

try to force each other to do it on the backs of one piece of our large Federal budget.

So to my conservative neighbors or those in the other party, I am sorry, we just cannot do this through cuts to discretionary, nondefense programs alone or through entitlement reforms alone. We cannot responsibly deal with this deficit and debt just within those two areas.

In the last 2 years we already made more than \$1.5 trillion in discretionary spending cuts. On the trajectory we are on now, in the next decade the percentage these programs make of our total Federal Government will drop to levels not seen since Dwight Eisenhower was President, even as our revenues today are at their lowest as a percentage of our economy in 50 years.

Federal spending, done right, in the right sectors, fuels our long-term competitiveness. I am talking about investments in education, in infrastructure, in R&D, and basic science and curing diseases, and in speeding commerce. They are key to our future.

One of our core areas of focus here ought to be on how do we create jobs in a progrowth agenda for our country? By simply focusing on hacking off the domestic, discretionary piece of our Federal budget, it is like an airplane that is trying to get lift but one of its engines is being cut off. We need to sustain investment in some of these critical areas of the Federal budget. But equally, I will say to my liberal neighbors, to folks in my party, we cannot solve this budget problem just by raising taxes on the wealthy and on corporations. The math just does not work. There is not enough we can raise there to deal with the whole challenge.

Remember, the fiscal cliff deal we just passed in the last few weeks will bring in another \$600 billion in revenue over the next 10 years. So we are making progress.

We also cannot do it if we simply ignore the poor fiscal health of our long-term entitlement programs either. Last year Medicare and Medicaid Programs—plus interest on the debt—made up almost 30 cents of every \$1 the Federal Government spent. In two decades, on our current trajectory, it may be 50 cents of every \$1.

Demographics, steadily rising costs of health care will keep driving this, and we must deal with it. Unless we change course, putting all these things together, productive expenditures that grow our economy—medical research, R&D—will be crowded out. Progressive priorities such as Head Start, low-income housing assistance, breast and cervical cancer screenings—the things that help care for the least among us or that help make us healthier will be gone.

So in my view, why not take this moment when we still have a Democrat in the White House and Democrats in control of this Chamber to make tough choices while we have historically low interest rates and fight to preserve the

legacy of the earned benefits—Medicare, Medicaid, and the vital entitlement programs we treasure. In my view, we cannot simply hope that the cost of our entitlement programs comes down and we cannot simply tax our way to economic health. Anyone who tells you that either of these is enough is wrong. Spending has to be cut. Entitlements have to be reformed. Revenue needs to be raised. They are all part of the problem, and they should all be part of the solution.

Somehow, though, when we actually do manage briefly to have a substantive debate on these questions, we tend to spend all of our time focusing on the smallest facet of the Federal budget—discretionary spending—but almost no time discussing these others, the rest of the equation, the big drivers.

This place has become somewhat of an alternative reality where, if we dig in real hard and people get really scared and we use fancy words such as “sequester” or “fiscal cliff,” we can ignore the facts. There is no question that we do have to reduce spending, but the sequester is the worst way to do it. When conceived, the sequester was such a bad idea that both sides were supposed to be motivated to move Heaven and Earth to prevent it from taking effect. That is how terrible it is as policy. Yet here we are.

I am dumbfounded. It is not as though we have not had plenty of time to make this better—18 months, by my count. Why are people talking now in the press here on Capitol Hill about whether BOEHNER will lose his speakership or whether the first person to suggest the sequester worked in the White House or in the Capitol, whether Republicans have more to gain by the sequester kicking in or Democrats? How much time have we been spending trying to fix blame rather than fix the problem? Who owns the sequester seems to be the fight of the day here. Who cares is my question. There are no winners in this fight.

I think the question of how we reduce our deficits, stabilize our economy, prioritize spending that will grow jobs—this debate can either dominate the next 10 years, as we lurch every 3 months from crisis to crisis, or we can address the broader, bigger question and fix it and lay a groundwork for health, for growth, for recovery. Again, the math is not that hard; the politics are.

We here in Congress, with the executive branch, have largely created this problem, and now we need to solve it. Tomorrow, leaders from this Chamber and the House will go to the White House to meet with President Obama about how to address the sequester on the very day it takes effect. On behalf of my constituents, on behalf of the teachers, the police officers, the non-profits, the personnel at Dover Air Force Base, the kids, their parents, my neighbors, on behalf of my State, I urge our leaders to embrace this mo-

ment and to work not only to avert this short-term sequester—not just this \$85 billion in cuts—but to resume their work on the grand bargain. We need a big deal. We need it to be balanced. We need it to be fair. Spending, entitlements, revenue—they all need to be on the table, and they all have to be part of the equation.

My question for everyone in that meeting tomorrow—

Mr. McCAIN. I have to ask for regular order.

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

Mr. COONS. I ask unanimous consent for 30 seconds to conclude my remarks.

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

Mr. COONS. My question for everyone—everyone—in both parties, both Chambers who goes to this important meeting at the White House tomorrow is, How much more time do we have to fight and not to act, to attack and not compromise, to spin rather than solve? Based on the e-mails, the calls, the contacts I have gotten from my constituents, from my neighbors, the time to step up and address this larger problem is now. The sequester, while savage, is not the underlying problem. It is our unwillingness to come together across parties and Chambers to deal with the underlying challenges of our budget. It is my hope, my prayer, that we will take this moment and act.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

AMERICAN FAMILY ECONOMIC PROTECTION ACT OF 2013—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 388, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 18, (S. 388) a bill to appropriately limit sequestration, to eliminate tax loopholes, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that in addition to the two cloture votes on bills dealing with the sequester today, there be set a time, to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Republican leader, that without intervening action or debate the Senate proceed to a rollcall vote on the motion to proceed to my alternative bill dealing with the sequester which is now at the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I reserve the right to object and will say just a few things.

Unless we act by midnight tomorrow, Friday, across-the-board cuts will kick in. They are going to start kind of slowly, but they are going to ramp up really quickly. So the question for us today is, Are we going to act to replace these across-the-board cuts?

The proposal we have put forward would prevent the cuts with a balanced plan. Our plan will protect air safety, our food supply and, most importantly, our national security. And frankly, Mr. President, air safety, which I mentioned, food supply—that is also part of our national security in addition to our military.

The alternative that has been put forward by my friend the Republican leader would not replace the cuts. As I said earlier this morning here on the floor, one of my colleagues in the Democratic caucus said at our caucus on Tuesday that he understood what the Republicans were going to put forward, and he said it would be like sending the President an order: We have already decided you are going to have to cut off three fingers, and we are giving you the alternative to decide which one you cut first.

The Republican alternative would not replace the cuts but would call for making the cuts in some different way. Republicans call their proposal “flexibility.” In fact, it is anything but that. Their proposal is entirely inflexible on one key point: not a single dollar of revenue, not a single tax loophole would be closed.

Now, remember, Mr. President, the one proposal we have forward says that if you make \$5 million a year, you will have to pay 30 percent tax minimum. That is it. That does not sound too outrageous. That is why the American people agree—Democrats, Independents, and 60 percent of Republicans.

Now the Republican side seeks a third vote on the Ayotte amendment, which would replace the cuts with a parade of even more unfair cuts and penalties on immigrants, people receiving health care under ObamaCare, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, those kinds of things.

I also have trouble understanding, as I do—I frankly do understand why, as I read in the paper, AYOTTE, MCCAIN, and GRAHAM do not like the Republican proposal—haven’t we ceded enough power to the President?

So it is not our fault over here that the Republican leader chose to offer not the Ayotte alternative but instead chose the Republican alternative that we are going to talk about and vote on later today.

I return to my main question again briefly. Are Republicans really filibustering a vote on replacing the sequester? My question is, Would the Republican leader modify his consent to allow for simple up-or-down votes on each of the two alternatives? Would it

make a difference if we allowed votes on three bills, including the Ayotte alternative? I would be happy to have three votes if the Republican leader would simply allow the votes to be held at majority thresholds.

So I have asked that. I can do it formally. I would be happy to do so if there is any taking of my request here. But this having been the case, if my friend the Republican leader says: Yes, why don’t you put that in proper form—and I would be happy to do that—then we would have votes on all three, with a simple majority on each one of them. Not hearing someone say: Great idea, then I object to the request of my friend from New Hampshire.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I would say to my friend the majority leader that I would object. He can either propound such a consent or not, whatever he chooses, but I would object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to the original request?

Mr. REID. Yes, I did that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, obviously we regret that we have not been able to reach an agreement. I am especially disappointed that we are unable to consider the Ayotte amendment, which is an alternative to the sequestration. A flexibility of sequestration would still sooner or later have the same Draconian effects on our national security.

I also would point out to my colleagues that what we are about to go through is in some respects a charade because we know the proposal on that side will not succeed with 60 votes, and the proposal on this side will not succeed with 60 votes. Meanwhile, the clock moves on until sometime tomorrow night.

Some of us warned for a long time about the effects of sequestration, and if we want to have a blame game, then I will take blame, everybody takes blame. But isn’t it time that we prevented what our military leaders in uniform, who have made their careers and their lives serving and sacrificing for this country, say would harm and inflict terrible damage on our ability to defend this Nation, our inability to train and equip the men who are serving? I always appreciate very much when Members on both sides of the aisle praise the men and women who are serving in the military. I am always pleased to see that. But shouldn’t we be thinking about them now? Shouldn’t we be thinking about those men and women who are serving who literally do not know what they are going to be doing tomorrow—like the crew of the aircraft carrier that they decided not to deploy to the Middle East at a time when tensions are incredibly high?

I would also point out to my colleagues that this is not a fair seques-

tration. Most Americans believe this is half out of defense, half out of non-defense. It is not.

Under the formulation of the sequestration, about half of the spending we engage in is exempt, such as compensation for the President, such as the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation, such as payment to the District of Columbia Pension Fund, such as the Host Nation Support Fund for Relocation. All of these and many others were made exempt, which meant the cuts and the reductions in defense were even larger, and, obviously, those who designed this legislation decided that the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation and relocation funding was more important than national defense because we didn’t exempt national defense.

That is disgraceful.

Nineteen percent of discretionary spending is out of defense. We are asking for a 50-percent cut out of defense, on top of \$87 billion that has already been enacted under Secretary Gates, on top of \$487 billion in defense which is already on track to be cut. The percentage of gross national product for defense continues to decline.

What are we doing?

A few days ago there was a wonderful ceremony in the White House where a brave young American received the Congressional Medal of Honor. I happened to go to an evening function at a pizza place with him and his comrades who fought. A book was written by Jake Tapper, an excellent book—I recommend it to all of my colleagues—about eight of their comrades who were killed. Here we are unable to make sure these young men and women serving in harm’s way have the equipment, the training, and everything they need to defend this Nation. We are doing the men and women who are serving this Nation a great disservice, and the President did them a disservice when he said in the campaign: Not to worry, sequestration won’t happen. The President of the United States said that. I didn’t say it. The three of us traveled this country warning about the effects of sequestration. Of course, we now know the idea came from the White House. That is the blame game, and I will be glad to engage in this game.

Can’t we at least come to some agreement to prevent this? Are we going to lurch from one fiscal cliff to another? If we want to do that, that is one thing.

General Odierno is one of the great leaders I have had the opportunity of knowing for many years. General Odierno, the Chief of Staff of the Army, a man who has decorations from here to there, said he cannot replace the men and women who are serving in Afghanistan under this sequestration because he doesn’t have the ability to train their replacements. Isn’t that an alarm for us?

We are going to go through a charade here. In a little while we are going to have a vote on the Democratic proposal, and it will not get sufficient

votes; and the same thing here on this side, and the clock will tick.

Tomorrow, on the last day, the President is going to call people over to the White House to see if we can address it. Where was he in the last year?

Again, I am not taking the floor today for the blame game. I am pleading for the men and women who are serving this Nation in harm's way who every single day have a hell-of-a-lot tougher time than we do. Can't we do something on their behalf to sit down with the President of the United States, who is Commander in Chief, and get this issue resolved before we do great damage to our national security?

I thank Senator AYOTTE for her proposal. It contains real reductions in spending so we don't have to go through this sequestration. On the one side, now we have a choice between "flexibility," which nobody really knows exactly what that means—and on the other side, obviously, a proposal that really bears no relevance to the issue that faces us.

I thank my colleagues for the time. If I sound a little emotional on this issue, it is because I am. It seems to me we, at least on this issue of national security and the men and women who serve our Nation, should come together. I stand ready to put everything on the table to prevent what could be, in the words of the departing Secretary of Defense, a devastating blow to our ability to defend this Nation in what I could make an argument are the most dangerous times.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. GRAHAM. I thank the Senator from New Hampshire who authored this amendment which Senator MCCAIN and I support. She spent a lot of time and effort trying to fix sequestration in the first year and trying to look at programs that are not as essential to the Nation, in my view, as the Department of Defense.

Let me put this in perspective. I don't need a poll to tell me what I think about this. The majority leader referenced some poll out there about where the American people are. I appreciate polling. It is a tool all politicians use. I don't need one here to know where I stand.

The question is, Do the people in South Carolina think I am right or wrong? I will have an election in 2014. I am certainly willing to stand before the people of South Carolina and say what we are doing in this sequestration proposal is ill-conceived, dangerous, and despicable.

Let's start with the Commander in Chief. This is what Mr. Lew said, our new Treasury Secretary:

Make no mistake, the sequester is not meant to be policy. Rather, it is meant to be an unpalatable option that all parties want to avoid.

That was their view of sequestration.

According to Bob Woodward and comments since, this idea came out of

the White House. The White House thought that if we created a penalty clause for supercommittee failure called sequestration, where we would have to take \$600 billion of the \$1.2 trillion out of the Defense Department, that would make the supercommittee more likely to achieve a result. If we took \$600 billion out of nondefense, that would put pressure on the supercommittee to get the right result.

We are going to spend \$45 trillion over the next decade. The next question for the country is, Could we save \$1.2 trillion without destroying the Defense Department and raising taxes? Yes, we could if we tried. Put me in the camp that this is an achievable spending cut. This is not something that is unachievable.

What Senator MCCONNELL said is very important. Two-thirds of the budget, almost, is exempt from sequestration. When you hear Republicans say surely we can find \$85 billion out of \$3.5 trillion in spending—to my Republican colleagues, stop saying that. That is not accurate. We are not cutting \$85 billion out of \$3.5 trillion. We are cutting \$85 billion out of about 1.3, 1.25, because the Budget Control Act took off the table two-thirds of the government from being cut.

I will get to the President in a minute, but let me talk a little bit about my party, the party of Ronald Reagan, the party of peace through strength. This is the party that believes—at least we used to—the No. 1 obligation of the Federal Government, before it does anything else, is to get national security right. That was what made Ronald Reagan.

That is what I believe. I don't need a poll to tell me that. I don't care if 90 percent of the people in the country said the Defense Department is not my primary concern when it comes to Federal budgeting. Count me in the 10 percent.

The party of Ronald Reagan, even though it came out of the White House, this very bad idea, agreed to it. What did we agree to? We agreed to take off the table two-thirds of the Federal Government.

Pell grants. My sister received a Pell grant when my parents died. It is a very important program. It helps people go to college who are low-income Americans. In 2008 it was \$16.25 billion and in 2013 it is \$41.57 billion.

Food stamps. A lot of people need help, I understand that. The Food Stamp Program has doubled since 2008.

I guess the Republican Party believes the Pell grants, food stamps, the FAA, and home mortgage interest deduction, and all this other stuff in the Federal Government should be shielded, but those who have been fighting the war that protects us all from radical Islam should be on the chopping block. Ronald Reagan should be rolling over in his grave. Shame on everybody who agreed this was a good idea on our side.

I cannot tell you how disgusted I am with the concept that when it comes

time to cut—because the budget politicians can't reach an agreement—we fire the soldiers and keep the politicians and every other social program intact and put half the cuts on those who are fighting the war.

So the next time you go to a military base, good luck. We will look those men and women in the eye—I don't see how you could. I don't see how you could go onto a military base or see somebody in the airport, shake their hand and thank them for their service given the fact you have taken the Defense Department and made it something not very special anymore.

Secretary Panetta said: After 10 years of these cuts we would have the smallest ground forces since 1940, the smallest number of ships since 1915, and the smallest Air Force in its history. This isn't like the drawdowns in the past when the potential enemy was disabled and in some way rendered ineffective. We are still confronting a number of threats in the world. It would decimate our defense. It would cripple us in terms of our ability to protect this country.

It would result in the hollowing out of our forces. It would terribly weaken our ability to respond to threats in the world. It is a ship without sailors. It is a brigade without bullets. It is an airwing without enough trained pilots. It is a paper tiger. In effect, it invites aggression. A hollow military doesn't happen by accident; it comes from poor stewardship and poor leadership.

I couldn't agree more.

To my Democratic colleagues, we are not going to raise any more taxes to spend money on the government. The next time I raise taxes, we are going to try to get out of debt. We are \$17 trillion in debt, and every time there is a crisis in this Nation you want to raise taxes to pay for the government we already have. We have enough money to run this government. We need to spend it better.

To my Republican colleagues, there is not enough flexibility in the world to change the top line number. You either believe Secretary Panetta or you don't. You either believe every military commander—I don't trust everything a general tells me, but the question for me is do I trust all generals who tell me the same thing. Can all of them be wrong? It is one thing to have a dispute with a general or an admiral, but when every general and admiral tells you the same thing—and if we don't believe them, we need to fire them—we act accordingly.

As to the President, you have one obligation that nobody in this body has. You are the Commander in Chief of the United States. They trust you, they need you, and your primary goal is to take care of those in uniform and their families.

Mr. President, you have let them down. My party let them down, but you are different from any other politician. You are the Commander in Chief. How you could have considered this as an

acceptable outcome just makes me sick to my stomach. I don't know how any Commander in Chief could have been comfortable with the idea that if the supercommittee fails, we are going to cut the military. You haven't lifted a finger in the last year to do anything about it. You finally go to a naval base down in Virginia, after the election, a few days before this kicks in.

To me, this is pathetic leadership by the Commander in Chief. This is an abandonment of the Republican Party's belief in peace through strength. This is a low point in my time in the U.S. Congress.

We are not going to raise taxes to fund the government. We are going to raise taxes in my construct to pay down debt and fix entitlements. I cannot tell you how ashamed I am of what we have done to those who have been busting their butts for the last 11 years, to those who have been deployed time and time again, and to their families.

The thank-you you receive from your President and your Congress is we are going to put your way of life on the chopping block. God, if we can't do better than that then all of us should be fired—politicians.

Mr. MCCAIN. I would ask the Senator to yield to respond to one question.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, if I may interject, I believe I have the floor.

Mr. MCCAIN. I have the right to ask a question from the person who has the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina has yielded for a question.

Mr. MCCAIN. My question is, does the Senator think the American people appreciate and understand what this does to the lives of the American men and women who are serving? For example, those who are serving on that aircraft carrier they said was going to deploy for many months and was cancelled at the last minute, the training plans which are now going to be cancelled, the deployments which will be changed—not to mention the massive layoffs in the defense industry, which sometimes are not easily replaceable. That is my question.

Mr. GRAHAM. Well, I don't know if they do or not. We have done everything we can—the three of us—to tell them what is coming our way. All I can say is that every general and admiral who has told us the same thing, I respect what they are telling us. Leon Panetta is a Democrat, but he is dead right. He has been a great Secretary of Defense. I trust their judgment.

I know enough about the military budget to know if we take \$600 billion out of their budget, on top of the \$487 billion, plus the \$89 billion, we are going to make them less able to defend our Nation, putting our men and women at risk, and that is what this debate is about.

I wish to thank Senator AYOTTE, who came up with an alternative to avoid this without raising taxes.

My time is up. I don't know who is next, but I yield the floor.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I wish to interject just for a moment to sort out the order on the floor.

I apologize to the Senator from Arizona for the last exchange. I thought I had the floor at that point. I understand now this is a colloquy.

I think Senator AYOTTE seems to be in order, but the chairman of the Appropriations Committee is here, so perhaps she could be recognized at the conclusion of Senator AYOTTE's remarks. I see Senator INHOFE, so if he could follow Senator MIKULSKI and then I will follow Senator INHOFE, I offer that as a proposal.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. INHOFE. Reserving the right to object, I don't need to be in this lineup. I will be talking later on. I only wanted to ask one question of Senator AYOTTE when she has the floor.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. The Senator has that right, and she will yield to him.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. AYOTTE. I thank the Chair, and I thank very much the Senator from Rhode Island for allowing me the opportunity to continue and for sorting out the order on the floor.

Mr. INHOFE. Would the Senator yield for a question before she starts?

Ms. AYOTTE. I will, and then, obviously, I would like to make a few comments.

Mr. INHOFE. Yes, of course. The question is this—and I know the Senator already knows this, but others may not know, and I want to make sure they are aware.

I am in support of the Senator's bill. I am a cosponsor of the bill and have been since way back when the Senator first started with Jon Kyl a long time ago.

Ms. AYOTTE. I thank the Senator for that.

Mr. INHOFE. I agree with what was said by both the Senator from Arizona and the Senator South Carolina. In fact, it was my request that Senator AYOTTE's measure be the Republican alternative. So I just wanted to make sure everyone knew that. I think it is a good idea.

Ms. AYOTTE. I thank the Senator for his statement and for his support and I certainly join in the comments and concerns that were just raised by my colleagues Senators MCCAIN and GRAHAM.

Here is where we are. We are in this position where, frankly, as Senator MCCAIN said, this is a charade. Both parties are acting out this play where we are going to have one vote on the Democratic alternative that is going to

fail, and then we are going to have another vote on one Republican alternative that is going to fail. So I put pen to paper and came up with some other ways to cut spending, which comes to about \$250 billion in savings over the next 10 years, in order to address sequester and also to have an alternative because I believe the American people see through this charade of what is going to happen today and that, ultimately, as prior speakers have said, the sequester was set up to be resolved in a way where we had alternative savings that did not undermine our national security and some of the core services that could be put at risk in the way the sequester is structured.

I firmly believe, when we look at what has happened, this bill was ill-conceived from the beginning. I didn't support it. I didn't vote for it. One of the fundamental problems with it was it was a kick-the-can-down-the-road exercise where we gave our responsibility to find the \$1.2 trillion in savings—the sequester—to a supercommittee, rather than the Senate and the Budget Committee doing our job of budgeting and prioritizing.

So stepping back, that is what has led us here. But I am also disappointed in my Republican colleagues, and that is why I offer an alternative of spending cuts, because it seems to me, the way this is structured we have already taken \$487 billion in reductions to our defense. I serve on the Senate Armed Services Committee. For 1 year on that committee, I have been listening to our military leaders at every single level when asking them about the sequester. From the highest leaders, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, we have heard things such as we are going to shoot ourselves in the head, we are going to hollow out our force, and America will no longer be a global power, which is what General Dempsey once told us, as a result of sequestration.

This morning, we had leaders of our military before the Armed Services Committee and I asked Assistant Secretary Estevez: If we go with the flexibility approach, does this address the impact on our national security? In other words, will this address making sure we can still meet the needs of our national security?

Let us not forget this is happening at a time when Iran is marching toward a nuclear weapon, when we have conflict in Syria, and when we are still at war. By the way, with this sequester, the way it impacts the Department of Defense, our war funding was not exempt. Over 50 percent of spending, as this was set up from the beginning, was exempt from the sequester, which of course is no way to find savings throughout the whole government, but we didn't exempt the war funding.

So at a time of war, I asked the Assistant Secretary: Does the flexibility solve the problem to our national security? And he said: Certainly, flexibility

will help us deal with it, but it will not solve the problem in terms of our national security.

So that is why I decided to come up with some alternative savings. My proposal will not get a vote today. I think it is a time when, frankly, we should be bringing more ideas to the floor, not less ideas, and debating this vigorously in the Senate, instead of where we are right now, which is a charade. We are going to have one vote and another vote and then we are all going to go to our respective sides and say: OK, American people, we know there are real risks, particularly to the safety of this country, that we should be addressing. From my perspective, I believe we can address them through alternative spending cuts.

Through all this, we have the President, who has called leaders of both parties tomorrow to the White House. I have spent a year working on this issue. He was at the Newport News shipyard the other day. We were there in July talking about the impact on that shipyard. We traveled to States around the country—to military facilities—to talk to the people there at those facilities about the impact of sequester. I think the President should have been on this much sooner, but now it is time for his leadership as the Commander in Chief—leadership we could have used this past summer when we were all talking about it. We could have been in a position to try to resolve it then rather than continuing to be in these crisis moments in which we find ourselves in the Senate.

Where I am left on all this is that we owe it to our men and women in uniform to find alternative ways to save the money, still protecting our national security. Also, so people understand how this plays out, the way the cuts are taken in 2013—during a shorter period, not a full period—OMB has estimated on the defense end it is about 13 percent, on top of the \$487 billion in reductions, and in nondefense spending it is about 9 percent over the additional \$487 billion.

So I would just simply ask for a time to stop this charade, and it is my hope we could actually get down to resolving this in a responsible way for our country. That is why I put pen to paper. People can be critical of my proposal, but I think that now is the time when we should have a vote on every proposal and we should have every idea come to the table because it is a time to stop the charade and it is a time to solve this problem. Let's make sure we protect our country at a very dangerous time.

I will continue to work to do that for our country. I think we can do it, still addressing our deficit, still with savings, but we certainly need to do it, and having the charade vote we are going to have today will not solve it. The American people deserve better and we should be giving them better and solving this.

I thank the Chair for allowing me the time, and I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise to speak on behalf of the Democratic alternative that would cancel the sequester for this year.

Before the Senator from New Hampshire leaves, I would like to take a minute to compliment her on her energy, her passion, and the fact that she actually wants to present ideas to be discussed. I think that is excellent. I want her to also know I support the concept she is advocating of no more delay; that we cannot solve America's fiscal situation and also important public investments we need to make in research and innovation and keep our fragile economy going by just punting now. I think we agree on that.

The other thing we agree on is the goal to get our fiscal crisis in order, to strengthen our economy, and to keep America strong. We just are going to disagree on the means. But that is OK. That is called America. That is called the Senate. That is called debate. Let's let the world watch and hear that we actually have ideas, and just as we are doing this minute, we can do it with civility and with interest in what is being said. I found what the Senator from New Hampshire had to say very interesting, and I will have a few comments about that and what the Senator from South Carolina said, but I wanted her to know that I do think we must begin to move with urgency. I do think the politics of delay, ultimatum and brinkmanship, should come to an end. I like the idea of debating ideas and look forward to that both in conversation and so on.

I just wanted to say that to her.

Ms. AYOTTE. Would the Senator from Maryland yield for a brief comment?

Ms. MIKULSKI. Yes.

Ms. AYOTTE. I thank the Senator, and I wanted to first say I know she is the new chair of the Appropriations Committee and I congratulate her on that. As we go forward, as we look at why we are where we are, if we can get back to regular order in the Senate, with a budget and a regular appropriations process, I think we would do a great service for the American people and eliminate this crisis-to-crisis mode. I know, as the new chair of the Appropriations Committee, Senator MIKULSKI will play a leadership position in doing that.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I absolutely will. Just to respond, first of all, I have a great vice chairman, Senator RICHARD SHELBY, from the other side of the aisle, who shares that same idea.

What does the regular order mean? It means we bring out one bill at a time; that we don't have a \$1 trillion bill on the floor at one time, where we can't discuss it, debate it, analyze it, and certainly no more of these 7,000-page bills, where we find things have parachuted into the bill in the middle of the night.

I agree with my colleague and I look forward to that, and I must say I have

enjoyed working with her and look forward to doing more of the same.

Ms. AYOTTE. I thank the Senator.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I do want to speak in support of the bill that is offered as our Democratic alternative. It is a balanced solution to preventing the dysfunctional, disruptive, across-the-board spending cuts called sequester. Sequester is a Washington word and a Washington invention we came up with during the budget crisis debacle in August of 2011, where we would cut \$1 trillion over 10 years or \$110 billion at a time. That was supposed to have been resolved through the supercommittee, but that didn't happen. It was supposed to have been resolved through the fiscal cliff, all the way up to New Year's Eve. What happened? We punted. We delayed for 2 months, and so here we are.

While we are facing the Draconian implications of the sequester, we do have an answer. That answer is composed of a balanced approach, where we look at increased revenue and strategic cuts that will not cripple our economy nor weaken America's strength here or abroad.

What does it do? Yes, it does go to increased revenue. The revenue we are talking about is to close these juicy loopholes, to end these outrageous tax earmarks that happen in the stealth of the night. Look, we got rid of earmarks on the Appropriations Committee. Let's get rid of tax earmarks on the Finance Committee, and this is one of the ways to do it.

I want to compliment the Senator from Rhode Island, Mr. WHITEHOUSE. He has done incredible research on just exactly what these cushy, lobbyist-driven tax breaks are.

Our closing the loopholes cuts spending, and it also protects the middle class, ensures essential government services, and keeps America strong. What does it do? Yes, it does reform the Tax Code. The first loophole it closes is something called the Buffett rule. It saves \$53 billion and it means wealthy taxpayers will pay lower effective tax rates than the middle class. In plain English, and this is what Warren Buffett said, a billionaire should pay the same tax rate as somebody who makes about \$55,000 a year.

Guess what. We Democrats believe in entrepreneurship. We believe in rewarding hard work. So that tax doesn't kick in until your second million. If I were a billionaire, I would take that deal. I am not a billionaire. But, more importantly, neither are 99 percent of the American population.

We also eliminate a special loophole to the oil and gas industry for \$2 billion where they get oil from tar sands. That would be also subject to a tax. But my favorite one is it eliminates tax breaks for shipping jobs overseas, another significant amount of money.

I am an appropriator, so let me talk about spending cuts. We have come up with spending cuts: Yes, 27.5 in domestic spending, and 27.5 in defense.

Let me start first with defense, because much has been said about defense. Many tables have been pounded, many chests have been thumped talking about it. And we do have to look out for our military. But our \$27.5 billion recognizes the reality of boots on the ground. The reality of boots on the ground. Our troops are coming home. They will all be home by the summer of 2014. Our defense cuts kick in in 2015, so nothing we do will in any way dilute, diminish, end or terminate money that would go to our men and women in harm's way. So our cuts don't kick in until 2015, and then it will be \$3 billion a year over a 9-year period, which our generals and our Acting Secretary of Defense, Secretary Hagel, now concur with. So we are OK with defense. And, most of all, the military is OK with it.

Then we also cut domestic spending. Here, we cut \$27 billion in the farm bill. It eliminates subsidies we don't need to do anymore. The Presiding Officer is from an agricultural State. We love your cheese. We even from time to time cheer on the Green Bay Packers. So we know agriculture is important. But essentially, we have a tax subsidy structure that goes back to the 1930s—a different economy, a Dust Bowl, people vacating homes in Oklahoma and following the grapes of wrath trail to California. So we came up through the New Deal with a way of subsidizing farms, restoring the land, and restoring people to their land. But a lot of those subsidies aren't needed anymore and, quite frankly, a lot goes to ag business for crops not even planted. So working with the Agricultural Committee—Appropriations didn't do this out of the blue—we come up with \$27.5 billion.

Much is said about asking Democrats if we know math. Yes, we know math. We have \$27.5 billion cuts in domestic spending, \$27.5 billion cuts in defense kicking in in 2015. That is \$55 billion. Getting rid of tax-break earmarks and making those who make more than \$2 million a year pay their fair share, we come up with 110. Quite simply, that is our plan.

I spoke quite a bit during this week about the impact of sequester. Sequester was never meant to happen. We have got to end sequester. We could do it this afternoon. For all those people who are crying their tears and don't want it, do they want to protect America's middle class, the 99 percent, or do they want to protect billionaire tax-break earmarks? That is the choice. So they can rally: We don't want to pay more taxes. You can't have a government without paying taxes. And ordinary people pay them every day.

Do you know what drives me wild? There is this fix the debt crowd flew in. I watched them fly in. I loved it. They stayed in Washington where they could take expense account deductions while they came to lobby us. And how did they come in? On their subsidized tax-break jets and their expense accounts

that they could deduct, from sushi to Cabernet. They came to tell us to raise Social Security. Then they told us to raise the age in Medicare because, after all, people live longer. Maybe when you have all that wealth you can afford health care and you don't need Medicare. Nobody has to take Medicare. If you don't need it, you don't have to take it. If you don't need Social Security, you don't need to take it.

My whole point was, often the very solutions are given by people who get the most tax breaks. That is a pet peeve of mine.

But really what hurts me is this: I represent some of the great iconic institutions in America—the National Institutes of Health, the National Security Agency, each doing its own work to protect the American people. The Federal Drug Administration—I have 4,000 Federal employees keeping our drugs and medical devices safe for the American people. And food safety. We have to make sure those people work so our private sector works and we keep our economy strong.

The Democratic alternative is sound from the standpoint of policy, it is sustainable and reliable. We could end sequester this afternoon.

I will be back to talk more about it. But I think we have a good idea here. Let's not follow the politics and let's not dither in the U.S. Senate.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. TOOMEY. Madam President, would the Senator from Rhode Island yield for a question?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I yield for a question.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. I thank the Senator, the gentleman from Rhode Island.

I wish to ask a question clarifying the procedure. My understanding is there is time reserved for me after the Senator from Rhode Island finishes with his comments.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. No order has been forthcoming to that effect yet.

Mr. TOOMEY. But there will be time available?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Having the floor, why don't I propose now that at the conclusion of my remarks Senator TOOMEY be recognized.

Mr. TOOMEY. I have no further questions. I thank the Senator from Rhode Island.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senator from Pennsylvania will be next.

The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I am rising today in strong support of Leader REID's proposal to stop the sequester. We need to reduce our debt and deficit. We should do so in a thoughtful manner.

We have so often on this floor heard our Republican friends criticize Demo-

cratic legislation as job killing: a job-killing bill, a job-killing proposal. We hear that all the time. Often that charge has been without much factual support, but it is part of the common rhetoric in this room. But now we face an event that actually is expected to cause the loss of 1 million jobs, and yet so many Republicans support these cuts in their fixation, frankly, on what economists call budget austerity, cutting your way out of a recession.

How has the budget austerity record worked? There is a record now, because a lot of countries have tried it—from Spain to Portugal to Greece, countries slashed spending to address deficits in the name of budget austerity. Their record? Lousy. Persistent double-digit unemployment and negative economic growth.

The U.S. unemployment rate of 7.9 percent—which is actually even higher in my home State—is for sure too high, but it is far better than the rate of 26 percent unemployment in Spain and Greece, the record of 16 percent unemployment in Portugal. Our 2.3 percent growth rate may seem inadequate, and it is; but as we recover from the deepest recession we have seen since the Great Depression, it is much better than the negative growth rates in the countries that took the austerity path. The results are clear. The evidence is in from the austerity experiments. The countries that cut the deepest have been hurt the most.

If we want to continue growing our economy and creating jobs, we need to resist the European path that is championed by Republican austerity advocates. We need to maintain the balanced approach that has brought the U.S. economy up out of recession—admittedly, not fast enough. But look at what the alternative has been.

Leader REID's bill would replace the indiscriminate cuts of the so-called sequester with targeted cuts to agricultural subsidies and defense spending—as the chairman of the Appropriations Committee said—after the troops are home when the costs can necessarily come down, paired with revenue not from raising taxes but from closing a loophole, a tax loophole that allows the highest paid people in America to pay lower tax rates than regular middle-class families.

I heard the passion of Senator MCCAIN—and I respect him immensely—on the harm the sequester will do to the military. We have a way out. It is a question of priorities. Do you really want to protect the military from these cuts or is it more important to protect the low tax rates of billionaires? That is the choice, and that is the choice they are making. Leader REID's is a smart and balanced bill, and I hope it will pass.

To put this into some context about where we are on spending cuts, the ranking member of the Budget Committee said this week that President Obama was opposed to spending cuts. I have the transcript of what he said in

committee here: The President believes no spending, even wasteful spending, should be cut.

Well, let's look at the facts. Through the Budget Control Act of 2011 and several other measures, we have cut spending almost \$1.5 trillion in the budget period of the next decade. When you include interest savings—the top part—from that reduced borrowing, it comes to \$1.7 trillion in spending cuts and associated interest savings.

On the revenue side, we have only generated a little over \$700 billion from ending the Bush tax cuts for the top 1 percent—at least over \$450,000 in income—and from the associated interest savings. This together puts us \$2.4 trillion in deficit reduction toward our goal of \$4 trillion in total deficit reduction that most economists agree is needed to stabilize our budget. But notice, in the balance between spending cuts and new revenues, spending cuts are ahead by \$1 trillion.

The ranking member of the Budget Committee said President Obama believes no spending, even wasteful spending, should be cut. And he is \$1 trillion ahead on spending versus revenues. We have cut \$7 of spending for every \$3 of revenue, even though right now U.S. Government revenue is at its lowest percentage of GDP in more than 50 years, more than half a century. Our proposal going forward is 50/50, spending cuts and revenues. So let's not pretend we are immune to or allergic to spending cuts. There have been more spending cuts than new revenues. We have tried to find a balanced approach and so far, in this \$2.4 trillion, we have not even looked at tax loopholes, at spending that happens through the Tax Code that mostly benefits big corporations, special interests, and super-high-end American earners.

Take a look at how big that amount is. We collect, in individual income tax revenue, a little over \$1 trillion every year from individuals. But the total liability of individuals under the Tax Code is over \$2 trillion. What happens to this other \$1.02 trillion? It flows back out. It never comes into the government as revenues. It goes back to people as tax deductions, loopholes, and various ways that we spend money through the Tax Code.

If you look at the corporate income tax side, it is about the same. We look at our corporations—which, by the way, contribute about one-sixth as much into our national revenue as they used to. They are at an all-time low in terms of contributing to our national revenues in the last couple of decades—60 years, I want to say. They are at \$118 billion that actually gets collected and becomes revenue. And there is another \$157 billion that is corporate tax liability, but we let them get it back through loopholes in the Tax Code. You put them together and you have \$1.16 trillion that we can use to help defeat or replace the sequester.

It is a big deal to look at the tax spending as well as just the revenues

that come in. We have done nothing on that yet. That should be part of this discussion. That is what we do in the proposal I put out.

Last year we spent a great deal of time in this body debating whether the top income tax rate should be 35 percent or 39.6 percent, and we ultimately set the rate at 39.6 percent for families whose income is over \$450,000. But what we know is that many of those families will never pay anything close to that rate. The Tax Code is riddled with those special provisions that I talked about, the loopholes, the tax spending that disproportionately benefits high-income folks. They are special deals for special interests. Of them all, perhaps the most egregious is the so-called carried interest loophole that allows billionaires—literally billionaires—to pay lower tax rates than regular families. That is why in the last election it became apparent that Mitt Romney was paying something like an 11-percent tax rate.

It is not just Mitt Romney. The IRS tracks the effective tax rates paid by the top 400 highest income earners in the country. In 2009, the last year they have data, the top 400 earned an average of over \$200 million each, 1 year's income, over \$200 million each. What did they pay in taxes on average? About 20 percent. About 20 percent on average. Some paid more. The nominal rate was supposed to be 35 percent. How many Mitt Romneys are there paying 11 percent in order to average to 20 percent? And 20 percent is the same rate that an average firefighter pays in Rhode Island, or a brickmason pays in Rhode Island. Don't tell me a billionaire hedge fund manager cannot pay a higher tax rate than a brickmason.

It is not just the top 400. The Congressional Research Service estimates that about a quarter of people in America who make more than \$1 million a year, about a quarter of them pay lower tax rates than over 10 million middle-income taxpayers. In that sense the Tax Code is upside-down in favor of these high-income earners. Loopholes let them do that.

So we cut across all these loopholes with the so-called Buffett rule. They are supposed to pay 39.6 percent. The Buffett rule says: Ok, take all the loopholes you want, but you cannot go below 30 percent. We will let you take off 9.6 percent of the rate the law says you are supposed to pay but you cannot go below 30 percent. You can't go to 11 percent. You cannot be paying lower than a brickmason pays. That is in our sequester replacement bill. It produces \$71 billion.

High-earning professionals can perform another trick. They can avoid paying Social Security and Medicare taxes simply by calling themselves corporations for tax purposes. You heard the Republican Presidential candidate say corporations are people. This is the flip side. These people are corporations. If you make enough money you can afford to turn yourself into a cor-

poration to dodge paying your Social Security and your Medicare contributions. So the second item on my list closes that loophole too, which is another \$9 billion.

The next item on the list contributes \$3 billion by ending special depreciation rules for private jets. Private jet owners can depreciate their aircraft faster, for tax purposes, than commercial aircraft. I am very happy for anybody who is successful enough to have a private jet. But that luxury need not be subsidized by taxpayers. Setting aside the need for this because of the sequester, this is a change that makes sense just on fairness grounds. It stands on its own and it is another \$3 billion.

The fourth provision in my bill would end tax breaks for big oil companies. Over the past decade the big five oil companies have collectively enjoyed over \$1 trillion in profits—yes, trillion with a T. Repealing taxpayer giveaways to them is something we should be doing anyway. It is another \$24 billion toward getting rid of the sequester.

The final provision in my plan helps replace the sequester by ending a tax break that, unbelievably, rewards manufacturers that close up shop in the United States and move jobs to other countries. It does that by allowing those corporations to indefinitely delay paying taxes on profits from those foreign overseas operations. Ending the deferral loophole for companies that manufacture goods overseas for sale to American customers is something we should do anyway to support our domestic manufacturers. It adds almost \$20 billion toward replacing the sequester cuts.

Each one of these five provisions would make the Tax Code more fair for ordinary Americans. I love our chairman of Appropriations. She can speak to issues on the floor of the Senate like nobody else. When she said these are cushy, lobbyist-driven earmarks, she is dead right. They do not deserve to stand on their own. And we can get rid of some of the smelliest ones and spare ourselves the sequester and the loss of a million jobs at the same time? Gosh, I think we ought to be doing that.

I strongly support Leader REID's bill to replace the sequester cuts with a 50/50 mix of revenue and spending. But I also want to show we can avoid the sequester for the coming year by looking at the vast tax spending we do through loopholes and gimmicks in the Tax Code—usually for the benefit of powerful corporations, special interests, and very high-income individuals. When you set that against the economic harm the sequester is going to cause to our country, closing those loopholes should be a higher priority, on economic grounds and on grounds of fairness.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

HOUSE PASSAGE OF VAWA

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I thank the distinguished Senator from Pennsylvania for allowing me to go first. I assure him I will be very brief. I know the distinguished Senator from Washington State is here. She has an interest in what I am going to say because of her very strong support of the Violence Against Women bill.

Earlier this month, the Senate came together in the best tradition of the chamber to pass the Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act with a strong bipartisan vote. I am happy to report that the House of Representatives just passed the Senate-passed bill. This vital legislation will now go to the President, and it will be signed into law. It will help victims of rape and domestic violence and victims of human trafficking who could not wait another day for us to act. This action of Congress will prevent terrible crimes and help countless victims rebuild their lives.

Today Congress showed that we still can act in a bipartisan way. I thank Senator CRAPO for being my partner on this legislation from the beginning, and I was glad when he and Senator MURKOWSKI, another steadfast supporter, joined me on a bipartisan letter earlier this week asking Speaker BOEHNER to pass this legislation to help all victims of domestic and sexual violence. Today, the House followed the Senate's example, and listened to the call from thousands of survivors of violence and law enforcement by passing this fully-inclusive, life-saving legislation with a bipartisan vote.

We made the Violence Against Women Act our top priority this Congress but it should not have taken this long. Our bill was written with the input of law enforcement, victims, and the people who work with victims every day to address real needs. None of the commonsense changes it included should have been controversial. Still, at a time when we face gridlock and stonewalling on even the most compelling issues, I am glad to see that we could find a way to cut through all of that to help victims of violence.

This new law will make lives better. It will encourage and fund practices proven to help law enforcement and victim service providers reduce domestic violence homicides. It will lead to more investigation and prosecution of rape and sexual assault crimes and more services provided to victims of those crimes. It will also help eliminate backlogs of untested rape kits to help those victims receive justice and security promptly.

This reauthorization, like every VAWA reauthorization before it, takes new steps to ensure that we can reach the most vulnerable victims whose needs are not being met. For the first time, it guarantees that all victims can receive needed services, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. This law strengthens protections for vulnerable immigrant victims. It en-

sure that colleges and universities will do more to protect students from domestic and sexual violence. This reauthorization also takes important new steps to combat the appalling epidemic of domestic violence on tribal lands and to ensure that no perpetrators of this terrible crime are above the law.

The bill that the President will sign also includes the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, which continues and strengthens effective programs to help us take on the scourge of human trafficking. It is unacceptable that 150 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, the evils of sex trafficking and labor trafficking, forms of modern day slavery, still exist around the world and even in the United States. It has been too difficult, but I am glad that Congress is finally acting once again to address trafficking.

I will never forget going as a young prosecutor to crime scenes at 2:00 in the morning and seeing the victims of these awful crimes. As we worked on this bill, I heard the moving stories in hearings and rallies and meetings of those who survived true horrors and had the courage to share their stories in the hopes that others could be spared what they went through. We have finally come together to honor their courage and take the action they demanded.

I thank the many Senators and Representatives of both parties who have helped to lead this fight, and the leadership of both Houses who have prioritized moving this vital legislation. I thank Representative COLE for his steadfast dedication to help preserve the protections for Native women. But most of all, I thank the tireless victims, advocates, and service providers who have given so much of themselves to ensure that this legislation would pass and that, when it did, it would make a real difference. Lives will be better because of their work and because of this law.

I yield the floor and thank my colleagues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

Mr. TOOMEY. Madam President, I rise to address the issue of the sequestration and the Democratic and Republican alternatives. But I want to start by expressing how disappointed I am that we are having the debate in this fashion. This is certainly among the very most important issues we are grappling with—should be grappling with as a Senate, as a Congress, as a Federal Government. Getting ourselves on a sustainable fiscal path is as important as anything we can be doing. The sequestration is an important part of that, and unfortunately the majority party here does not want to have a full and open debate and will not permit multiple amendments from both sides.

I don't know how many ideas there are on the Democratic side. I know

there are at least three or four or five different ideas on the Republican side. Frankly, I think any sensible approach to this ought to have a full and open, robust debate and I am happy to vote on every one of them. I will vote against some, I will probably vote for others. But why in the world would we say there can only be two choices, one Democratic choice and one Republican choice? I have to say I am extremely disappointed that we have gotten to this point where we cannot have an open debate and amendments on a wide range of ideas, because the challenges require that kind of response. It is very disappointing that the majority party refuses to conduct that debate and appears unwilling to have those votes.

Nevertheless, I have developed a bill, together with Senator INHOFE, which I think is a much more sensible way to achieve the savings we badly need. I will say unequivocally, we need to trim spending. We cannot continue spending at the rate we have been spending money. We cannot continue trillion dollar deficits. We have a \$16 trillion debt. The massive deficits and the accumulated debt are today costing us jobs and holding back our economy, so we need to begin the process of getting spending under control. Frankly, the sequester barely starts that process.

The President has been campaigning around the country, spreading this idea that somehow we are going to have a complete economic disaster and meltdown if this modest spending discipline goes ahead. We keep hearing about austerity. The question is, what austerity? Let me put a little context into what we are talking about here.

First of all, over the last 12 years, the Federal Government has doubled in size. We spend 100 percent more now than we did a dozen years ago. After this huge run-up in the size of Federal spending, this sequester—if it goes into effect or its equivalent—would reduce spending by 2.3 percent. After growing by 100 percent, we cannot find 2.3 percent? By the way, that is budget authority, which means permission to spend the actual amount that would be spent during this year would go down by about 1.2 percent. That is less than one-half of 1 percent of our economy.

Here is the other thing. This is how much austerity we are talking about: If the savings of the sequester go into effect, total spending by the government in 2013 will be greater than spending was in 2012. So let's just be clear about what is going on here. This is not nearly the amount of savings we need. This is merely one step in the right direction. While government has been growing, the economy has not. We have had all of this spending growth. We have had massive deficits. What have we gotten in return? The worst economic recovery from any recession since the Great Depression.

We have an unemployment rate that is persistently unacceptably high. Eight percent is the official measure of unemployment, but when we take into

account the people who have given up looking for work altogether, it is much higher than that. The fact is economic growth doesn't depend on a bloated government that is always growing.

In fact, we will have stronger economic growth as soon as we begin to demonstrate that we can get on a sustainable fiscal path, as soon as we can start to take the threat of a fiscal collapse off the table by showing we can get spending under control. It is absolutely essential for the sake of our economy and job growth that we achieve the savings of this sequester.

I am the first to acknowledge there are a couple of problems with the way this legislation goes about it, and that is the reason I introduced this legislation along with Senator INHOFE. The two big problems are, first, the savings hit our defense budget disproportionately. The defense budget is about 18 percent of total spending, but it is half of this whole sequester, and that is after we have already cut defense spending. I am very sympathetic to the concern that this imposes a real problem on our defense budget.

The second problem is that the cuts are not very thoughtfully designed. There is no discretion or flexibility. The categories that are subject to the sequestration are spending cuts across the board. There are huge categories that are not subjected, such as the entire Social Security Program and many others that are not affected at all. But for those programs that are cut, there is no ability to discern which programs ought to be cut more or which ones ought to be cut less and which ones, perhaps, should not be cut at all.

The bill Senator INHOFE and I have introduced and will be voting on today—at least the cloture motion—addresses both of these problems. It does require that we achieve the savings of the sequester—and that is very important—but it would allow the President flexibility in how it is achieved so we don't have these very ham-handed, poorly designed, across-the-board cuts.

If the bill passes, the President will be able to go to his service chiefs on the defense side, he could go to his agency and department heads on the nondefense side and say: OK. Look, you have been used to budgets that keep growing and growing, and that is what has been happening. This year you are going to have to cut back a little bit. It will be a few pennies of every dollar. Look for the programs that are working least well or not at all. Look for areas where there is waste and inefficiency. Look for redundancies, and that is where we are going to trim a little bit, and we will hit these goals.

That is what competent managers in any business would do. That is what families have to do, and that is what State and local governments have to do. That is what we need to do here, and that is what this bill would enable the President to do. He would have to find the areas where we can make the cuts without causing great disruption.

This is not a blank check for the President. There are constraints on what the President could do under the legislation that Senator INHOFE and I are proposing. For instance, there could be no tax hike. We don't think we need still more tax increases after all the ones we have recently been through. The defense cuts could not be any greater than what is contemplated in the current sequestration. Under Senator INHOFE's approach and mine, they could be less. The President could choose to follow the advice of his senior military advisers and cut the defense budget a little bit less and shift this elsewhere.

I am one who believes our defense budget should not be exempt from scrutiny, from spending discipline, and some cuts, but I think they ought to be done carefully and thoughtfully.

The President would not be able to increase any amounts. This is not an exercise in just shifting money to another account. It is a question of where we can do the cuts most thoughtfully and sensibly. Any cuts in the defense budget would have to be consistent with the National Defense Authorization Act that has been passed. The President would have to achieve 100 percent of the savings; that is part of this. He could not use any gimmicks to do it. There would be no phony cuts in the future offset by promises for cuts at another time. There would be none of that. It would have to be straightforward and honest.

Finally—and I think this is an important part—Congress would have a final say. When the President—under this approach if it were to pass and be signed into law—would be required to propose an alternative series of cuts, and then Congress could vote to disapprove them if Congress chose to do that. Ultimately, Congress would still control that important element of the purse strings, but we would allow the President to find the most sensible way to do this.

The President is saying he does not want this flexibility. That is kind of unbelievable to me. He is going around the country scaring the American people and threatening all kinds of disastrous things he says he will have to do. Then in the same breath he says: By the way, don't give me the flexibility to do something else. I don't understand that. It seems to me the obvious thing to do is to do these cuts in a way that would not be disruptive and would not do harm.

Let me give one particular example: A good example is the FAA. If the sequester goes into effect on the FAA, the budget there will be cut by \$670 million. That is from a total of just about \$17 billion.

The President and the Transportation Secretary have said if the sequester goes into effect, they are going to lay off air traffic controllers; they might have to shut down control towers; we will have long delays at airports with flights being canceled. All

kinds of problems. It is interesting to note, if the sequester goes into effect, the amount of funding available to the FAA will still be more than what the President asked for in his budget.

In his budget request was the President planning on laying off air traffic controllers and shutting down airports and control towers? I rather doubt it. So if we gave the President the flexibility just within the FAA budget, the President could adopt the kinds of savings that he proposed in his own budget and have enough money to pay all of the air traffic controllers and keep the airports running. The point is even within the FAA's budget, there would be no service disruptions whatsoever. They are not necessary.

Our bill would give the President even more flexibility. He would be able to achieve savings in other areas. In other words, he would not have to hit a particular savings number for the FAA. He might find savings in other places. Let me suggest we have an unbelievably lengthy list of opportunities to reduce excessive and wasteful government spending. Instead of closing down air traffic control facilities or military bases or FBI offices, maybe what the President could do is cut back on Federal employee travel.

We spend \$1 billion a year for Federal employees to go on conferences and trips. Maybe we could cut back on the cell phone subsidies where we buy cell phones for people, costing \$1.5 billion a year. We spend millions of dollars on an old-fashioned style trolley in St. Louis, millions on a sports diplomacy exchange program. We have 14,000 vacant and underutilized properties. We spend money for a cowboy poetry festival and \$1 million for taste-testing foods to be served on Mars.

I don't know about anybody else, but I think some of these are a little less important than keeping our air control system intact and safe. To me, it seems like common sense that we ought to give the President the discretion he needs to reduce the spending on the less vital things and continue to fund the important things.

We don't have to only go after wasteful spending, we have an unbelievable number of redundancy in duplicate programs. I have just a few examples. We have 80 different economic development programs spread across the Federal Government. We have 94 different programs to encourage the construction of green buildings. We have 47 different job training programs.

Doesn't it make sense if we are going to have some savings that we look to those programs that are not working so well? It cannot be that every program is equal. I guarantee that some of them are not working so well. I would like to think that the administration has metrics for performance and it knows which ones are performing better and which ones are not. We could concentrate the cuts on those that are not working or we could decide to consolidate this huge plethora of programs

and save a lot of money and overhead in administrative and bureaucracy costs.

There is just any number of ways to achieve savings. Senator TOM COBURN has made an enormous contribution to our Federal Government by providing exhaustive litanies of duplication, redundancies, waste, and excesses. In addition to what I have mentioned, that would be a very useful place to begin in terms of finding alternatives.

I would simply say we have a simple choice here. This sequester is going into effect. Nobody here suggests they have the votes or they have a way to prevent it. So the question is, Are we going to achieve these savings through badly designed spending cuts that make no attempt whatsoever to distinguish between more sensible government spending and less sensible government spending or will we adopt this bill that Senator INHOFE and I have introduced which will give the President the flexibility to cut where the cuts would not be painful, where there is waste, and where there are excesses? We are talking about what will amount in actual outlays to a little over 1 percent of the total government spending. This is a government that has doubled in size in the last 12 years.

The people in Pennsylvania who I represent don't believe that every dollar of government spending is spent wisely and prudently and is necessary. They know that there is a lot of waste.

This is all about the next 6 months. As we know, the \$1.2 trillion in savings in subsequent years is achieved by statutory spending caps. In those years the savings will be figured out by the Appropriations Committee, which is where this should be happening. I wish we had taken up an appropriations bill over this last year, but we didn't. At least given the reality that we face, we have an opportunity to avoid the kind of calamity and disaster that is being threatened and is completely unnecessary.

I hope we will do the commonsense thing and adopt a bill that will give the President the flexibility he needs to make these cuts in a rational and sensible fashion. We need to achieve the savings for the sake of economic growth and job creation. This is no time to trade higher taxes for more spending, as my Democratic colleagues would prefer. This is a time to make sensible cuts in spending. We can do that, and I urge adoption of the measure that Senator INHOFE and I have proposed.

I yield back the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, in the last 2 weeks we have learned more and more what the across-the-board cuts for sequestration really mean for our families and our communities that we all represent. We have heard of workers who are on pins and needles about getting a layoff notice. We have heard from businesses that are expect-

ing fewer customers. We heard from school superintendents wondering how they are going to absorb deeper cuts on the budgets that are already extremely tight.

After 2 years of watching our economy lurch from crisis to crisis, I think we can all agree the American people have dealt with more than enough of this. That is why I am here today urging our colleagues to support the American Family Economic Protection Act which will replace the automatic cuts from sequestration in a responsible and a fair way.

Our legislation builds on the precedent that was set in the year-end deal, and it is in line with the balanced approach that the American people favor. It would replace the first year of the sequestration with equal amounts of responsible spending cuts and revenue from the wealthiest Americans and biggest corporations. Half of the deficit reduction would come from responsible cuts evenly divided between domestic and defense spending.

As the drawdown from Afghanistan is completed, our bill will make targeted reductions in an overall defense budget which will be phased in responsibly as the drawdown from Afghanistan is completed and are in line with the strong military strategy for the 21st century.

Our bill would eliminate the direct payments to farmers that have been paid out even during good times for crops that are not grown. Those are the kinds of cuts we can and should make, because responsibly tackling our debt and deficit is crucial to our country's long-term strength and prosperity.

But to do this in a way that puts American families and our economy first, we are all going to have to do our fair share, and middle-class families and seniors and the most vulnerable Americans shouldn't be asked to share the whole burden alone.

Our bill would replace half the sequestration with new revenues from the wealthiest Americans and biggest corporations. It calls on the wealthiest Americans to pay at least the same marginal tax rate on their income as our middle-class families pay. It will help reduce the deficit by eliminating a tax break that encourages companies to ship jobs overseas and by getting rid of a special tax loophole for oil companies. At a time when there are so many American families struggling just to get their kids off to college or to pay their mortgage or to put food on the table, it only seems fair to ask those who can afford it the most to contribute to this national challenge as well.

My Republican colleagues will say the year-end deal closed the door on revenue. Most of them seem to think that closing loopholes for the richest Americans is too high a price to pay—even to replace the serious cuts to defense that are going into effect. Instead, they say all we need is more spending cuts.

But that is not how the American people see it. More than a month after the year-end deal, 76 percent of Americans—and, by the way, 56 percent of Republicans—favored a combination of spending cuts and revenue increases to reduce our deficit.

We also know the American people want an end to the cycle of looming deadlines and uncertainty and political posturing we are seeing here in Washington, DC. They have spent enough time wondering if infighting in Congress will affect their paycheck or the businesses they have worked hard to rebuild or the future they want for their children. I think we can all agree our constituents deserve a solution and some certainty.

So our legislation meets Republicans halfway. It reflects the balanced approach the majority of the American public wants. It protects families and communities we represent from slower economic growth and fewer jobs and a weakened national defense. And it allows us to move past this sequestration debate toward a fair, comprehensive budget deal that provides certainty for American families and businesses.

While the Democrats have taken a balanced and responsible approach in our sequestration replacement bill, Republicans have gone in a very different direction. They seem to be more focused today on trying to make sure President Obama gets the blame for these cuts than actually trying to stop them. We have all been hearing from our constituents. They want us to come together to solve this problem. They want to see compromise. They want to see a balanced replacement. But the Republican Inhofe-Toomey bill fails to meet these expectations. It does not solve the problem. It doesn't stop sequestration. It is not a compromise. I urge all of our colleagues to oppose it.

The Republican Inhofe-Toomey bill would keep in place the massive cuts to both domestic and defense spending. It wouldn't replace them; it would lock them in. Instead of making the tough decisions required to replace those cuts with responsible deficit reduction the way our bill does, the Republican bill simply hands the problem off to the President. Instead of taking a balanced approach—the approach that is favored by the vast majority of the American people—the Republican bill would protect the wealthiest Americans and biggest corporations from paying even a penny more in taxes to help us solve this, while pushing the entire burden of deficit reduction onto the backs of our families and our communities and national defense programs. Their bill would protect defense spending from cuts, open up nondefense spending to more cuts, and specifically prohibit raising revenue to replace the cuts.

One of my Republican colleagues who is very concerned about the cuts to defense spending that would be locked in by this Republican bill called this approach “a complete cop-out.” That

same Republican said if something such as this were to pass, Republicans would be forcing President Obama to make impossible choices and then “every decision he’ll make, we’ll criticize.”

Another Republican opposed this approach as well, saying, “I believe the appropriations process belongs in the legislative branch.” That is us.

The Republican bill will be devastating to our economy. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that sequestration would cause 750,000 workers to lose their jobs by the end of this year. They estimate the economy would shrink by six-tenths of a percent by the end of the year. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke said on Tuesday that rearranging these cuts would not have any substantial impact on the near-term economic picture.

Republicans have spent months talking about how they would not raise taxes on the rich and that we need a cut-only approach. But now they can’t even agree on a bill that names a single cut. They want the President to do it. Leader REID and Leader MCCONNELL agreed to have these votes we are having today over 2 weeks ago, and it took the Republicans until last night to decide what they were even going to bring to the table. After all that time, they decided to play political games and not make any of the tough choices.

Tackling our debt and deficit responsibly is a serious issue, so I hope Republicans get serious. I hope they will listen to their constituents, come back to the table, and work with us on a responsible replacement to these automatic cuts that are scheduled to begin tomorrow.

I urge my colleagues to support our approach, the American Family Economic Protection Act, and to oppose the Toomey-Inhofe bill.

VAWA

Before I yield the floor, I wish to say that I am very pleased the House of Representatives just took up and passed the long delayed, very hard-won, and badly needed victory for millions of women in this country, the Violence Against Women Act that was just passed. That means that after over 16 months of struggle, tribal women in this country, the LGBT community, immigrants, and women on colleges campuses will now have the tools and resources this life-saving bill provides.

The passage of VAWA today is validation of what we all have been saying on this side, and I am proud of the Senate for its bipartisan work. I see Senator CRAPO here today, and I thank him for his leadership on this critical issue.

I have heard from so many women throughout this months-long battle, and I especially want to mention one woman today: Deborah Parker, a member of the Tulalip Tribe from my home State who happened to be here the day many months ago when Congress wanted to dump the tribal provisions in order to move the bill. She stood up

with all the courage she could muster and told the story she had never told before about the abuse she had suffered while she was a very young girl and watching the same person who abused her abuse other tribal members because she had nowhere to go for recourse.

Today, that changes, for Deborah Parker and for thousands and thousands of other tribal members and other women and men in this country. I am very proud of the bipartisan work and I am very excited that this President is going to sign this bill into law and pass something that is going to make a difference in the lives of many Americans.

Thank you, Madam President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Madam President, as I look at my watch, the clock is ticking toward midnight. Midnight becomes March 1, and that is the point at which the sequester kicks in, which is the across-the-board cuts—hardly massive when this year it will be about 1.2 percent of our total outlays this year. So, I am not sure how the word “massive” can be used with any credibility; but, nevertheless, this is going to happen.

Republicans have proposed a way to address the President’s concerns—the very concerns that have been stated on this floor—including the concern that across-the-board cuts is no way to govern because it doesn’t separate the essential from the nonessential. I think we as Republicans couldn’t agree more. It is not the best way to govern, because it treats everything on an equal basis and basically says that every Federal program, no matter what its performance over the years, doesn’t deserve a look at how to adjust it for its lack or strength of performance. It doesn’t separate what the essential functions of the Federal Government are from the “this is what we would like to do but can’t afford to do right now.” So, to say that this government and the out-of-control spending that has occurred over these last several years is totally functional and that every penny we have spent is wisely spent and has been done in the interests of the taxpayer and protecting their hard-earned dollars, and that the money we are extracting from them through ever-increasing taxes—some of which happened less than 2 months ago on every American; every American’s paycheck was reduced. It is not just the millionaires and billionaires who took the hit, because \$620 billion over 10 years of money comes out of Americans’ paychecks. So, for someone to say that what we are doing is massive when this year it amounts to a 1.2-percent cut in total spending, when virtually every business in America, every family in America has had to tighten its belt, given the recession and the slow economic growth, when we continue to have 23 million unemployed or underemployed people in this country,

and then to simply say we don’t have a spending problem, as the President famously said, defies common sense.

We don’t need fancy explanations or fancy words such as “sequester” for the American people to understand what is happening here. They see their States having to tighten their belt. They see the companies they work for having to tighten their belt. And, as families, they see themselves having to cut back on some of their spending or some of their future plans because they no longer can afford to do it. The only entity they see in the United States not addressing a fiscal imbalance is the U.S. Government.

In an attempt to deal with this a year and a half ago, Congress passed the so-called sequester. The sequester was a fallback in case we weren’t able to come to grips with the problem we have and reach an accommodation, an agreement, on how to address it in the best way possible. This was the fail-safe. And all the attempts, starting with the President’s own commission, which he rejected, and then the Gang of Six proposals, and then the supercommittee of 12, all of the efforts, many of them on a bipartisan basis, for whatever reason did not succeed. So, what was put in place to drive a solution, didn’t drive a solution, and as a result, here we are with a sequester. But, to say the sequester cutting, this year, 1.2 percent from total spending, is going to make the sky fall and cause a total economic meltdown and keep people from getting on their planes and keep us from ordering meat because meat inspectors can’t go to the meat processing plants to certify the quality of the meat, and all of the things the President is out campaigning for, for his own program—it was the President’s idea. Maybe it was his staff, but he certainly had to agree to it. It was proposed by the President and now he is out campaigning against it. In fact, it wasn’t that long ago when he said if it didn’t go into effect, he would veto it. So there has been a real change here, and I won’t go into the motivation for all of that.

There is also talk about balance. Balance is a code word for new taxes and for more taxes. It has been said over the past couple of years, during the campaign and leading all the way up to the fiscal cliff vote, that Republicans would refuse to give in on any kind of tax increase, even if it was on millionaires and billionaires. In the end the President won that battle and Republicans supported it. Even though we did not believe that was the best way to go forward to get our economy to grow and to provide the kind of economic growth we are all looking for, we supported that. Now, we here we are just two months later with the same tired phrase that Republicans won’t take 1 penny from the rich when they just took \$620 billion from the rich; therefore, what we need are more taxes on the American people to achieve balance.

It seems the White House has an obsession with solving this problem through increasing taxes and not wanting to make the hard decisions to cut even 1.2 percent of our total budget—2.4 in succeeding years. To say we cannot, through our oversight responsibility, find 2.4 percent, and this year 1.2 percent, of waste, of corruption, of misuse of programs that no longer are viable—maybe they were well-intended in the past but they certainly have not proven themselves worthy of asking taxpayers to keep sending their hard-earned money to Washington in order to cover that spending—when Senator COBURN, Senator TOOMEY, when many of us—I have been standing here every day in virtually every session basically saying, just through waste and ineffective programs we can easily come up with this amount of money. Everyone else in America has had to do it. Why can't we?

The charge we have heard over and over is that this is such a terrible way to address it that we need the flexibility so these agencies can move the money around and take the money from the nonessential programs to keep the security at the airports with the FAA and the air traffic controllers and also keep the meat inspectors and the others who are essential.

In order to keep them from having to take the hit, we came up with the idea—Senator TOOMEY and Senator INHOFE—that gives the executive branch the flexibility. That is what they have been asking for all these years. If we have to have the sequester, just do not do it across the board because it forces us to do things we do not want to do. But if we had the flexibility—if you could give us the flexibility—then we could move the money within the accounts and we would still reach the same amount of cuts—the 1.2 percent of this year's budget—but we would have the flexibility to not have to scare people or keep people waiting in lines at airports for 4 hours and do all the things, all the doomsday scenarios that have been proposed by the President and his Cabinet members.

We bring that forward and then suddenly there is a 180-degree reversal on the other side, which basically says: No, no, no. We do not want flexibility. That is not the way to do it. Well, what do you want? Yesterday you wanted flexibility. Today we gave it to you, and today you are saying: No, we do not want that. It sounds like what they want is only a solution to this problem if there is a big increase in taxes.

This word "balance," which I say, is a code word for taxes. I just came from the Joint Economic Committee where a very respected economist, Michael Boskin, said: Balance is not 50-50 if you want economic growth because every dollar you raise in taxes is a hindrance to economic growth. He said: I am not saying there should not be increases in taxes. But the ratio should be "5 or 6 to 1." If you want to position this country for growth, you need about five to six

times the amount of spending cuts as taxes increased.

So balance—50-50—according to a very respected economist and many others—I do not know of anybody who said raising taxes encourages growth because it takes money out of the private sector and gives it to the public sector. But rather than get into that argument today, what the President defines as balance is simply evermore taxes to solve our problem, when we know that after 4 years of effort here that has not worked, and it will not work.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, will the Senator from Indiana yield for a unanimous consent request? I will yield the floor right back.

Mr. COATS. I am happy to do that. The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the motion to proceed currently pending, at 2:30 p.m. the Senate resume the motion to proceed to S. 16 and the Senate proceed to the cloture votes on the motions to proceed as provided under the previous order, with the time until 2:30 p.m. equally divided between the two leaders or their designees; further, all other provisions of the previous order remain in effect.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague for yielding.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I am going to wrap up because my colleagues want to speak also.

But, let me say this: I have been saying from this platform, and I have been saying from everywhere people will listen that we need to move to a solution to the problem. The solution to the problem involves, I believe, three or four essential elements, and I think there is widespread consensus on this among liberals, conservatives, Democrats, Republicans, economists, and others. Unless we address that which is growing out of control—which is our mandatory spending—no matter what we do on the spending level and no matter what else we do, we are not going to solve this problem and we are going to keep careening from short-term fix, short-term measure to the next one, from fiscal cliff to fiscal cliff.

Already, we have another cliff which people have not paid much attention to at the end of this month, where we have to fund the government for the rest of the year. That will be another drama, soap opera, played out before the American people. In May, we hit the debt limit.

None of this is necessary. None of this had to happen if we had taken the steps we knew we needed to take that were presented in the Simpson-Bowles presentation to the President years ago and, unfortunately, rejected that and basically said we are headed for catastrophe, we are headed for insolvency because this mandatory spending is growing out of control and the amount

of discretionary spending we have which we can control is ever shrinking.

Yes, we need to sort out the fat, the duplication. My colleagues and I have been laying out things that I do think any American who looks at it carefully would say: Of course we do not need that, of course that is not an essential function of the Federal Government. It has had a miserable performance as a program. Why do we keep throwing money at it, particularly at a time of austerity when so many people are out of work.

Yes, we need to do that. But that needs to be coupled with what I think there is almost full agreement on: The need for comprehensive tax reform. That is where closing the loopholes, which Republicans are willing to do in order to lower the rates, to make us more competitive and make our Tax Code much simpler and much fairer—that needs to happen. Of course, it cannot happen if we take closing loophole money and use it for spending, which is what the President wants to do instead of using it to make our code simpler, fairer, and make us more competitive around the world and to promote growth.

That is a proven process. Unless we put that together with some regulatory reform—but most important of all and most essential of all is to address the runaway mandatory spending, which if not addressed will undermine the sanctity and the solvency of entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare. The trustees—do not trust a Republican conservative saying this—the trustees of the programs have said: "You have to deal with this, and the longer you put it off, the tougher it is and the more painful it will be."

This morning, again, Dr. Boskin and even Dr. Goolsbee—the President's former Economic Council head—said you have to do this, you have to take it on. You are taking it on to, one, save the programs, two, save the country from bankruptcy, and, three, give us the opportunity to have funds to pay for the essential functions of government.

We are not against government. We want it to be leaner, more efficient, more effective. My State has taken measures that quintuple what is being talked about here. We ended up achieving a surplus. We have a AAA bond rating. We have made our State government the most efficient, effective government with taxpayer dollars of any State in the country.

It can be done, and it can be done here. But what we have that is different from what our States have is the fact that mandatory spending—that spending which we have no control over—is eating our lunch. Until we step up and deal with it, we are not going to solve this problem; we are going to keep careening from crisis to crisis.

The real issue is—at this point, with the sequester going in place—can we step up and sensibly adjust it through flexibility in terms of how we reach

that goal? Can we summon the will and the political courage to do what we all, I believe, know we need to do; that is, simply to do what is right for the future of America—America's interests not our own political interests?

Finally, in my opinion, that cannot be done, despite all the time, all the efforts made, many on a bipartisan basis—Simpson-Bowles was bipartisan, the Gang of 6 was bipartisan, the Committee of 12 was bipartisan. It is not true we are at a standoff in terms of how to go forward. What we have not had is leadership from the White House. Something of this magnitude cannot be done without Presidential leadership, and the President has refused to do anything other than plead on a campaign basis for yet evermore taxes, which he calls balance.

So that is our challenge.

We need you, Mr. President, to lead the way. We will work together with you in putting together a package which achieves the right ratio. We will work together to do what is right for the future of America and not what is right for our political future this year or next.

I guess we are pleading with the President. Similar to Presidents of the past—Ronald Reagan, a Republican, and Bill Clinton, a Democrat, took on the toughest issues and together we worked for the benefit of our people and for the future of this country and we made enormous strides in that regard. But it would not have happened had the President not become engaged. At this point, the only engagement the President has made is to call for higher taxes and go out and campaign against those of us who are trying to sincerely address this problem.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to applaud the passage by the House, just a little while ago, of the Violence Against Women Act.

I wish to also congratulate my colleagues, Senator LEAHY, my neighbor from Vermont, and Senator CRAPO, who is on the floor today, for their leadership in getting this legislation passed so early in this session and for helping to see that it got shepherded through the House where it had been so challenging.

This is legislation that treats all victims equally regardless of whether they are Native Americans, whether they are members of the LGBT community, whether they are immigrants. It supports law enforcement by providing critical funding for police officers and prosecutors so they can hold abusers responsible. It supports crisis centers for women and families, to provide for immediate needs such as shelter and counseling.

On behalf of the thousands of women and families in New Hampshire who will benefit because of this reauthor-

ization, I wish to thank all the 268 Members of the House who voted for it and all the people in the Senate where it had such a broad bipartisan majority.

Again, I thank my colleagues, Senators LEAHY and CRAPO, for the leadership they provided in getting this done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I too want to stand to congratulate the House for their passage of the Violence Against Women Act. I thank the Senator from New Hampshire for her kind remarks.

I am honored to have worked on this bill with Senator LEAHY and my other colleagues in the Senate. Senator LEAHY and I have worked together for years on issues of domestic violence and stalking, and this is one of the key endeavors we needed to get across the finish line. Now we see that we will, and we will send this important legislation to the President.

I would also like to commend the advocates across the Nation and specifically the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence who have worked tirelessly on this issue.

As a longtime champion of the prevention of domestic violence, I am glad to see there are areas in Congress where we can come together to support these important causes.

This act provides critical services to victims of violent crime as well as agencies and organizations that provide important aid to those individuals. For nearly two decades, the Violence Against Women Act has been the centerpiece of our Nation's commitment to ending domestic violence, dating violence, and sexual violence. This legislation provides access to legal and social services for survivors. It provides training to law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, attorneys, and advocates to address these crimes in our Nation's communities. It provides intervention for those who have witnessed abuse and are more likely to be involved in this type of violence. It provides shelter and resources for victims who have nowhere else to turn.

There is significant evidence that these programs are working not just in Idaho but nationwide. The U.S. Department of Justice reported that the number of women killed by an intimate partner decreased by 35 percent between 1993 and 2008. In 2012 it was reported that in 1 day alone, 688 women and their children impacted by violence sought safety in an emergency shelter or received counseling, legal advocacy, and children's support.

These important provisions are making a difference in the lives of people across this Nation. I again wish to commend all of my colleagues who supported this legislation and helped to move this critical piece of legislation to the President's desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the vote we are going to

have today at 2:30 regarding sequestration, and I wish to strongly support the notion of giving the executive branch the flexibility it needs over the next 7 months to work through this situation in a more graceful way.

To put this in perspective for the American people, we are going to spend \$47 trillion of your money over this next decade. It was incumbent upon a bipartisan group about a year ago to try to come up with about \$1.2 trillion in savings over that 10-year period. Believe it or not, that didn't happen. The sequestration was a method to ensure that at least there was some reduction in the growth of spending. I do want to say that there have been a lot of discussions about reductions in spending.

The overall effect of sequester over this 10-year period is not to reduce any spending but to slow the growth of spending over the next 10 years. We are one of the few entities in the world that don't budget off of last year's spending. It is not like your city, your county, your State government, your household, or your business. We budget off of projections and growth.

The task a year or so ago was for six Republicans and six Democrats to come up with \$1.2 trillion. It is beyond belief that this did not occur. The sequester was put in place as a mechanism to ensure that there at least was some slowing of growth. The first 7 months of the sequester is the most ham-handed portion of it. It is cut at the PPA level. It is across the board and focused on two important categories. I agree that it is ham-handed, and the only thing worse than sequestration, in my opinion, would be kicking the can down the road on some much needed fiscal discipline here in Washington.

I hope what we will do today is get behind a very thoughtful proposal that would say: Look, we are still going to reduce spending by this amount, but we are going to give the executive branch, because this first 7 months is handled so differently that what happens after that—by the way, appropriators live within a top-line number, but they are able to weigh in on how that money should be spent, again, in two more specific categories than just the overall budget. So it is just this first 7 months.

I was at home last week in Tennessee and spoke with diverse groups of citizens.

Democrats thanked me for being willing to give some flexibility to the President to work through this.

Businesses obviously held this as incredibly intelligent. They need to deal with these kinds of issues right now. Many of them over the last several years have had to do the same kind of thing. Obviously, to them, it is very intelligent to give the executive branch a degree of flexibility where they have some transfer authority to work through this in a more graceful way.

Republicans thanked me because it was a way for us to at least begin turning the curve in a different direction

and certainly still having the cuts that are necessary in growth, I might add, not in real spending. That is where we are.

We have a proposal, the Toomey-Inhofe proposal, which gives the executive branch the flexibility to work through this. It is my understanding they don't want that flexibility. I can't imagine being President of the United States and having something that I thought was a little bit ham-handed and having Congress say: Look, we will candidly defer to you to make some transfers.

I have spoken with some of the folks in our security apparatus in this Nation. They said this to me: CORKER, look, we understand we are going to have some reductions, but if you would just give us some flexibility, we could work through this gracefully. We could live within these constraints.

Speaking of these constraints, I want to say that there is a number that has been thrown out of \$85 billion over the next 7 months. Again, know that this is Washington's language. We are really only talking about half that in real expected outlays. We have budgeted amounts and then we have outlays. We do things very differently than do most people back home. This is not nearly the amount of reduction people are talking about as far as real money flowing out.

I strongly support the Toomey proposal, the Inhofe proposal. I hope others will join in and at least move to debate this issue. I have a sense that is not going to be the case today. Maybe next week when some things happen, some others will be open to doing this.

I can't imagine why anybody in this body, if they think draconian things are happening in a specific area and some judgment could be used to really alleviate that, I can't imagine why anybody in this body would not want to give administrators of these various agencies the ability to have some degree of transfer authority to make it work better. I don't imagine there is a business in our country, whether it is a one-man shop or a large corporation, that wouldn't want that flexibility. I can't imagine a Democrat or a Republican really thinking it is a bad idea to give the administration the ability to be more graceful in dealing with this.

Today it looks as though we might have a partisan vote. It is a shame.

Again, this is ham-handed. We can make it work better. Hopefully, on March 27, if we continue on this course until that time—obviously, to me, the only thing worse than this ham-handed approach is not enacting the \$1.2 trillion in cuts. This needs to happen, in my opinion.

Maybe on March 27 when the appropriators come forth with a continuing resolution, they will have shifted this around to a degree that we end up with the same amount of spending reductions. This is the way regular order should work here, the way the Senate should work, the way the House should work. It is not that far down the road.

As a matter of fact, I am understanding that if the Appropriations Committee wanted to, they could pass out an omnibus—not a CR but an omnibus—that has already gone through the checks. I think the two staffs have been working; I am talking about at the House and the Senate. It is my understanding that they could pass something out in a week. I think maybe there are going to be some discussions about this later in the majority leader's office. Hopefully, he will give the green light to the chairman of the Appropriations Committee to move ahead with something like this, which would be very sensible, in my opinion. I think most people around here would love to see something actually happen under regular order.

These reductions are necessary, in my opinion, to get our fiscal house in order. Much more needs to be done beyond this \$1.2 trillion—much, much more. I don't think there is anybody who doesn't believe that deficit reduction greater than \$1.2 trillion needs to occur. Right now we are focused on the cuts side. We focused on the income side at the end of the year.

As we move ahead and are able to deal with these issues under regular order, where committees have looked at the impact, this is the best way to go forward.

Again, sequester will kick in tomorrow. I think we all understand that. There is a better approach. There is a bill that would allow the executive branch to have the flexibility it needs to work through this in a way that is least harmful to the American people, and if that doesn't work, another step with a continuing resolution in 3 or 4 weeks—there is another way of hitting this in an intelligent way.

I hope we have the opportunity to work this out in a way that is better for the American people. At the same time, I hope we will not back away at all from at least \$1.2 trillion in spending reductions. I wish we would move later this year into real tax reform, which is really where all the money is.

To the American people, the reason we are moving to sequester and the reason we are cutting discretionary spending is we don't have the courage in the Senate to deal with entitlements. When the word "entitlement" comes up, everybody runs for the hills. They know where the money is—62 percent of our spending, which in 10 years, combined with interest, will be 90 percent of our spending.

The reason we are here today is this body has not come to terms with the fact that we need to reform entitlements for them to be here for future generations and certainly people who are getting ready to retire.

This situation is a shame, and so we are going through this pain again due to a lack of courage in the Senate to address the real issues of the day. That is a shame, and what you are going to see playing out is solely because of that.

I have a bill which would deal with that. LAMAR ALEXANDER, my colleague from Tennessee, is a cosponsor. It was based on Bowles-Simpson, Domenici-Rivlin—bipartisan concepts.

For some reason, when it comes to dealing with the real issues of America, this body runs for the hills. Hopefully, soon we will be brought back together and we will deal with this in a mature way, deal with the real issues our Nation is dealing with, solve them, put it in the rearview mirror, and all of us will come together and focus on those things that would make our country stronger.

I ask unanimous consent that all quorum calls before the votes at 2:30 p.m. today be equally divided.

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

Mr. CORKER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, we have heard a lot of discussions recently about the author Bob Woodward and his comments about spending and the sequester. It is important for us to understand this. This is not an easy matter. We have a lot of confusion, I think, as to what has been happening in the Senate. So from my perspective, as ranking member on the Budget Committee, I wish for all of us to understand the issue that is at stake.

Here is what Bob Woodward said in his Washington Post Op-Ed earlier this week:

So when the President asked that a substitute for the sequester include not just spending cuts but also new revenue, he's moving the goalpost.

And when the President talks of spending cuts, he's referring to some other spending cuts somewhere in the government so that they do not fall so hard on defense, for example.

But Bob Woodward goes on to say—referring to the President's request for a substitute—that was not the deal he made.

So we need to all remember what happened was that in August of 2011, after the American people were aroused and spoke strongly in the 2010 election, the debt ceiling was reached. We couldn't borrow any more money. Since we are borrowing almost 40 cents out of every dollar, it amounted to a 40-percent cut in spending, had we not raised the debt ceiling. So it was important to raise the debt ceiling, but it was also important to do something about the surging debt. So a bipartisan agreement was reached, and the agreement essentially said we will reduce spending \$2.1 trillion, and we will raise the debt ceiling \$2.1 trillion.

The good news, for those who wanted to keep spending, was that we spread

the spending cuts over 10 years. But we have already reached the debt ceiling again. We have already spent \$2 trillion more than we took in. We have to deal with that again very soon.

I would like to say this to my colleagues: That agreement called for no tax increases; it called for a modest reduction in the growth of spending. Instead of going up \$10 trillion, it would go up \$8 trillion. Instead of adding \$9 trillion to the debt of the United States, we would add \$7 trillion to the debt of America by simply constraining the rate of growth in spending. It was not cutting spending. Except the way the sequester part of that agreement was reached, the cuts fell disproportionately on defense and maybe a few other programs. And over 10 years, defense would take a real cut. This isn't war costs. This is a fundamental problem.

What I would say to my colleagues is this: Please don't come in and say, there are loopholes we can close or we can tax the rich more here and we can do this, that, and the other in order to bring in more revenue and to spend more. You see? But we agreed to a new baseline in spending. It passed the House and the Senate and the President signed it into law. He agreed to it. And he was the one who insisted on the sequester, even though he has denied it since. He got that, he and his budget director, Mr. Lew, whom he just promoted to Secretary of the Treasury. So he agreed to that. And closing loopholes is simply a tax increase, of course.

So if we agree at some point to close loopholes, it ought to be part of tax reform and it ought to be part of reducing the deficit, not funding new spending. Because, you see, we have agreed to this new baseline. When the President says don't do the sequester, the sequester amounts to \$1.1 trillion out of the \$2.1 trillion in reduced spending. So he is talking about increasing spending over the amount he just agreed to 19 months ago. He is talking about increasing spending at a time this Nation has never faced a more serious systemic financial debt crisis. And his excuse is that we will close loopholes.

But you see, reducing the amount of new debt we incur over 10 years from \$9 trillion in to \$7 trillion is not enough. The budget commission, experts, everybody knows—ask anyone in this Senate, liberals and conservatives, and I don't think a single one would say that increasing the debt by \$7 trillion over 10 years is good. Our current debt is \$16 trillion. This is not a healthy trend.

We know we can't give away the cuts we just agreed to. What would we tell the American people? We already told them: We know you are unhappy that we are raising the debt ceiling, we know you are mad at us for putting the country in this situation, but we are going to cut spending, trust us. Trust us. And then here we waltz in, less than

2 years later, with the President saying that we cannot cut as much as we promised, as agreed to and signed into law. He says that is too much. He tells us that he is not going to help us find a smarter, more effective way to do the cuts.

I don't think that is good policy. What I urge my colleagues to do, and I believe it is the right thing, is to make the decision—and we have no choice but to make it—that we are not going to give up the little bit of spending cuts we achieved in 2011, which are not spending cuts but a small reduction in growth in spending. We should advise the President that we stand ready—and I am confident I can speak for the Republicans in this Chamber that we stand ready—to try and spread those cuts out in a way that is smarter and is less painful, because everybody should tighten their belt to help get this country on a sound path. We are willing to do that, but we should state we are not willing to allow the President to breach his agreement—as Mr. Woodward said, the deal he made—that he signed, that is in law and that has created a new spending baseline. We should not give up on that 19 months after we agreed to it. What a mockery that makes of the integrity of our government and the commitment to fiscal responsibility.

Let's work together on this. We had a big tax increase in January and a spending agreement in August of 2011. So now let's get on with it and operate in the world we are in. I don't believe we will avoid the sequester by raising taxes and increasing spending over the level to which we agreed. It won't happen. So we might as well get serious and figure out a way to help make this work in a more rational way.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today, as we debate proposals for avoiding the so-called sequester, we find ourselves in a uniquely awkward position. Not only is there general disagreement about what brought us here, who is responsible, who is to blame, et cetera, but we also disagree about where "here" is to begin with.

President Obama has been touring the country giving speeches describing just how bad the sequester will be and why Republicans are to blame for it. This is, of course, par for the course for this President, whose motto seems to be: Why solve a problem when you can campaign on it? You would think, after having won the election, the President would be the first to acknowledge the election is over. But nearly 4 months after election day, the President's campaign road show continues.

The problem with the President's sequestration campaign is that, once again, his claims are at odds with the facts. Everyone in Washington knows that, despite the President's efforts to put the blame on Republicans, the se-

quester was his idea to begin with. The record is clear and it is not in dispute. The idea for the sequester was pitched by the President's then-OMB Director Jack Lew as a negotiating tactic to get Republicans to vote in favor of raising the debt ceiling. Not only did the idea originate in the White House, the President threatened to veto House-passed legislation designed to replace the sequester.

Moreover, in these final weeks leading up to the March 1 deadline, the President spent more time on his national sequestration campaign than he has in sitting down with Republicans to reach an agreement on a replacement package. So if the sequester goes into effect—and at this point it appears it will—the American people should not blame Republicans in Congress, who have been working in earnest to replace it. No, the blame should fall squarely on President Obama, who proposed the idea in the first place and has refused to work on a passable solution.

So that is how we got here. The bigger, more complicated problem is determining where "here" actually is. The President and his allies have spent a lot of time misleading the American people on that as well.

If you describe the sequester using the worst possible numbers, it is an \$85 billion reduction from \$3.5 trillion of yearly Federal outlays—yes, that is \$85 billion out of \$3.500 trillion. When all is said and done, it is a reduction of less than 2.5 percent from overall Federal spending. And, as the Congressional Budget Office has made clear, not all of the \$85 billion in reduction will even take the form of reduced spending this year. Even if it did, keep in mind that \$85 billion would represent less than 9 days of Federal spending, based on the rate of spending last year. Once again, that is if you describe it in the worst possible terms.

For a moment, let's go with those numbers.

The President would have the American people believe that a 2.4-percent reduction in Federal spending out of \$3.6 trillion will cripple our government and irreparably damage our economy, even an economy that the President must have felt was strong enough to absorb a \$600 billion tax hike back on New Year's Day. The ramifications of the 2.4-percent spending reduction are so great, according to the President and his allies here in Congress, that the only alternative is to raise taxes yet again.

I will be the first to admit there are better, more responsible ways to reduce the deficit than the President's indiscriminate sequester. But these scare tactics don't even pass the laugh test. Does the President really expect the American people to believe our government is so fragile it cannot absorb a 2.4-percent spending cut—less than 9 days' worth of Federal spending—without inflicting massive damage on the American people and our economy? Apparently so.

Once again, I am describing the sequester in the worst possible terms just to demonstrate the outlandish nature of the President's arguments. However, when you look at whether the sequester even represents a reduction in spending, you find the claims are even more absurd. In fact, when you look at whether we are cutting spending at all relative to past periods, you can easily see we are not, even with the sequester.

The so-called spending cuts in the sequester are measured against 2010 spending levels. We should all remember that in fiscal year 2010, spending levels were highly elevated as a result of the President's stimulus and other "temporary" spending measures passed in response to the financial crisis and recession. So, in other words, the sequester reduces spending only if you are measuring against an extremely high baseline that was, at that time, supposed to be temporary.

Whether something is an increase or decrease depends on what you are measuring against. If you measure relative to a big number—such as the Democrat-fueled spending of 2010—then proposed spending looks like a cut. But if you look at spending levels relative to more reasonable spending baselines, you will find that future spending will actually be up even with the sequester in place. For example, you will see what post-sequestration spending looks like relative to a more reasonable baseline.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, baseline estimates for post-sequester discretionary budget authority total \$978 billion for fiscal year 2013. The average during the Bush years, in inflation-adjusted fiscal year 2013 dollars, was \$957 billion. Neither of these figures includes spending on wars or emergencies, so this is an apples-to-apples comparison.

In adjusted current dollar terms, post-sequester spending this year will be more than \$20 billion higher than the average during the Bush years. Someone may have to refresh my memory, but I don't believe the government ceased to function during the Bush years. I certainly don't remember hearing anyone express concern about the elimination of basic governmental services. In fact, I don't think anyone remembers the Bush years as being a time of spending restraint here in Washington. Indeed, we have all heard President Obama claim it was the extravagant spending of the Bush administration that, in part, caused our current budget woes. Yet now the President is telling the American people that a return to those spending levels will devastate our country, leaving children hungry and our border unprotected.

Not surprisingly, the President and the Democratic leadership's solution to this problem is more tax hikes, which makes these claims about the impact of sequestration all the more transparent. Indeed, it appears that the President's current campaign on the

sequester is less about reaching an agreement to replace the sequester than it is about satisfying his drive to once again raise Americans' taxes while also serving his desire to vilify Republicans, no matter what the costs to the American people.

I don't want to minimize the negative impact the sequester may have in some areas. I think there are very few of us who would not like to see the President's indiscriminate sequester replaced with more responsible spending reduction alternatives. There are alternatives to the approach we are debating today. But whatever we do, we should do it through regular order.

Today we are yet again debating a bill that has bypassed the relevant committees of jurisdiction. Regular order has become the exception rather than the rule around here, which is extremely frustrating I think to both sides. There are consequences to skipping the established committee process. If legislation does not go through the relevant committee, it is not studied and vetted. It simply shows up out of the majority leader's office before anyone has a chance to even look it over. Bypassing regular order is simply shortsighted. Yes, short-circuiting the committee process prevents Members from having to take tough votes in committee. But taking tough votes to enact legislation is part of being in the Senate—or at least it used to be. These days, no one in the majority has to take a difficult vote. The majority leader has made sure of that.

I have a chart that has the title "Honest Leadership and Open Government." You can see the large letters at the top and the small letters right against the podium Senator REID is at. My friends on the other side of the aisle won the Senate majority in the 2006 elections by campaigning on this theme. Unfortunately, in the 6 years since they have been running things here in the Senate, things have gone exactly the other way. Backroom deals are the rule, regular order is the exception, open government is the casualty, and committees are ignored with aplomb.

I have and will continue to urge my colleagues to support the restoration of regular order here in the Senate because, in the end, it yields better legislative results, and it is a much more fair way to legislate and involves everybody, not just a few people in one office.

Despite the fact that the President and congressional Democrats just got over \$600 billion in tax increases out of the fiscal cliff deal, the Democratic leadership's bill that we are debating today contains even more tax increases.

The Congressional Budget Office wrote earlier this month that over the next 10 years, revenues as a percent of GDP will average 18.9 percent. Over the last 40 years, according to CBO, revenues have averaged 17.9 percent of GDP. So over the next 10 years, Fed-

eral revenues are set to exceed the historical average.

At the same time, government spending, which is projected by CBO to reach about 23 percent of GDP in 2023—an historical average—will be on an upward trajectory and will remain far in excess of the 40-year average of 21 percent. So the problem is not that the American people are undertaxed, it is that Washington is overspending.

Given this basic point, I have filed a motion to commit the Democratic leadership's bill to the Finance Committee to strike all the revenue increases and replace them with spending cuts. And to help further the process, I have prepared a menu of spending cut options to select from. These proposals come from Dr. TOM COBURN's book, "Back in Black: A Deficit Reduction Plan."

During the 2008 campaign, the President promised to find spending cuts by going through the budget, line by line. Dr. COBURN has done what the President promised but failed to do. Today, I am drawing from a small body of Dr. COBURN's hard work.

For instance, instead of the latest incarnation of the Buffett tax, we could, according to "Back in Black," save \$71 billion over 10 years by instituting a 5-year freeze on locality pay adjustments for Federal workers or we could reduce travel budgets of Federal agencies. That would save just over \$43 billion over 10 years.

Another revenue increase in the majority leader's bill that could be replaced with a spending cut is the elimination of what some Democrats have described as a tax break for shipping jobs overseas. Indeed, we have seen this proposal pop up several times over the last few years.

However, as some may recall, the Chief of Staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation wrote a letter to Senator STABENOW and Representative PASCRELL, the authors of a bill to close this so-called loophole, that stated,

Under present law, there are no specific tax credits or disallowances of deductions solely for locating jobs in the United States or overseas.

I previously challenged my colleagues to come and point out to me if they thought that was incorrect. To date, no one has tried to meet that challenge. Yet efforts continue to raise a tax under the guise of closing a loophole where no loophole exists.

One spending cut from Dr. COBURN's book that could be used as a substitute for closing the Democrats' phantom loophole is to reduce the Federal limousine fleet back to the level it was in 2008. According to Dr. COBURN's book, the government owned 238 limousines in 2008. By 2010, that number had grown to 412. What changed in government between 2008 and 2010 that required an increase of over 73 percent in the number of limousines needed to shuttle bureaucrats? If anyone knows, please let the American people know. Going back to the 2008 level of Federal limousines

would save the government \$115.5 billion over 10 years.

There are numerous other places where we can cut spending immediately. Instead of pursuing the Democrats' tax hike strategy or the President's indiscriminate sequester, we should instead sensibly restrain spending through proposals such as these.

I anticipate that some of my friends on the other side will argue we should pursue these spending cuts in addition to passing more tax hikes. My response is that we should be saving all of these revenue raisers for future tax reform efforts.

There is a growing bipartisan consensus here in Congress in favor of comprehensive tax reform. The leaders in both the tax-writing committees are committed to this effort, and I believe we have a real opportunity to accomplish something on tax reform this year. However, if we start closing loopholes and eliminating preferences now in order to raise revenue to avoid the sequester, they won't be there to help us lower marginal tax rates later on when we are working on tax reform, which will make an already difficult process that much harder.

Ultimately, if we follow the path my Democratic colleagues want us to take, we will be raising taxes on the American people while at the same time hampering future tax reform efforts. This is simply not the way to go, particularly when there are perfectly reasonable spending cuts available to replace the President's sequester.

As I said, whatever we do, we ought to do it through regular order. That is why I have filed this motion to commit and why I hope my colleagues will support it.

While I am waiting for someone to represent the majority, because I am going to have a unanimous consent request that I understand will be objected to and I want to protect the majority's right to do that, as much as I don't agree with it. I know there is an agreement in place for consideration of the sequestration bill and I don't want to stand in the way. But at some point we need to have a real bipartisan conversation about a return to regular order. For too long we have been avoiding the committee process here in the Senate and I think the results speak for themselves.

I want to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to find a way to restore the deliberative traditions of the Senate by allowing the committees to do its work. If we can return to regular order, the words "honest leadership and open government" will be more than a campaign slogan. The American people should expect nothing else.

I understand my unanimous consent will be objected to, and so I ask unanimous consent that I be immediately recognized to make this unanimous consent as soon as the distinguished chairman of the Finance Committee arrives.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I thank my friend from Utah for his comments. I think it is important, since we have two votes coming up starting in less than 30 minutes, that we talk a little bit about the background, where we are today and what we are going to be faced with in these votes and what the options are.

Back about 5 weeks ago, when it looked as though sequestration was going to kick in, there was concern. I understand there is a lot of concern on the domestic side and on the defense side, but my concern is mainly on the defense side. I am the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. I am concerned about what has been happening under this administration in the last 4 years, the disarming of America and the devastation that has taken place already. A lot of people do not realize, under this administration we are now projecting cuts already to hit \$487 billion in defense.

If sequestration should come in, it would raise that to \$1 trillion, and \$1 trillion over that period of time is, in fact, devastating. The Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, came out immediately and said: This cannot happen; we cannot adequately defend America if we allow this to take place. He was talking about sequestration.

Sequestration, I think people kind of lose sight of what it is. It is the equal cutting all the way across all of these accounts in order to come up with a savings, which I think is kind of interesting. Here we are talking about all this anguish we are going through right now just for \$1.2 trillion, when you stop and realize in the President's own budget, over 4 years he has a \$5.3 trillion increase. So we are talking about 10 years to come up with \$1.2 trillion when he was accountable for \$5.3 trillion in 4 years. That is not even believable. When I say it back in my State of Oklahoma they shake their heads and think there must be some miscommunication, it cannot be right.

The problem has been, in this administration, over the past 4 years all the cuts have come from the military. They have not come from anywhere else. It is an oversimplification, but you can make the statement that they are cutting—I will yield to my friend from Utah because I understand he has a unanimous consent request. I will be happy to do that, but I ask unanimous consent the floor be returned to me.

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

Mr. HATCH. I thank my colleague for his courtesy. I appreciate it.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that following the two cloture votes today, it be in order for me to make a motion to commit S. 388 to the Finance Committee, the text of which is at the desk, and the Senate proceed immediately to vote on the motion without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Madam President, this Senator was probably not paying enough attention. This is the Senator's motion to recommit?

Mr. HATCH. It is the motion to recommit.

Mr. BAUCUS. Madam President, I respect my Ranking Member's attempt to alter the leader's bill to strike the revenue increases in this legislation.

However, I think time is at a premium and we need to consider the Reid legislation today.

Recommitting the bill to the Finance Committee will delay a solution to the sequestration cuts for weeks, if not months, and I believe most Members believe we should address the issue here and now. There is no time to waste.

We will have a full opportunity to discuss additional deficit reduction ideas in the coming weeks when we consider the budget resolution, the continuing resolution and the extension of the debt limit.

I agree we need to cut our debt and get our fiscal house in order. We know there are places to trim the fat in Federal programs.

To give families and businesses certainty, we must agree on a balanced, comprehensive plan to cut the debt that includes both revenue and spending cuts. The math will not work any other way.

A long-term balanced plan will bridge the budget battles and make real progress solving our deficit problem.

A balanced plan will also encourage businesses to invest, enable investors to return to the markets with confidence, and, most importantly, put Americans back to work in a growing economy.

And I look forward to working with Senator HATCH, taking on these fiscal challenges and crafting policies that create more jobs and spark economic growth.

The only way we will be able to get past these budget battles is by working together—Republicans and Democrats, House and Senate. We need to work together.

However, at this time I object to the motion to recommit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Look, this place is not being run on regular order. The committees are being ignored. The committees are established to be able to intentionally look at these matters

and hear both sides and hear the top experts in the country. I feel very badly that this simple motion has to be objected to. I feel badly because I know neither of the amendments that will be filed, that will be heard or voted on, are going to pass. One reason they will not is because we have not followed the regular order.

Mr. INHOFE. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. HATCH. I am happy to yield.

Mr. INHOFE. I asked unanimous consent I be recognized after the two of you went through this. Can I inquire as to about how much longer it will be? I am the author of the bill that is coming up in just a few minutes.

Mr. BAUCUS. Will the Chair indicate the time remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 22 minutes.

Mr. BAUCUS. Madam President, I ask which side has the 22 minutes?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority.

Mr. BAUCUS. I will be glad to yield time to my friend from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. I appreciate that. It is my understanding, responding to my friend, that the other author of this bill, Senator TOOMEY, wants to be heard for 2 minutes prior to the vote. I would like to be heard for a few minutes of time.

Mr. BAUCUS. At this time?

Mr. INHOFE. Right after his time, yes.

Mr. BAUCUS. I don't fully understand. I am happy to yield 10 minutes to the Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. I appreciate that.

Prior to the time we propounded the unanimous consent request, I was talking about my frustration about what has been happening fiscally in this Senate during the last 4 years and the mere fact that under this administration we have increased deficits by \$5.3 trillion. Now we are trying to come up with something far less than that in a period of 10 years. To me, people look at that and say: What is this all about? But that is not the reason I bring this up.

I bring this up because the amount of money that has come out of the military is actually a reduction. If you look at the increase in the spending in the last 4 years, it has all come out of defense accounts, so it is defense that has taken the hits on this. Government has expanded approximately 30 percent across the board. At the same time our military has been reduced in terms of our budget for defense accounts.

Anyway, when this came up a few weeks ago, I thought it was not going to happen. I thought we were going to have something come up and change this whole idea of having to make these reductions. So what I did at that time was draft a bill. The bill merely said if we are stuck with sequestration, let's allow the chiefs—speaking of the military—to reevaluate everything that is included so they can look and see where we can take cuts and it will not be as devastating.

In fact, I called each one of the five service chiefs and I said: Would it be less devastating if you were able to take the same amount of money out but take it out selectively, out of accounts where it would be not as significant?

They said: Yes, it would.

I said: Would you be able to prepare for this in the next 4 years?

The answer is yes. That is where we are today. They said they are able to do that.

The frustrating fact is this President—I am getting criticized on both sides. People are saying you are giving too much to the President. We are not because we have safeguards in here, which I will explain in a minute. But at the same time, the President comes out and says he will issue a veto threat against this bill. What does this do? It gives flexibility for the President.

I am going to read something. This is a statement that President Obama said on February 19, 2013. He said:

Now, if Congress allows this meat-cleaver approach to take place, it will jeopardize our military readiness; it will eviscerate job-creating investments in education and energy and medical research. It won't consider whether we are cutting some bloated program that has outlived its usefulness, or a vital service that Americans depend on every single day. It doesn't make those distinctions.

He goes on to say that he wants that flexibility. This is the President asking for it on February 19, 2013. Here we come along with a bill that gives him that flexibility with certain restrictions so that he can't pick and choose areas that we find are against the policy that has been set. I will give an example.

We had the National Defense Authorization Act. It was one that took months and months to put together. It took a long time to put together, and we made evaluations, with a limited budget, on what we could do. All this does is say if we have to make some changes from the across-the-board cut, let's make them consistent with the National Defense Authorization Act.

In other words, all those weeks and months of work by the Senate Armed Services Committee and, I might say, the House Armed Services Committee would not be in vain. Those cuts would be consistent with the intent, to make sure the President would do this.

A lot of people say we can't trust the President; he is going to put more cuts in places where it would not be in keeping with what the Senate Armed Services Committee wants. But we have a provision called a congressional disapproval mechanism. That means if the President doesn't do what the intent of this legislation is, then we can go ahead and disapprove it.

We have those two safeguards. One is they have to follow the criteria that is consistent with the Senate Armed Services Committee, the national defense authorization bill, which is the House and the Senate. To be sure we will be able to do that it has the disapproval mechanism.

People do not realize the costs of this. If you take the same amount of money that we are talking about in sequestration and allow the service chiefs to massage this and make changes, give them flexibility to go after programs that are not as significant as some that might otherwise be cut—the bill allows the President to listen to the advice of his military leadership and offset some of the devastating impacts of sequestration. If the sequester is allowed to take place and the congressional resolution is not fixed, the Department of Defense stands to waste billions of dollars through the cancellation of contracts.

People don't think about this. We make commitments backed by the United States of America that we are going to do certain things. A lot of these are contracts such that if they are terminated it could cost quite a bit of money.

The termination of multiyear contracts is something that we would be concerned about. Providing the Department of Defense flexibility to determine how these cuts will be implemented will let us take this into consideration.

At this point, I ask the Senator from Pennsylvania how much time he would like for his concluding remarks.

Mr. TOOMEY. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Oklahoma. I will only ask for a minute or two to make my closing comments.

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

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I appreciate that very much. He has been a great partner. I have given a background of what went on 5 weeks ago and our discussions with the service chiefs. I was hoping this day would not come and that we would not be faced with the continued devastation of our military, but the time is here. Tomorrow is the 1st of the month.

The Senator from Pennsylvania and I have come up with a bill that will be voted on, and it will minimize the damage and still preserve the cuts that are mandated and are out there.

One of the problems we have not talked about is the continuing resolution. When I was talking to the different service chiefs, one was General Odierno, who is in the Army. He said that just as devastating as how the CR is set up, this corrects that problem at the same time. We have something that is not going to cost any more money. Believe me, a lot of my closest friends—for instance, in the House of Representatives—think it is a good thing that we are making these mandatory cuts. They cannot argue with that, but we can at least minimize the damage in these cuts.

I will read something that shocked me when I saw the President had issued—I am not sure if it is a veto message. I am told it was a veto message.

Here we have a bill that gives him flexibility with the restrictions we

talked about. Yet he says he is now going to veto it. It is worth reading this again, and we need to make sure we get this in the RECORD.

This is his quote on February 19, 2013. This is the President speaking.

Now, if Congress allows this meat-cleaver approach to take place, it will jeopardize our military readiness; it will eviscerate job-creating investments in education and energy and medical research. It won't consider whether we're cutting some bloated program that has outlived its usefulness, or a vital service that Americans depend on every single day. It doesn't make those distinctions.

We are now giving him a vehicle that makes those distinctions so we have that flexibility. It has the safeguards to take care of the problems that have been brought up. I think it is not a good solution, but right now it is the only solution.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Madam President, I would like to thank and compliment the Senator from Oklahoma, who has been a terrific leader and ally. I appreciate his hard work and the work product we have come up with.

At the end of the day, it is not complicated. It is pretty simple. Do we go ahead with indiscriminate across-the-board cuts that give us no ability whatsoever to establish priorities, to recognize that some spending is more important than others, or do we adopt this flexibility approach and give to the President of the United States the flexibility for him to turn to his service chiefs and say to them: Folks, is there a better way to do this? I am sure they know best what their needs are. I am sure they can come up with a better set of spending cuts than these across-the-board cuts that are in law.

Similarly, on the nondefense side, any competent middle manager of any business in America knows that when they have to tighten their belt, they go through and prioritize. So when the President and the Secretary of Transportation go around the country saying: Oh, we are going to have to lay off air traffic controllers; we are going to have to shut down towers; we are going to have delays, none of it is necessary. It is not necessary if we pass this legislation because it would give the President the flexibility to cut the items that would not be disruptive to our economy, and it would not be disruptive in any meaningful way.

I gave the example earlier of the FAA. The FAA would have more money postsequester than what the President even asked for. Obviously, what the President needs is the discretion to be able to make some cuts where they can be best be borne.

After having a total budget that has grown 100 percent over the last 12 years, we can find the 2.3 percent that is needed now. These are flexibility measures we would give the President for the remainder of this fiscal year. Thereafter, the savings we will achieve will happen through the spending caps

and, therefore, will be decided by the Appropriations Committee.

I urge my colleagues to support the Republican alternative.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, earlier this week, I shared with the Senate the consequences of sequestration for the budget of the Department of State and foreign operations and its impact on the security of the United States. Funding for the entire Department of State and foreign operations budget amounts to only about 1 percent of the Federal budget, not the 15 or 20 percent some mistakenly believe.

That 1 percent includes funding to operate our embassies and consulates in over 290 countries, to carry out diplomacy in dangerous environments like Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, respond to humanitarian crises, and build alliances with security and trading partners. Sequestration would harm these efforts by cutting assistance for diplomatic security at a time when everyone agrees we need to do more to protect our Foreign Service officers overseas.

On the development side, sequestration will mean cuts to global health programs that prevent the spread of AIDS and pay for vaccines for children, protect maternal health, and combat malaria and tuberculosis. It will also mean reductions for funding for disaster and refugee aid at a time when an increasing number of victims of drought, famine, and extremist violence around the world need assistance.

As has been pointed out repeatedly, sequestration was included in the Budget Control Act as an incentive to negotiate. The idea was that it would have such catastrophic consequences that rational minds would replace it with a thoughtful and balanced approach to deficit reduction.

That has not happened. To the contrary, just 1 day before the sequester is to take effect, our friends on the other side of the aisle, who favor cutting government programs and particularly those that help the neediest, seem to have decided that they would rather see sequestration take effect rather than close tax loopholes that only benefit the wealthy and pad growing corporate profits.

However, as President Obama and others have been warning for weeks, allowing these Draconian cuts to go into effect tomorrow will have a tremendously negative impact on jobs all across the country and on essential services provided by our government.

The American people elected us to come to Washington to work together and make tough decisions. It is well past time for a certain amount of reasonableness to come back to Congress. I have always believed that a balanced approach of pairing decreased spending with increased revenues is a far better way to deal with our budget deficits than sequestration. That is what we did with President Clinton in the 1990s, and we saw record budget surpluses.

We simply cannot cut our way out of this deficit. We created this situation partly by putting two wars on the Nation's credit card. We already have reduced the debt by \$2.5 trillion, with the vast majority of those savings coming from spending cuts. Just as most private businesses adjust their prices prudently over time, we cannot finish the job of deficit reduction through spending cuts alone.

We must understand that even in these difficult budgetary times we cannot sacrifice the future of critical Federal programs in education, in health care, and in national security that affect hard-working families across the country, every single day. The American people want and expect us to take a balanced approach. They know it isn't wise to protect endless corporate loopholes and tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans instead of investing in our schools, our factories, our roads, and our workers. Yes, they want us to get our books in order—but in a balanced way where everyone pulls equally.

Today the Senate has the opportunity to avoid this devastating sequester by voting for the American Family Economic Protection Act, which does just that. This balanced legislation will delay sequestration by replacing it with a combination of new revenues and targeted spending cuts. These spending cuts would reduce the deficit in a responsible way, eliminating unnecessary direct payments and farm subsidies and implementing reasonable and responsible defense spending reductions beginning when the war in Afghanistan is expected to end. This legislation would also generate revenue, equal to the amount of spending cuts included, by eliminating oil industry tax loopholes, denying deductions to companies that ship jobs overseas, and ensuring that millionaires do not pay a smaller share of their incomes in taxes than the typical middle-class family.

The American Family Economic Protection Act provides us with a clear, balanced proposal that would avoid the devastation of sequestration. I look forward to the opportunity to support this responsible approach to deficit reduction and hope all Senators will join me in doing the same.

If we choose to not act responsibly and do not pass this legislation today, I am afraid sequestration will go forward and would mean devastating cuts around the country and for Vermont. Without action, sequestration would mean that Vermont schools would lose more than \$2.5 million for primary and secondary education and the education of children with disabilities, while putting the jobs of teachers and aides at risk. Vermont would stand to lose more than \$1 million in environmental funding to ensure clean water and air quality, as well as prevent pollution from pesticides and hazardous waste.

Vermont would lose roughly \$2.6 million in funding for medical research

and innovation funding from NIH and \$400,000 in funding from the National Science Foundation, costing the State 53 jobs. Vermont would lose funding for the grants that support law enforcement, prosecution and courts, crime prevention and education, corrections, drug treatment and enforcement, and crime victim and witness initiatives. Sequestration would mean Vermont would lose \$101,000 in funding for job search assistance, referral, and placement, meaning 3,700 fewer people will get the help and skills they need to find employment, just when they need it most.

In Vermont, sequestration would impact public health. Fewer children will receive vaccines for diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, whooping cough, influenza, and hepatitis B due to reduced funding for vaccinations. Across-the-board cuts mean Vermont will lose about \$270,000 in grants to help prevent and treat substance abuse, resulting in around 500 fewer admissions to substance abuse programs. And the Vermont Department of Health will lose about \$55,000 resulting in around 1,400 fewer HIV tests. Sequestration would mean the state would lose funding used to provide meals for seniors and services to victims of domestic violence.

If we do not pass the American Family Economic Protection Act today, our States will lose funding for community development block grants and housing vouchers helping to put a roof over families' heads, we will lose funding for cancer screenings, childcare, and Head Start programs helping to get our Nation's children ready for school.

We cannot afford to allow this self-inflicted devastation move to forward. The bottom line is that getting our fiscal house in order must go hand in hand with policies that promote economic growth, create jobs, and strengthen the middle class—all things that President Obama and Democrats in both Houses of Congress are eager to do if only we had more cooperation from our friends across the aisle. We simply cannot cut our way out of this. We cannot allow an unbalanced approach that would once again require that deficit reduction be achieved solely through spending cuts, and would disproportionately impact low-income Americans and middle-class families. And we should not allow politics and posturing to dictate our actions here today. The American people expect more from us. I hope the Senate will end the filibuster of this legislation and allow an up-or-down vote so that we can show our constituents that we are capable of putting the interests of the Nation first.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, the sequestration spending cuts that are scheduled to begin tomorrow would cause pain and hardship across our country. These cuts will be devastating to workers, small businesses, middle class families, and children.

The list of essential programs and services that will be affected by sequestration is long. So today, I would like to focus on just a few of the more than 50 agencies funded by the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Subcommittee, which I chair.

My subcommittee helps small businesses get the loans they need. It keeps Wall Street watchdogs on the job. And it funds the agencies that stand up for consumers and stand guard against unfair and deceptive business practices. But the largest single appropriation in my subcommittee goes to our Nation's tax collector—the IRS.

At about \$12 billion, the IRS budget is a major expense. But cutting the IRS budget is short-sighted instead of reducing our deficit, shrinking the IRS makes our deficit larger.

That's because short-changing the IRS makes it easier for tax cheats to avoid paying what they owe.

Last year alone, about \$400 billion in taxes owed were never paid.

Mr. President, I was a CEO for many years. If there is one thing I learned in my time at ADP, it is that you can't run a company without revenues. And you surely can't run a country without revenues. The sequestration plan Republicans insisted on will slash the IRS and sacrifice revenues. In fact, for every dollar the sequester cuts from the IRS, our deficit will increase by at least \$4.

These cuts make no sense. But these IRS budget cuts are just the beginning of our problems. Under sequestration, as many as 1,900 small businesses won't get loans, which would mean 22,000 fewer jobs at a time when millions are looking for work. Wall Street watchdogs like the SEC and CFTC will be forced to go home, leaving investors on Main Street vulnerable to wolves on Wall Street. And cuts to the Judiciary could jeopardize one of the most important aspects of our life: the safety of our families. That is because we will have fewer probation officers to supervise criminal offenders in our communities. Courtrooms will be less safe because of cuts to their security systems. And cuts to mental health and drug treatment programs could lead to more offenders relapsing into lives of crime.

The Federal Bar Association agrees. They wrote in a letter last week to Chairman MIKULSKI and me that, Funding reductions could jeopardize the supervision of thousands of persons under pretrial release and convicted felons released from federal prisons, compromising public safety in communities across the Nation.

Mr. President, I voted against the legislation that put us on the path to sequestration because I was concerned about the effects of reckless cuts on everyday Americans. Just look at what sequestration will do to Head Start a program that helps our most vulnerable children learn how to learn: 70,000 kids could be kicked out of Head Start, including 1,300 in New Jersey.

We had a chance today to vote on a bill to replace these cuts with a balanced approach to deficit reduction, but our Republican colleagues insisted on protecting loopholes for the wealthy and big corporations. I hope that they will reconsider their position in the coming weeks, and work with us to undo these damaging cuts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask for an opportunity to respond to the Senator from Pennsylvania and then yield to the Senator from Iowa.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, we just met with Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, a former Congressman from Illinois. He said the opposite of what the Senator from Pennsylvania said. The Secretary of Transportation said exactly the opposite of what the Senator just said.

The sequestration is going to force him to reduce the payroll in his department. The largest payroll source is the Federal Aviation Administration and the largest cohort within that administration is the air traffic controllers. Sequestration is going to result in an announcement by the Department of Transportation within the next several days—if we don't avoid it with a vote on this Senate floor—of restrictions on airports across the United States because of sequestered air traffic controllers.

Mr. TOOMEY. Madam President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I will when I am finished.

We know we are going to have to tell them they are only going to be able to work 4 days out of the week. It is mindless to stand on the Senate floor and say we can cut \$1 billion out of the Department of Transportation and no one will feel it. Come on. Get real. We have 7 months left in this year. These agencies are trying to come up with the savings, and the only places they can turn are very limited.

Ashton Carter, Deputy Secretary of Defense, just went through with what they are facing. These are not easy because the sequestration was never meant to be easy. It is hard.

Please don't sugarcoat it and say there is a magic wand out there to find \$1 billion in the Department of Transportation and that if the President would just look closely, I am sure we can do it. It is not that simple.

The Senator has been involved in the supercommittee, and he has been involved in looking at this budget. He knows that on a bipartisan basis we can find savings. There is money to be saved in every single agency of government, but you don't do it with a heavy-handed sequester approach.

Please don't suggest we are favoring the idea of air traffic control being limited in America. I want it expanded. Unfortunately, the sequestration is going to limit it in the State of Illinois

and in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

I will yield for the Senator's question.

Mr. TOOMEY. Madam President, it is hard for me to follow this. The Senator is decrying the effects of the sequestration, and what Senator INHOFE and I are offering is a way to minimize the damage.

In the President's submitted request for the FAA, did he contemplate laying off air traffic controllers or closing towers? I know the answer. The President's budget—which he submitted to Congress and is a public document—requested a certain funding for the FAA.

Mr. DURBIN. For the next fiscal year?

Mr. TOOMEY. For the current fiscal year, the President's most recent request. The President's request was for less money than the FAA will have if the sequester goes through. I don't think the President was planning to lay off air traffic controllers.

Mr. DURBIN. Reclaiming my time, this is getting perilously close to a debate, which I will tell those in attendance never happens on the floor of the Senate. I will tell the Senator at this time we are dealing with the CR and last year's appropriations for the Department of Transportation; that is what Secretary LaHood is using. He is using the Budget Control Act numbers. So the President's request, notwithstanding—I am not sure how the Senator voted, but there was a bipartisan vote for limiting the amount of money that could be spent in this fiscal year. I voted for it, and that is what the Secretary is operating under.

The reality is this: Even with the Inhofe amendment, \$1 billion has to be cut from the Department of Transportation, and the flexibility notwithstanding, the options are so limited at this point in time.

I will tell the Senator pointblank that I believe we need to reduce this deficit. Sequestration is a terrible way, but there is an alternative. There will be an alternative this afternoon, and we will ask the Senator from Pennsylvania and to the Senator from Oklahoma: Are they prepared to say we are going to limit the direct agriculture support payments to farmers who have had the most profitable years in their lives and don't need them? Are they prepared to say that people making \$5 million a year in income ought to pay the same tax rate as the secretaries who work for them? If they are, we can avoid the worst parts of the sequestration. If they are not, be prepared, we are in for a pretty rough ride.

Mr. INHOFE. Would the Senator yield?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. This has been very interesting. This is not what I was going to speak on. I was going to speak on the amount of cuts we have already taken in our appropriations bill on Labor, Health, Human Services, Edu-

cation, NIH, and Centers for Disease Control.

I could not help but hear my friend from Pennsylvania talk about the President's budget as though that is controlling this. Would the Republicans want to adopt everything in the President's budget? I don't think so. They might want to select this or that or this or that, but are we now hearing from my friends on the other side that we should just *carte blanche* rubberstamp the President's budget? I sure hope not.

I remind my friends that the Constitution of the United States clearly says this body has two functions: taxing and spending—not the President and not the executive branch. The executive branch can propose whatever budget they want, it is up to us to decide both how to collect the taxpayers' money and how to spend it. It does not matter to me exactly what the President proposes. What I want to know is how do we—as Senators and as Congressmen—feel about where we should be investing our money and on what we ought to be spending the taxpayers' money.

The idea that somehow the President's budget says this or that and that people can pick and choose whatever they want with it, I submit again, I will bet my friends on the other side will not say: We will just adopt the President's budget as it is and we will go with that. I don't think they are ready to do that. I would not even do that for a President of my own party.

I wish to talk a second, again, about sort of the intransigence on the part of my friends on the Republican side—not only in this body but in the other body—of not countenancing any other funding or raising of revenues. I keep hearing the Speaker say: We gave revenues last month, that we had \$700 billion of revenues last month; now it is time to talk about spending cuts.

What the Speaker has done is he has drawn an arbitrary starting line of January 2013. What about last year and the year before when we adopted over \$1.4 trillion in spending cuts that have already been adopted? What about the starting line there? That is when we started to address the \$4 trillion we needed by 2020 to stabilize our debt.

We have come up with about \$1.4 trillion in spending cuts and about \$700 billion in revenue. It is not the idea that we have already given up and that we have collected enough revenue. That is not it at all. Going forward we need a balance between revenues and spending cuts.

I want to read some of the things we have done in our own committee last year. We had \$1.3 billion in cuts. We eliminated the education technology state grants, which a lot of people kind of liked. The Even Start Program was eliminated. The tech-prep education state grants were eliminated. The mentoring children of prisoners was eliminated; the foreign language assistance was eliminated; the civic education

was eliminated; The Alcohol Abuse Reduction Program was eliminated. The career pathways innovation fund was eliminated.

Many of these programs were started by my friends on the Republican side at some time in the past, some were started by Democrats, but most of them were started jointly with Republican and Democrats. What I am pointing out is that we have already cut a lot of things out of Health and Human Services, education, NIH, and the Centers for Disease Control. I can tell that you Dr. Francis Collins, the head of NIH, warned that the sequester will slash another \$1.6 billion from NIH's budget at the very time when we are on the cusp of having some good breakthroughs in medical research. A lot of medical researchers have been lined up and doing some great programs out there. Now all of a sudden they are going to have the rug pulled out from underneath them, but that is what is going to happen.

I might mention the kids with disabilities and what is going to happen with the funding for the IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. I am told about 7,200 teachers, aides, and other staff who help our communities and our schools cope with kids with disabilities who come into schools—because under IDEA we are providing that kind of support—are going to be cut. But it is going to be cut.

So this idea that somehow we can keep cutting and cutting and cutting and we are going to get to some magic land where we can continue to function as a society just isn't so. We need revenues. That is what is in the bill the majority leader has proposed, revenues that will help us reach that point where we can have both spending cuts and revenues and stabilize our debt at a reasonable percentage of our GDP.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call in relation to the cloture vote on the motion to proceed to S. 16.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

TO PROVIDE FOR A SEQUESTER REPLACEMENT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 16, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 19, a bill to provide for a sequester replacement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows: