good that this body could do for the American people and for our economy and for the taxpayers. Tomorrow, the Senate budget conference that was established as part of this recent agreement that was made over reopening the government and extending the debt limit will meet. This will be the first public meeting of the group. We have had some other meetings, including the one I just had with some of the Members of that group, but this is the first opportunity for us to meet as House Members and Senate Members, Republicans and Democrats, in this budget conference, and it could not come soon enough.

The opportunity we have with this group is that in the wake of what happened at the beginning of this month—which was, again, a government shutdown and then a debt limit debate and then pushing right up against the debt limit—the opportunity we have now is to finally deal with this issue of government shutdowns and to deal with the underlying problem of overspending that forces us to extend the debt limit time and time again.

So let's start with government shutdowns.

The agreement opened the government for 3 months. That is right. In January, we once again come to this cliff where the government shuts down unless we act. So Merry Christmas and Happy New Year everybody. In January we hit this again.

It does not have to be that way. Earlier this year I introduced, with Senator TESTER from Montana, bipartisan legislation that would have prevented the last shutdown and would prevent all shutdowns in the future. It is called, appropriately, the End Government Shutdowns Act. It is pretty simple, and it addresses several critical issues we saw firsthand during this last shutdown.

It would end the chaos we saw on Federal services and citizens who depend on them. It would give government agencies the predictability they need to plan their budgets based on these appropriations levels. It would add certainty to the economy, and more certainty in the economy is certainly needed right now as we try to bring back the jobs. It would also take away the pressure for these haphazard, last-minute budget deals, which inevitably have stuck in them little provisions that nobody finds out about because they are all done at the last minute to avoid a government shutdown.

Here is how this would work: When we do not have spending bills agreed to by the time the fiscal year comes to an end—and that would be October 1—then the spending continues just as it was the previous year. So it is the same level of spending, except that automatically it would begin to reduce spending after 120 days and 90 days. So Congress would have 120 days to come together and figure out a budget. That is the carrot. The stick is that after 120 days the spending would be ratcheted down 1 percent and then again every 90 days another 1 percent.

I think it has become painfully obvious that Congress needs encouragement to get its work done, and this certainly would be encouragement. By the same token, we would not have these government shutdowns. That gradual decline in spending, by the way, would treat all spending equally. So all discretionary spending would be treated the same way—no exceptions for liberal spending priorities or conservative spending priorities. It would be the same for everybody. Both sides of Congress would feel the pain, and both sides then might be more willing to actually get the work done.

Is this the ideal solution to end government shutdowns? No, it is not. The ideal solution is that Congress actually does its work, which is our constitutional duty—the power of the purse—and that is to sit down and have these appropriations bills pass. That requires oversight of the agencies and departments which are badly in need of it. It then requires prioritizing spending in