

This bill is simple. It only suspends new IRS rulemaking related to 501(c)(4)s until the ongoing investigations are completed. It simply suspends for 1 year. That is prudent and necessary.

I urge my colleagues to join me in support of free speech rights by these groups by approving this legislation to prevent the finalization of the IRS's rule or any other that seeks to continue to target groups based on ideology.

Madam President, with that, I ask unanimous consent that the Finance Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 2011, that the bill be read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid on the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. WYDEN. Reserving the right to object, Madam Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. This bill is clearly within the jurisdiction of the Senate Finance Committee, because it changes the Tax Code. For many months before I became the Chair of the committee, the Finance Committee staff, on a bipartisan basis, worked very hard and very comprehensively in a thoughtful way to address this issue, interviewing 28 IRS employees and reviewing approximately 500,000 pages of documents.

It is my hope—and again, I have been the Chair of the committee for only a little bit over 1 week—it is my hope and expectation that our report will be ready for release next month or in early April.

The Finance Committee, as I have indicated, is the committee of jurisdiction. It has the technical resources, the expertise, and experience to best fashion the appropriate remedies. My view is these matters are simply too important to be handled on the floor without the opportunity for the Finance Committee to address these issues, examine them in hearings, and to have meaningful debate.

The Senator from Arizona believes that the new rules from the IRS are not fair because they limit the public debate. I want to indicate to him and to our colleagues that I don't take a back seat to anybody in terms of promoting public debate. Free speech and fair treatment for all Americans—all Americans—in the political process is absolutely central to what I believe government ought to be all about.

I have tried, with our colleague from Alaska, Senator MURKOWSKI, to show that even in these difficult, polarizing political times, the parties can come together. Senator MURKOWSKI puts it very well in terms of what the future ought to be all about. It truly embodies our campaign disclosure bill—which, I would mention, is the first bipartisan campaign finance bill in the Senate since the days of McCain-Feingold.

Senator MURKOWSKI says it best when she says that what she wants, with re-

spect to the rules for political debate in this country, is the "even-steven" rule. She wants to make sure the same principles that apply to the NRA apply to the Sierra Club, so that all Americans, in the course of political debates, are treated fairly. Also, we both believe that shining a light on the dark money that pulses through the American political system is not going to inhibit free speech. To the contrary, it is going to enhance the public's right to know about who is behind the political ads that bombard them during the political season without accountability or transparency.

I agree with Justice Scalia when he said:

Requiring people to stand up in public for their political acts fosters civic courage, without which democracy is doomed.

So there are two reasons for my objection. First, the Finance Committee is the committee of jurisdiction that ought to have the opportunity to address these questions, and I want to assure my friend from Arizona—whom I have worked with many times on issues—that having just become the Chair, I intend to work very expeditiously on this matter, particularly with Senator HATCH.

Second, I point out to my colleagues on the floor there is a bipartisan opportunity in the days ahead to address many of these issues. It is embodied very eloquently by Senator MURKOWSKI, who says: If we are going to be serious about promoting the widest possible debate in this country and treating everyone fairly, we do it in accord with that even-steven principle.

For those reasons, I object at this time to the unanimous consent request.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. If I could, I want to respond to a few of the Senator's items.

The Senator is correct, it falls under the Finance Committee's jurisdiction. That is part of the reason why I bring this forward. The Finance Committee is undergoing an investigation that is not yet complete, so I think it would be prudent to forestall the implementation of new rules by the IRS while the Finance Committee investigation is ongoing. I think we all agree we shouldn't move forward on imprecise or incomplete information. That is why we are simply saying we are not proposing a rule, we are saying simply delay the new rule until investigations can be completed.

Also, with regard to the issue of fairness, I should note that this applies to 501(c)(4) organizations, nonprofit organizations. There are other organizations that are also nonprofit but are not included in this proposed rulemaking—for example, labor unions. They offer, under a nonprofit status as well, a 501(c)(5). They are not included here.

The Senator correctly says we should be concerned about fairness for all

groups that are under this kind of non-profit umbrella. That is concerning to a lot of people as well, because those organized under 501(c)(4) status are targeted here when those organized under (c)(5) status are not, when they have some of the same restrictions on what they can do. So we would be imposing new rulemaking and new rules on some organizations and not others. That is one concern and another reason to forestall new rulemaking until we have more complete information about what is going on at the IRS.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

## HEALTH CARE

Mrs. MURRAY. I come to the floor this afternoon to take some time to talk about a law this Chamber passed in 2009. I wish to talk a little bit about what it means to serve in this body, what our responsibilities are, and why our constituents sent us here in the first place.

I have served in the Senate for more than 20 years and I have seen my share of controversial legislation. I have seen Democratic bills that Republicans couldn't stand; I have seen Democratic bills that Democrats wouldn't vote for; and I have seen bills that pretty much everybody opposed. But what I have seen in the last 4 years since the Affordable Care Act was passed by Congress and signed by the President is something new altogether.

Since the day that law passed, I have seen some of my Republican colleagues set reason, and some of their basic duties as public officials, completely aside, all in opposition of a law that means millions of Americans have access to affordable, quality health insurance they couldn't get before. It is a law that means millions of young people, many of them fresh out of college, are able to stay on their families' insurance plans. It is a law that says it is illegal for insurance companies to charge women more money just because they are women. It is a law that has provided millions of Americans with access to free preventive screenings and health care such as colonoscopies, mammograms, and flu shots. It is a law that says if you are an American and you have a preexisting condition, it is illegal for an insurance company to turn you away.

Since 2009, I have seen some of my colleagues simply refuse to acknowledge those facts about the law. I have watched them time and time again not listen to or hear stories of people in their own States whose lives have been changed by the Affordable Care Act and others who simply need access to get the benefits that are theirs. Some of my colleagues have even passed laws that make it harder to get covered under the Affordable Care Act.

One of our responsibilities as Senators, as public servants, is to help our

constituents access the Federal benefits that are available to them, particularly when it comes to health care. That might mean, perhaps, putting someone in touch with a navigator to help make sure they are getting the most affordable health insurance plan. It may be helping them become aware of an enrollment event in their State where they can learn how to get covered.

But our responsibilities don't end there. We also have to have an open, honest discussion about what the Affordable Care Act means for our constituents and talk about ways to improve it.

Instead, what we have seen is some of our colleagues who have spent the better part of 4 years try to turn this law into a bogeyman and trying to score cheap political points on an issue that can literally mean the difference between life and death.

I can understand why some of our colleagues disagree with parts of this law, and I have heard from some people who had challenges, honestly. We have to look and say can we fix this in a way that makes it work better for you. But what I can't understand is why anyone elected to Congress would decide to simply ignore real-life stories of their own constituents whose lives were changed the day this law took effect.

I can't understand why anyone would ignore an opportunity to make this law better, because that is not why we were sent here. We were sent here to listen to our constituents and fight to make sure our laws work for them.

I want to give some examples from my home State of Washington about people whose lives have been changed by the Affordable Care Act, people whose stories have been pretty much ignored in Washington, DC. I know later this afternoon several of my colleagues will be doing the same thing, so I hope everybody can turn off Fox News for a little while, not listen to Rush Limbaugh, and listen to some real stories of real live Americans who have been impacted by this law. I encourage them to go home and listen to some of the men and women in their own States, because the stories I am going to share are not unique.

I will start with the story of Susan Wellman from Bellingham, WA. She is self-employed and has had to pay for individual health insurance. Every year she has watched her health care costs rise higher and higher. It reached the point where she was paying \$300 monthly premiums with an \$8,000 deductible. All were what she described as "paying for nothing." So as soon as she could, Susan got access to health care through our Washington State exchange, and she was so happy to have that chance. She spoke on the phone with a real-live person, and she was able to sign up for an affordable plan in just a few minutes. Now Susan is on a plan that costs her \$125 a month instead of \$300—\$125 instead of \$300—and it is a plan that has a \$2,000 deductible,

not an \$8,000 deductible, and she says it actually pays for things.

Guess what. She can now afford to go to a doctor not just in the case of an emergency but for a physical or a mammogram that could save her life, not to mention thousands of dollars in health care costs. That kind of preventive care is good for Susan, and it is good for her family. It is also good for this country because when more people have access to preventive care, it makes health care cheaper for every single one of us.

Another person I have heard from whose life was changed by the affordable health care act is a man named Don Davis. He is 59 years old, and he actually goes by "Reverend Don." He is a pastor in Seattle, and he is also a volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club. As the pastor of his church, he doesn't get any health care through his job. He doesn't even have a salary. That meant for a long time that Reverend Don didn't have health insurance. So when he was hospitalized back in 2008 for severe headaches, he was only able to receive an MRI through charity care. That MRI showed that Reverend Don had several brain tumors, but when the doctors wanted to do more testing and provide more care, he didn't have the insurance to pay for that. This is a man who has asked for nothing in life, who woke up every day willing to give to others, but he couldn't get the basic care he needed when he got sick.

Reverend Don is healthy today. He is serving his community. Because of the Affordable Care Act, he now also has health insurance. He signed up with a navigator at the local YWCA. Now, if he gets a headache, he can afford to go to the doctor. So because of the Affordable Care Act, Reverend Don can afford to dedicate his life to people in his community and he doesn't need to worry that the cost of the health care he needs might be denied him.

Finally, I want to talk about a couple in Bellingham, WA, named Rod Burton and Sarah Hill. Rod is one of millions of Americans who have had the utterly maddening experience of being denied insurance because of a preexisting condition. In Rod's case his preexisting condition was a congenital heart defect. Under our old system Rod was deemed uninsurable by most insurance plans from the moment he was born. So for a long time Rod found himself forced into purely catastrophic insurance with a very high premium that wouldn't cover much of anything. That changed for him with the Affordable Care Act.

Despite his heart defect, Rod was able to get a plan that covers him and his wife, and they found out they were eligible for tax credits to help pay for it. So today both Rod and Sarah are covered through a silver plan with lower premiums than the plan that only covered Rod if the worst happened.

I know we have a number of other colleagues who are here to speak, and I

note some of them are here to tell stories from their own States, but I would like to note that I only told three stories today of people who are benefiting from the Affordable Care Act. These are only 3 people among the 400,000 others in my home State of Washington who have now signed up for care through the exchange, Washington Healthplanfinder, and they are only 3 people among the 4 million people who have signed up across the country. For the most part, their stories are not unique. Millions of other Americans face the same kind of health care problems they do. It is time that we stop ignoring that reality. It is time that we do our job and help our constituents get the health care coverage they deserve and can now get under this law.

I yield the floor.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from Utah.

#### IRS 501(C)(4) REGULATIONS

**Mr. HATCH.** Madam President, I understand Senator SCHUMER wants to speak in a little while, so I will try to hurry my remarks as quickly as I can.

I rise today to speak once again on the proposed IRS regulations targeting grassroots 501(c)(4) organizations. I have already come to the floor to discuss this issue, and I expect I will be here several more times in the coming months as these proposed rules continue to move through the regulatory pipeline at the IRS.

The public comment period for these proposed regulations ends today. As of this morning, the IRS had received over 100,000 comments on this proposal, the vast majority of them negative. This is an all-time record. In fact, the number is more than five times greater than the previous record for comments on a proposed IRS regulation. By contrast, the Keystone XL Pipeline—another item of enormous public interest—received just over 7,000 comments.

With all this public attention, the obvious question is, Why? Why has this proposal generated so much criticism from the American people? I think the answer is quite simple: The American people see this proposal for what it is—an attempt to silence this administration's critics and keep them on the sidelines of the democratic process.

I would like to take a few minutes to describe in detail just what this regulation does.

Under the Internal Revenue Code, a 501(c)(4) organization is a nonprofit organization, the exempt purpose of which is the "promotion of social welfare." The phrase "promotion of social welfare" has long been defined as "promoting in some way the common good and general welfare of the people of the community" or "bringing about civic betterments and social improvements."

Such organizations may engage in political activity for or against candidates for public office so long as their primary activity falls under the category of promoting social welfare.

Under current regulations, activities such as voter registration or "get out

the vote" drives are correctly treated as promoting social welfare, just like the distribution of voter guidelines outlining candidates' positions on issues that are, in the view of the organization, important to the public.

The proposed regulations would recategorize these types of candidate-neutral activities as not consistent with the exempt purpose of promoting social welfare. This is important because over the past few days, in an effort to justify these regulations, the administration has communicated to Members of Congress that they are not banning these types of activities; they are just putting them in different categories. But lost in their justifications are some important distinctions. It is easy to get lost in the weeds, which is probably what the administration is hoping for. So let's break this down.

Traditionally speaking, in order to keep their tax exemption, 501(c)(4) organizations have had to limit their involvement in "political activities" to around 49 percent or less of their overall activities. In other words, they can be directly involved in the political process so long as the majority of their activities are devoted to social welfare.

What this proposed regulation would do is redefine the parameters of what is considered political activity, moving a number of activities from the social welfare category to the political category. As I said, under this regulation, simply stating where candidates for public office stand on issues important to a specific 501(c)(4) organization would be considered political activity. In fact, even mentioning a candidate's name in a communication within a specified period before an election—even if the communication does not say whether the organization supports or opposes the candidate—would be considered political activity. As I mentioned, the same could be said for voter registration drives or "get out the vote" initiatives even if the efforts are obviously and legitimately non-partisan.

Basically, this proposed regulation would instantly categorize so much run-of-the-mill behavior as partisan political activity that many existing 501(c)(4) grassroots organizations would have to stop promoting their causes altogether. And that is precisely what the administration wants. They do not want 501(c)(4)s educating the public on the issues of the day or telling voters where candidates stand on political issues. Sure, they are fine with these groups promoting social welfare so long as that promotion does not include criticism of this administration or its policies that are harmful to the general welfare of their communities.

It would be one thing if the IRS was an agency with clean hands when it came to dealing with critics of this administration. But, as we have seen, that is simply not the case. Indeed, over the last few years we have seen a record of harassment and intimidation of conservative groups applying to the

IRS for tax-exempt status. The agency is under investigation in three separate congressional committees for its actions in the run up to the 2010 and 2012 elections.

Put simply, the credibility and the political independence of the IRS are very much in question. A reasonable person would think that, rather than further damaging the IRS's reputation, the administration would instead focus on rebuilding it in the aftermath of the targeting scandal. Sadly, there don't appear to be too many reasonable people working in the Obama administration, at least not when it comes to this set of issues.

We need to call this what it is: an affront to free speech and the right of all American citizens to participate in the democratic process. This is an attempt by the administration to marginalize its critics and silence them altogether.

Republicans have been very vocal in our opposition to this proposed regulation. We have spoken out in a variety of venues. But make no mistake, it is not just Republicans and conservatives who oppose this new rule. A number of left-leaning organizations have spoken out against it as well. The ACLU, for example, submitted a scathing comment letter to the IRS arguing that the proposed regulation would "produce the same structural issues at the IRS that led to the use of inappropriate criteria in the selection of various charitable and social welfare groups for unfair scrutiny." The ACLU argued further that social welfare groups should be free to participate in the political process because that kind of participation "is at the heart of our representative democracy. To the extent it influences voters, it does so by promoting an informed citizenry." We have seen similar comments from groups such as the Sierra Club. Leaders of labor unions have also publicly weighed in about the overly broad nature of the proposed regulation.

Put simply, when you have a proposal that is drawing unanimous opposition from Republicans in Congress and is being criticized by the ACLU and Big Labor, there is a pretty decent chance it is not good policy. Quite frankly, that characterization is probably too charitable for this particular proposal.

This proposed regulation needs to be stopped in its tracks. Yesterday the House of Representatives passed legislation that would do just that. If enacted, the House bill would delay the implementation of the proposal for one year. I am an original cosponsor of the Senate companion bill to this legislation, which was introduced by Senators FLAKE and ROBERTS.

Sadly, I think I know where my colleagues on the other side of the aisle stand on this issue, and I expect those of us here in the Senate who support the right of all Americans to participate in the political process are likely to be disappointed with regard to this particular legislative effort. Still, even

if this legislation dies here in the Senate, that will not be the end of the line.

Earlier this month, when I came to the floor to talk about this issue, I called on IRS Commissioner Koskinen to use his authority to block these regulations. I expect him to do so. When questioned about this proposal, he has consistently deferred, usually saying he was not the Commissioner when it was drafted and published. Fine. But he is the Commissioner now, and now that he is the Commissioner, he is in a position to stop the proposed regulation from going final and acquiring the force of law. This proposal cannot take effect unless Commissioner Koskinen personally approves and signs the final regulation clearance package. That being the case, I call on him today to do the right thing—to not sign it when it reaches his desk. In fact, he ought to decry it for what it is.

In an ideal world, the administration would simply withdraw this proposal and leave this issue alone. However, we are not living in such a world. That being the case, if the administration continues its effort to push through this proposed rule, the IRS Commissioner can and should use his authority to stop it from taking effect. After all, that is one reason Congress gives the IRS Commissioner a 5-year term. The Commissioner is supposed to be free from political pressure when making decisions and implementing our Nation's tax laws.

In light of that fact, I want to implore Commissioner Koskinen to use the power he has been granted to restore the IRS's credibility and make it clear to the American people that his agency, the IRS, will no longer be used as simply another political arm of this or any future administration. I hope he will do so because it is the right thing to do, and I am calling on him to do it.

I have faith in Commissioner Koskinen. I believe he is an honest man. I don't think he has any other choice but to stop these obnoxious regulations which people from the left to the right consider to be breaches of free speech and are wrong.

I yield the floor.

#### AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, over the next several months the Affordable Care Act is going to become less important as a Republican campaign issue because more and more Americans—from young adults all the way through seniors—are going to realize the benefits it has to offer. It is happening already.

Every day there are more positive stories about people getting cheaper coverage, better coverage or coverage for the first time. Let me say, in my State of New York the initial rollout of ACA has been a big success. We didn't have the problems of a Web site because we did our own, and because we have a lot of competition, as was intended on the exchanges, people are getting very good offers and a large number of people are getting their costs reduced.

I will tell one story. A friend of mine goes to a hairdresser in a conservative neighborhood in New York. The person who owns the beauty shop is very conservative, and when the ACA first rolled out she was very upset. She said: Look. I have looked at that Web site. I am a nice person. I pay for health care for my eight employees. It is going to cost me hundreds of dollars more for each employee. I don't even know if I can afford to stay in business. That person talked to all of her friends, I think she blogged on her Web site, and talked all about it.

I spoke to my friend a few weeks ago. Guess what. This same person actually got health care on the New York Web site which reduced the cost of health care for employees by a couple of hundred dollars each. She was very happy. Of course, I asked my friend to make sure she puts that on her Web site and tells all of her conservative friends about that.

But this story is going to be repeated over and over. There are going to be millions of seniors who realize they can get a free checkup and keep their health good. There are going to be millions of young people who realize they can continue their health care and stay on their parents' health insurance from age 21 to 26. Millions of people are going to find out that either, God forbid, someone in their family or someone in a family they know has a pre-existing condition, and now they can get health care. Millions of businesses are going to see the cost of health care is actually going up at a much smaller rate than they are used to. So all these good things will start mounting and the positives about ACA will grow in the public's mind and eventually I believe it will catch up in the Senate and the House. Then something else too will happen and that is this: Lots of people who are not affected directly by ACA have had fear put into their souls. They listen to the rightwing talk radio and they hear: Oh, they may lose all their health care or their costs will go way up. But what they are finding is it is not happening.

I met a firefighter who works for New York City—not a volunteer firefighter—a few months ago. He said: I know ObamaCare is going to kill me. It is going to greatly reduce the health care I am getting as a New York City firefighter.

They get very good health care and they should. They are risking their lives for us. He said: It is going to happen, I hear, in the new year, January 1, 2014.

I saw the firefighter a few weeks ago, and he said to me: Hey, I still have my health care and nothing changed. Well, of course nothing changed. All the horror stories which have been launched by so many on the rightwing talk radio and those who just hate ObamaCare, whether it works or not, are starting to fade.

So we are seeing two things happen at once: We are seeing the positives in-

crease and the negatives decrease and we are seeing it particularly with senior citizens. Because the doughnut hole is filled, millions of our senior citizens are spending much less on prescription drugs than they had to. It is a huge benefit to them. Since ACA was enacted, more than 7 million seniors and people with disabilities have saved \$9 billion. That is a huge amount of money. To seniors, many of whom are on fixed incomes, that is dramatic savings for them.

Something else is happening to our seniors. They are getting free checkups. That does two things. First, it saves money out of their own pockets but, second, it reduces our health care costs because we all know an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Free checkups are that prevention we need. It will not only save the seniors but save our system billions and billions of dollars in the years and decades to come. Somebody who finds a growth on their skin and gets it removed before it becomes cancerous, somebody who might get a colonoscopy, a mammogram or a prostate exam and is saved from prostate cancer—all that is going to happen.

So the bottom line is very simple: People are learning the positives of ACA. The Web site is being improved. More people are signing up. In my State of New York alone, more than 250,000 people with Medicare saved \$246 million on prescription drugs. The numbers are higher when we count up to today because that was only the first 10 months, through November 1 of 2013. The benefits are all over the place.

One other thing. This is not our subject of the week, but I think we have to keep mentioning it. We are reducing the budget deficit through the ACA. I know our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are very careful about the budget deficit. Good. They should be. Health care costs are declining and declining significantly. Some is due to the recession, but almost every expert says much is due to the ACA.

National health care expenditures, for instance, in 2012 grew by 3.7 percent, meaning that the growth from 2009 to 2012 was the slowest since government collected this information in the 1960s. The percentage of health care spending for the first time actually shrunk from 17.3 to 17.2. At the same time, the solvency of Medicare's hospital insurance fund increased and costs declined. So this is great news.

The bottom line: I know our colleagues on the other side of the aisle think they hit political goals when they attack the ACA and call for its repeal, but the American people don't want repeal. Secondly, as we move on in time the positives of ACA will become more apparent, the negatives people perceive of ACA will decline, and I believe by November this issue will not be the political gold mine our colleagues think it is.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Massachusetts.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I thank Senator SCHUMER for his great leadership on this issue and his strong words.

I am pleased to join with my colleagues on the floor to speak about the positive impacts of the Affordable Care Act and the impact it is having on our Nation's health and particularly the health of our seniors.

We have all heard about the benefits of the Affordable Care Act in terms of increasing coverage: Over 4 million people have already signed up for the affordable private health insurance through the State and Federal exchanges, millions more have signed up for Medicaid coverage, and millions more young people are now able to stay on their parents' insurance policies until they are 26—and the numbers are growing.

But as important as these figures are, the Affordable Care Act isn't just about expanding coverage for the uninsured. It is also about improving the quality of care and the quality of coverage for all Americans, including our seniors.

Seniors in this country rely on the Medicare Program—and they should rely on the Medicare Program—because Medicare respects a promise that we made as a country to ensure that people who contribute to the program during their working years will have their health care needs taken care of after the age of 65. We have a duty to keep that promise, and we need to build on that promise.

To keep the promise of Medicare, we have to make sure the program stays afloat. The Affordable Care Act does this by improving the quality of care, by coordinating care, and by better delivering under Medicare so we reduce waste in the program and we use Medicare dollars in a way that improves health outcomes for our seniors.

The Republicans have a very different approach to Medicare solvency. They want to reduce benefits, they want to increase premiums and copays so it is harder for seniors to afford to go to a doctor, and they even want to end Medicare's guaranteed benefits entirely by turning it into a voucher system. Think about that: lower benefits, charge more, and end Medicare as we know it.

These approaches are wrong. They do not reflect our values, and they also don't reflect good policy because cutting Medicare benefits will not stop seniors from having heart attacks, it will not stop seniors from getting sick. It will just push them into emergency rooms and private insurance systems—which is more expensive and less efficient than Medicare—or, worse, it will prevent them entirely from getting the medical care they need.

Fortunately, the Republican vision is not the law of the land. The Affordable Care Act is the law of the land, and it is already showing progress in improving the solvency of Medicare and the quality of care for our seniors.

We can already see how the accountable care organizations created under the Affordable Care Act are saving money. The pioneer accountable care organizations—five of which are now operating in Massachusetts—have already saved Medicare nearly \$147 million while continuing to deliver high-quality care. New standards for hospital reimbursements have reduced the number of people who need to be readmitted, meaning that for seniors 130,000 fewer Medicare beneficiaries had to check back into a hospital last year.

Thanks to these and other changes, the Medicare trust fund will be solvent for nearly 10 years longer than was projected before we passed the Affordable Care Act. The results are clear. When it comes to our seniors, the Affordable Care Act is saving money and saving lives.

But the Affordable Care Act does more. It builds on the promise of Medicare by improving prevention coverage and reducing actual out-of-pockets for our seniors. Last year over 70 percent of seniors—25.4 million people in Medicare—visited their doctor and received a preventive service, such as a critical colonoscopy or a lifesaving mammogram. They received it for free because of the Affordable Care Act. Despite high drug prices, the average senior in America saved an average of \$1,200 on their prescription drugs in 2013 because of the Affordable Care Act closing the doughnut hole in Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage. The Affordable Care Act has made these changes—reducing the cost for seniors, expanding benefits and reducing wasteful spending at the same time that we have improved the solvency of Medicare.

When I hear Republicans talk about repealing the Affordable Care Act, I wonder what alternative universe they are living in. In this real world there should be no confusion about what repealing the Affordable Care Act would actually mean for our seniors: higher costs for prescription drugs, higher costs for preventive services, reduced benefits, and a Medicare program that would go bankrupt nearly 10 years sooner.

The Affordable Care Act is working to help seniors with their expenses and to keep the costs of health care down. We need to improve and build on the progress the law has made and not argue over tearing it down. This should not be about politics. This should be about keeping the promise we made to our seniors. It is about building on that promise, and I will continue to fight for that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I appreciate my colleagues—Senator WARREN, Senator SCHUMER, and Senator MURRAY—joining us on the floor today. I think we will be joined by Senator STABENOW in a few moments. I also appreciate that they were at an event we did yesterday in which we were kicking off

the Affordable Care Works Campaign. The campaign is designed to tell what has been untold for much of the last 6 months, which is the increasing good news about the millions of Americans for which the Affordable Care Act is working and, indeed for many of them, changing their lives.

An announcement was made this week that 4 million Americans have now signed up for the private health care exchanges. There are now over 10 million Americans all across the country who now have insurance today that didn't have it prior to the passage of the law either because of these private exchanges or increased eligibility of Medicaid or the law's provision that young men and women under the age of 26 can stay on their parents' insurance. Over 10 million people all across the country now have access to insurance that they didn't have before we passed this law.

As Senator SCHUMER said, there is even more good news because we now know that the second promise of the act, that it was going to reduce the deficit, is true as well. CBO tells us that from the 10-year period covering the enactment of the law to a decade later, we are going to save about \$1.2 trillion beyond what we initially estimated.

At current trajectories, we are going to be \$250 billion under CBO's initial estimate for Federal health care expenditures on an annual basis. That is a big savings to the American taxpayers. When you combine that with the millions of Americans who have coverage, you can see how the Affordable Care Act is working.

There is still work to do. There will be debates on the floor of the Senate about ways in which we can change and fix the Affordable Care Act. Because we are reordering one-sixth of the American economy, there is no doubt there will be bumps along the road, and no doubt there will be places where we can find bipartisan agreements on how we can fix the act to make it work even better.

The answer from our Republican colleagues has been pretty simple so far. It has been to simply repeal the law. They say they want to repeal and replace it, but we have yet to see any evidence of that replacement. I think when the Presiding Officer and I served together in the House of Representatives, we probably witnessed about 30 or 40 different votes to repeal all or part of the Affordable Care Act, and never once was there a vote to replace that act.

The American people don't want this bill repealed so we can go back to the days when the insurance companies ran our health care. They don't want to go back to the days when the 10 million Americans who have insurance are uninsured. They want this act to be implemented. They want it to be perfected. They want us to work to make it better. But they are understanding day by day that the Affordable Care Act is working.

Specifically for seniors there are some pretty unique benefits, many of which have been glossed over. At the outset of the implementation of this act, some pretty important things happened—sometimes while people weren't even looking.

First, the doughnut hole was cut in half almost overnight. The first year anybody who was in the doughnut hole got a \$250 rebate check. The second year, their drugs—when they were in the doughnut hole—got cut by 50 percent. By the end of this decade, the doughnut hole will be completely eliminated.

The average savings for a senior, as Senator STABENOW will talk about, has been \$1,200. People often don't know that is because of the Affordable Care Act. When you go in and your drugs all of a sudden cost 50 percent less than they did, there is no stamp on that bill that says courtesy of the Affordable Care Act.

The fact is that without the Affordable Care Act, seniors—over the course of the last 3 years—would have spent \$9 billion more on drugs than they have. The number is so big that it is kind of hard to fathom. The Affordable Care Act has saved seniors \$9 billion, an average of \$1,200 per senior.

On top of that, when seniors go in to get their annual checkup or for a cancer screening or tobacco cessation program, those preventive health care visits are now free. Twenty-five million seniors have access to those programs all across the country.

In my State of Connecticut, 76,000 people with Medicare have taken advantage of free annual wellness visits under the health care law. So we are seeing tremendous benefits for seniors all across the country. This is not just about the doughnut hole or preventive health care.

In 2012, the Medicare Part B deductible dropped by \$22 to \$140. That is the first time in the history of Medicare that the Medicare Part B deductible has actually been reduced thanks to the efficiencies that are being garnered in the Medicare Part B program by the health care law.

Second, Medicare Advantage plans now can't charge more than Medicaid for things like chemotherapy, skilled nursing, and other specialized services, which results in saving thousands of dollars for seniors.

In the first 3 years of the Affordable Care Act, Medicare recovered \$15 billion in fraudulent payments under Medicare because of new tools designed to root out fraud and waste and abuse in the Affordable Care Act. Older Americans who have not yet reached Medicare age are saving money because the act reduced the amount of discrimination in premiums against older Americans by saying that insurance companies can't charge older workers more than three times what they charged younger workers.

For seniors, in particular, we are trying to make it clear that some of the

unnoticed benefits, such as the fact that nobody is asking you for a copay when you go in for a Medicare checkup and that you are saving money every time you go into the pharmacy—that didn't happen magically. That didn't happen because of Republican health care policies. It happened because of the Affordable Care Act.

Finally, before I turn it over to my colleague Senator STABENOW, I want to address some of the mythology we have been hearing on the floor of the Senate in the past few days about Medicare Advantage.

There is no doubt that there were reductions in the payment from the Federal Government to the Medicare Advantage plans in the Affordable Care Act. Why? Because we were overcompensating private health care companies for running the Medicare Advantage plan. We were giving them 13 percent more than it cost Medicare itself to run the Medicare program. That just doesn't make a lot of sense.

Private companies were telling us they could do things for the same price or less than the Federal Government. In this case we were paying Medicare private insurers a lot more than it costs Medicare to run the program. So we decided to eliminate that subsidy.

Guess what. The news has been pretty remarkable. In fact, 30 percent more seniors are on Medicare Advantage plans today than when we passed the law, and premiums under Medicare Advantage have come down by 10 percent during that time. More people are on Medicare Advantage plans, there are less costs in premiums, and the average Medicare participant has 18 different plans to choose from.

All of this apocalyptic talk about what was going to happen when we passed the Affordable Care Act with respect to Medicare Advantage and all this new apocalyptic talk about what will happen when the subsidies get further reduced has not come true. We now have cheaper Medicare Advantage plans, more seniors on them, and plenty of across-the-board availability.

I am really pleased to have been joined here by about a half dozen of our colleagues to tell the story about what the ACA has meant for seniors.

We are going to come to the floor every week. We are going to stand with patients and consumers every week to talk about the benefits for seniors, cancer patients, women, and taxpayers all in an effort to try to prove to the American people what millions of Americans are finding out, and that is that the Affordable Care Act works.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, first I thank the Senator from Connecticut for his advocacy for seniors, children, families, and small businesses to have access to affordable and quality health insurance. He has been a powerful voice on this issue.

I also congratulate his State of Connecticut and the Governor of Con-

necticut for all of their hard work. I know they are doing a great job on their insurance pool—the health care exchange which is providing more affordable health insurance for the citizens in Connecticut.

I thank the Senator for his leadership.

I also rise today to talk about the fact that millions of American families today have access to more affordable health care. Seniors, children, small businesses, and others are getting the opportunity to have the health care they are paying for and know they can get the health care they need even if they have a preexisting condition because of the Affordable Care Act.

I will take a few moments to talk about what this means for our senior citizens—for people on Medicare. Obviously, Medicare is a great American success story and something that I strongly support, as do my colleagues who are speaking today.

As part of health care reform, we wanted to strengthen Medicare for the future. We protect the guaranteed benefits under Medicare. We have shored up the program so that the trust fund is now solvent until 2026 and will be so going forward as other savings occur over the long run. It is working because of some very tangible work we have done to put more money in the pockets of our senior citizens and to create the opportunity for them to have access to affordable health care.

I often think about the letters and emails I have received from people in Michigan prior to our passing health care reform and the kinds of stories that people told me all the time before we strengthened Medicare.

I will read one letter from a senior citizen from Warren, MI, who wrote to me a letter prior to health care reform talking about the gap in coverage in prescription drugs. Under Medicare Part-D, you are covered to a certain point, and then there is a gap and you get no help. Then if your prescription drug costs are very high, it kicks in again. Some people call that the doughnut hole. It is a gap in coverage. A senior from Warren told me this:

I cannot afford all of my costly drugs so I have to stop taking one of them (the least risky one) and have to scrounge free samples from my doctor's office for another while paying high retail prices for the other two.

That was before we passed health reform. Now on average in our country, seniors have \$1,200 more in their pocket since we passed health care reform which helps them with their prescription drug costs. Why? Because we are closing that gap. That gap is going to go away. There is going to be no more cliff, no more doughnut hole, and no more gap in coverage. Right now seniors across the country are saving, on average, \$1,200, which is more money back in their pocket.

When we think about it in big terms, there are more than 7.3 million seniors and people with disabilities who are on Medicare who found themselves in that

gap in coverage, and the health care reform law—in the big picture—has saved them about \$9 billion—on average \$1,200 for an individual, but all total so far about \$9 billion. That is \$9 billion more available to seniors, which puts money back in their pocket—to do what? Well, to pay the rent, to pay the electric bill. In a State such as Michigan, to pay the high heating bills because of the winter we have been having; to put gas in the car. Maybe it is to do something fun with the grandkids and pay for that birthday present. Maybe it is doing something else that is needed. Whatever it is, the idea is the average person who is retired and on Medicare has over \$1,000 back in their pocket now because of health reform and what we have been able to do to strengthen Medicare. It is a great thing.

The problem is that is what Republicans want to take away. That is what they want to take away. That is what will be taken away if it is repealed; if one of the over 40 different repeal votes were actually to happen, and what the House of Representatives has already done.

Let me share another letter from Mary Ann from Rockford who wrote last fall to say she is sick of the efforts to repeal health care reform. She says:

The Affordable Care Act has already helped millions of seniors like myself. From free preventive services to lower-cost prescription drugs, we're saving money.

We are saving money.

Let me talk about another area where seniors are saving money, and that is the annual checkup. We always want folks to have the annual checkup. That checkup used to have copays and deductibles. Today, under Medicare, because of health reform, when a senior walks into a doctor's office, how much are they paying for that annual checkup? Zero. Zero, because of health reform. We don't want any seniors to feel they can't get that checkup, they can't get the mammogram they need, they can't get that lovely colonoscopy we all look forward to getting. We don't want our seniors to feel they can't get any other kinds of preventive care or cancer screens or flu shots, or whatever it is, because of the copays or deductibles. Today the cost of that checkup for preventive services is zero. If health reform is repealed, that is repealed. That is what folks who want repeal are doing; it is what they want to take away.

So I join with my colleagues who feel strongly that we need to make sure we are keeping in place those positives that are making a real difference in the lives of senior citizens, of children, of families. If there are areas going forward that need to be fixed, we need to fix them, and we will. But we certainly do not want to go back to the days when seniors are spending \$1,200 more out of their pocket for their medicine, on average, or when they are paying for the cost of an annual checkup that is absolutely critical they get for their



life going forward. I am proud to stand with colleagues saying let's talk together about how we make sure things work going forward, but let's not go back to the time when all of these important services and protections were not in place.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

#### FREE SPEECH

Mr. ROBERTS. Thank you, Mr. President. I come to the floor today to also speak about ObamaCare. But before I do so, I feel the need to address some comments made on the floor of the Senate yesterday that, sadly, I find to be extremely distasteful.

Yesterday, two prominent citizens were called unpatriotic merely because they have engaged—legally, I must say—in their First Amendment right to participate in the political process. I was saddened, I was dismayed, and I was discouraged to see the floor of the Senate used as a venue for such campaign-related attacks.

In order to further their own agenda, it has become commonplace for my colleagues—especially across the aisle—to suppress the free speech and rights of certain people and organizations. These are simply people with whom they do not agree and who have had the audacity to hold views different from this administration.

Make no mistake, this is all part of a coordinated plan. I call it shaping the battlefield to tamp down—maybe that is not the right word; make that suppress—political opponents in the runup to the general election as of this fall.

We have seen repeatedly since the Citizens United decision of 2010 Members of this body trying to rein in conservative groups' ability to participate in the political process. This campaign is a direct attack, I believe, on the rights of these organizations. This campaign created an environment in which the Internal Revenue Service found it necessary and possible to single out conservative organizations for extra scrutiny. And this has made it impossible for conservative groups to participate in the last two elections, and now they are at it again in 2014. There is a short phrase which describes this, and I think it is "abuse of power."

This is all troubling and shocking enough, but now we have a very direct personal attack against a Kansas company whose political views some find very objectionable. What I find even more offensive is declaring on the floor the opposing views make them "liars." Our Constitution grants every American the fundamental right to engage in the political process, and these folks have done so, fully within the bounds of the law.

Nothing Charles and David Koch have done or are doing is illegal. Their participation, their statements, their work is very far from un-American. Quite the opposite. It is the essence of what it means to be an American. Nothing is more fundamental to our

Constitution, our way of governing, than the freedom of speech.

We should be focused on our role and responsibility of governing to make things better for the American people and not using the Senate floor to further any political agenda by making personal attacks on private citizens.

That brings me to what I came here to discuss today.

(The remarks of Mr. ROBERTS pertaining to the introduction of S. 2064 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. President. It is good to see my long-time friend from Massachusetts in the Presiding Officer's chair.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

#### VETERANS BENEFITS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, President Kennedy, from the Presiding Officer's home State said, if I could paraphrase a bit: A nation reveals itself not only by the men and women it produces but also by the men and women it honors, the men and women it remembers.

It is our duty to take care of those who served in uniform. Today, this Nation has revealed itself, and the image is shameful. This body failed to consider the important veterans legislation of this Congress—the most important veterans legislation of this Congress: the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014.

I sit on the Senate Veterans Affairs' Committee. I am the first Senator from my State ever to sit on that committee for a full term. I consider that an honor. I consider it a privilege to serve those who served us in this Nation.

I have worked alongside Republicans and Democrats, as has Chairman SANDERS and Ranking Member BURR. We have produced good legislation here. Next to the post-9/11 GI bill, which Senator Webb worked on 4 or 5 years ago, it is the most important advancement in veterans legislation and assistance to our Nation's veterans at my time in the Senate. That is the good news.

The bad news is this debate has been about politics, not about veterans. Again, people in Washington want to score political points by filibuster, by obstruction, by blocking good bipartisan legislation, supported by a whole panoply of veterans organizations and community groups.

There are those who have concerns who want to add to this bill, concerns that are not related to veterans. To hold up this bill with something unrelated to veterans is unconscionable.

Whether you are in Marblehead, MA, or Mansfield, OH, we all have heard our

constituents say: Why do they attach these unrelated things to legislation instead of voting them up or down on their merits? That is what people want to do here. Those who want to filibuster this bill are the people who want to add things to the bill that have nothing to do with serving our veterans.

This legislation by itself improves vital programs to honor our commitment to those who served in uniform and for those who care for our veterans. Whether it is a community-based outpatient clinic in Zanesville or Chillicothe or Springfield, whether it is a VA center in Dayton or Chillicothe or Cleveland, we care about those who care for our veterans, many of whom are veterans themselves, and we take care of those veterans.

This corrects errors in programs and benefits and, as I said, has widespread support in the veterans community. The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America all support this legislation.

I will not go through a lot of the details we have discussed before that Senator SANDERS brought to the floor, but I want to talk about a couple.

This bill renews our VOW to Hire Heroes Act by reauthorizing provisions such as the VRAP, the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program. This program retrains unemployed veterans for high-demand occupations.

I traveled across Ohio throughout 2012 spreading the word about VRAP, encouraging our veterans to apply. Ohio veterans applied in larger numbers than our State's population would suggest because of the outreach of so many in encouraging people to sign up for VRAP.

I met veterans such as Everett Chambers in Cleveland, who used VRAP funds to get retrained as an electrical engineering technician at Cuyahoga Community College, or Tri-C.

I remember meeting a veteran in Youngstown who went back to school because of VRAP and got the opportunity to work at a health care center in information technology.

We know VRAP works. It helps our veterans get back to work. It lowers the unacceptably high unemployment rate for recently separated service-members who have so much to offer employers.

This program is aimed for those veterans who are a little bit older who are no longer eligible for the GI bill and those veterans who have been out of the service for a while. But it does not stop there. It adds other important improvements in education benefits, in reproductive health, in the delivery of care and benefits to veterans who experienced sexual trauma while serving in the military.

Too many Members in this body will say they support the programs in this bill but that finding the money to do so is not possible. So they are for the bill,

they say, until they are not. Well, there is a disconnect between what they say and what they do. Those same elected leaders—those same elected leaders who say: I am for this bill, but we can't pay for it, so we can't pass it—those same people want to give tax breaks to companies that take jobs and factories overseas when we say we cannot find the money to provide a caregiver the support he needs to care for his wife, a veteran. We fight a decade-long war in Afghanistan that goes unpaid for and we cannot find the resources to ensure the very people who fought that war will be cared for.

It would be a little more simple than that. When a company closes down in Springfield, or Springfield, MA, and moves to Wuhan, China, or Shihan, China, they can deduct the cost of the plant shutdown in one of the Springfields and they can deduct the cost of building the new plant in Wuhan, China. That is a loophole we could close. It would mean more companies would stay in Springfield, OH, or Springfield, MA, helping our communities, helping our tax base, and it would mean those companies would not be deducting that move and that money could then be used for these veterans programs. But no, they say: We can't find the money.

It is important to end this filibuster and pass this bill.

#### BUYING GOVERNMENT

Mr. President, I heard my friend from Kansas talk about what he calls the personal attacks on two I believe he said great Americans, but Americans nonetheless, which they are, and prominent businesspeople in Kansas and around the country.

These two Americans—and this is not personal to me—these two Americans have spent millions of dollars trying to defeat me, as they have tried to defeat a number of people in this Chamber who think government has a role in preserving Medicare and government should provide funds for Head Start and government should give tax breaks to low-income people, not just rich people, and government should play a role, as the Presiding Officer has, in a cleaner environment and deal with climate change. But I disagree with these two Americans. I do not personally dislike them or personally know them. But I do know they have spent millions of dollars in ads, millions of dollars in an unprecedented way—they and a small number of people—to try to hijack our political system.

People are sick and tired, first, of the TV ads; second, of the lies in the TV ads; and, third, that there are people—a few billionaires—who are trying to buy elections in this country, billionaires who are looking for tax breaks for themselves, billionaires who are looking for the opportunity to weaken environmental laws, billionaires who want to kill the union movement in this country.

I want to read from one editorial that was printed in, I believe, Roll Call

or The Hill newspaper talking about some of these ads. Here is what this editorial said:

Were this an ad for Stainmaster carpet, a Koch product—Koch, this is the family, the brothers—

Were this an ad for Stainmaster carpet, a Koch product, Federal Trade Commission guidelines would require the ad to “conspicuously disclose that the persons in such advertisements are not actual consumers.” Moreover, the FTC would require them to either demonstrate that these results of ObamaCare are typical or make clear in the ad that they are not.

Needless to say, the ad meets none of these requirements, thereby conforming to the legal definition of false advertising.

That tells you a lot. I rest my case in just those terms. It is never personal. It should never be. It is whom you fight for in this body and what you fight against. But there are people in this country who think they can buy our government. We have seen that throughout our history. We have seen the oil companies try to do everything they can to at least if not buy government take a long-term lease. We saw the robber barons 100 years ago, including one from my State, Mark Hanna, who used to try to control the legislature. They used to say that he wore President McKinley like a watchfob when he was Governor of Ohio.

So we have seen this in the past. We have never seen it in such an incredibly big way as we have seen it in the last few election cycles.

#### MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. President, I want to speak about the minimum wage, something this Chamber, frankly, needs to do. The Presiding Officer in his time in the House saw, as I did, a number of Members of Congress who would vote to raise their own pay but then vote against a minimum-wage increase, which I find morally inconsistent or worse. But let me make a couple comments about that.

In 1991, the average price of gas was \$1.15 a gallon, a loaf of bread around 70 cents, a dozen eggs about \$1. The tipped minimum wage—that is the minimum wage for people who work in a diner who get tips, people who push a wheelchair in an airport who rely on tips, a valet, someone who does nail manicures, people who work in jobs where they are receiving tips—the minimum wage in 1991 for those workers at the local diner or the local airport was \$2.13 an hour—in 1991.

Today, the average price of gas is \$3.30 a gallon; a loaf of bread costs \$1.35, more or less; eggs are about \$2. The tipped minimum wage is still \$2.13. Its value has fallen by 36 percent in real terms. Think about that—\$2.13 an hour.

Americans who work hard and take responsibility should be able to take care of their families. That is why I support the Fair Minimum Wage Act, which would raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour in three 95-cent increments and then provide annual cost-of-living increases linked to changes in

the cost of living. The bill would also gradually raise the Federal minimum wage for tipped workers at the diner, the valet, the person doing the manicure from \$2.13 an hour to 70 percent of the regular minimum wage.

In 1980 the minimum wage for tipped workers was 60 percent of the regular minimum wage. It is now less than 30 percent of the regular minimum wage. In Canada the minimum wage in Ontario is \$11; the tipped minimum wage is \$8.90. The United States is the only industrialized nation in the world—except for Canada—where a large number of workers must depend on tips for a large share of their income. So in Canada the tipped minimum wage is only slightly less than the minimum wage. In the United States it is less than 30 percent of the minimum wage. In the rest of the world it is 100 percent of the minimum wage.

Interestingly, servers in the United States, people who work at diners or restaurants in the United States—when a European comes across the ocean and eats at a restaurant in Cleveland or in Cincinnati, the European will usually leave a really small tip because they are not used to tipping. The American worker relies on those tips for any kind of a decent wage.

Ohio's current tipped minimum wage is a little higher; it is \$3.98. That is still not enough. These are men and women who have bills to pay and families to support.

Most tipped workers do not work at fine dining establishments where the average bill is \$50, \$60, or \$70, so someone is making pretty good money on tips. A server in a high-class restaurant, an expensive restaurant, can make hundreds of dollars in a night. But for a server who works in a diner where four people come in, get coffee, spend an hour there, and have a bill of \$6, the tip might be \$1. That person has worked for an hour. They are not getting to the minimum wage with the tipped wage, and, often, neither is the valet or the person at the airport who is getting someone off the plane and pushing their wheelchair to their connecting flight. They often do not even receive tips because so often the person in the wheelchair never thinks about it, does not know that these are tipped workers, that they are only making \$2, \$3, or \$4 an hour. They are working hard.

We work hard for the money we make. We are very well paid here. It is a privilege to serve in the Senate. But when you think about those workers who are working very hard, their minimum wage is \$2.13 an hour. There is something not right about that.

One more point. The Center for American Progress completed an analysis of 20 years' worth of minimum wage increases in States across the country. They conclude that there is no clear evidence that the minimum wage leads to further job loss during periods of high unemployment.

The opponents of raising the minimum wage say that it is going to



cause price increases and that there are going to be layoffs. But what is interesting is that every time there is a minimum wage bill we are debating, the opponents say: You know, these businesses are going to have to raise their prices or lay people off to pay the minimum wage. But when an executive gets a \$1 million bonus, when a CEO gets paid \$12 million and gets a raise to \$16 million the next year, I never hear them say: Boy, they are going to have to lay people off to pay those executive salaries. It is only when it is low-wage workers that my friends on that side of the aisle stand and say: This is going to hurt business. This is going to hurt commerce. This is going to hurt employment.

Their arguments are weak. Their arguments are, in many cases, a bit hard-hearted. I wish my colleagues would do what Pope Francis said. Recently, Pope Francis exhorted his parish priests to go out and smell like the flock; go out among your parishioners and listen to them and try to understand their lives and try to live like them.

Well, a lot of those parishioners are minimum wage workers or slightly above minimum wage. Smelling like the flock might help some of my colleagues come to the conclusion that raising the minimum wage is important to do, is humane, is right for our country.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

#### THE UKRAINE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I take this time to share with my colleagues the tragic events that unfolded these past few weeks in the Ukraine. Ukraine is an incredibly important country. The recent events are tragic, the result of a corrupt government and loss of life.

I remember the Orange Revolution that took place in Ukraine, starting in November 2004, ending in January 2005. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians took to that protest to protest the corrupt election. They did it in a peaceful way.

They not only got the attention of the people of Ukraine but the attention of the world. As a result of that peaceful revolution, the government stood for new elections, free and fair elections. Democratic leadership was elected, and all of us thought the future for Ukraine was very positive.

I was in Kiev not long after that Orange Revolution. I had a chance to talk

to people who were involved, and I talked to the new leaders. I saw that sense of hope that Ukraine at long last would be an independent country without the domination of any other country and that the proud people would have a country that would respect their rights, that would transition into full membership in Europe and provide the greatest hope for future generations.

They started moving in that direction. As the Presiding Officer knows, there were agreements with Europe on immigration. They have been involved in military operations in close conjunction with NATO. Ukraine was and is an important partner of the United States and for Europe.

Then Victor Yanukovich came into power for a second time. Mr. Yanukovich took the country in a different direction. He was a corrupt leader. He had a close involvement with Russia.

Today there is some hope. The Parliament has brought in a new interim government. Presidential elections are now scheduled for May 25. But there are certain matters that are still very much in doubt. In the Crimea, which is a part of the Ukraine which has a large Russian population, it is unclear as to what is happening there. Pro-Russian sympathizers have taken over government buildings. It is not clear of Russia's involvement.

It is critically important that the international community have access to what is happening in the Crimea and make it clear that Russia must allow the Ukraine to control its own destiny. It is time for the international community to mobilize its resources to assist Ukraine's transition to a democratic, secure, and prosperous country.

The people of Ukraine have had an incredibly difficult history and over the last century have been subjected to two World Wars, 70 years of Soviet domination, including Stalin's genocidal famine.

Our assistance at this time will be a concrete manifestation that we do indeed stand by the people of Ukraine as they manifest their historic choice for freedom and democracy. Moreover, we need to help Ukraine succeed to realize the vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.

That is our desire and that is the desire of the people of Ukraine. They are moving on the right path. They critically need our help and that of the international community to make sure Russia does not try to dominate this country; that its desire to become part of Europe is realized; that free and fair elections can take place, and the rights of their people can be respected by their government.

Yesterday I heard from Swiss President and OSCE Chair-in-Office Burkhalter and welcomed his engagement and the important role the OSCE can play in Ukraine.

As a member of the Commission, I had the honor of chairing the Helsinki

Commission, which is our implementing arm to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. A Foreign Minister from one of the member states usually acts as our Chair-in-Office, and this year Mr. Burkhalter is not only the Foreign Minister of Switzerland, he is also the President of Switzerland. He is the person responsible for the direction of the organization. We had a hearing with him and Ukraine took a good part of our discussions.

The guiding principles of the OSCE is if they are going to have a prosperous country, if they are going to have a secure country, they have to have a country that respects the rights of its citizens. Respecting the rights of its citizens means they are entitled to good governance. They are entitled to a country that does not depend upon corruption in order to finance its way of life. Those are the principles of the OSCE. A country with good governance, respect for human rights, that takes on corruption, is a country in which there will be economic prosperity and a country which will enjoy security. That has been our chief function, to try to help other countries.

The meeting yesterday underscored the importance OSCE can play in the future of Ukraine, and we hope they will utilize those resources so Ukraine can come out of this crisis as a strong, democratic, and independent country.

There has to be accountability. There has to be accountability for those who are responsible for the deaths in Kiev. I mention that because, yes, there is a moral reason for that. Those who commit amoral atrocities should be held accountable. That is just a matter of basic rights. But there is also the situation when they don't bring closure here, it offers little hope that these circumstances will not be repeated in the future. If future government leaders believe they could do whatever they want and there will be no consequences for their actions, they are more likely to take the irresponsible actions we saw on Ukraine.

So, yes, it is important we restore a democratic government in Ukraine. It is important that government be independent and able to become a full member of Europe. It is important that government respect the human rights of its citizens, but it is also important they hold those responsible for these atrocities accountable for their actions.

The Obama administration took some action this past week. They did deny visas to certain members who were responsible for the Government of Ukraine, and they did freeze bank accounts of those who were involved in the corrupt practices in Ukraine. That was a good first step and I applaud their actions.

I remind my colleagues we passed the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act as part of the Russia PNTR legislation. I was proud to be the sponsor of the Sergei Magnitsky Rule

of Law Accountability Act. What it does—and it says it was amended to apply only to Russia—those who are involved in gross violations of internationally recognized human rights will be denied the privilege of being able to come to America, to get a visa and we will deny them the opportunity to use our banking system.

Why is that important? Because we found those corrupt officials want to keep their properties outside of their host country. They want to visit America. They want to use our banking system. They want their corrupt ways to be in dollars, not in rubles. Denying them that opportunity is an effective remedy for making sure they can't profit from all of their corruption.

That legislation was limited to Russia not by our design. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Finance Committee approved the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act as a global act applying beyond Russia.

Sergei Magnitsky was a young lawyer who discovered corruption in Russia. He did what he should have done—told the authorities about it. As a result, he was arrested, tortured, and killed because he did the right thing.

We took action to make sure those responsible could not benefit from that corruption. That was the Sergei Magnitsky bill. We felt, though, it should be a tool available universally. We had to compromise on that, and it was limited to Russia.

It is time to change that. Along with Senator MCCAIN, I have introduced the Global Human Rights Accountability Act, S. 1933. It has several bipartisan sponsors. It would apply globally. So, yes, it would apply to Ukraine. It would have congressional sanctions to the use of tools for denying visa applications and our banking privileges to those who are responsible for these atrocities. I believe our colleagues understand how important that is for us to do.

It is interesting that today the State Department issued its Human Rights Practices for 2013. This is a required report that we request. It gives the status of human rights records throughout the world, talking about problems.

I am sure my colleagues recognize that human rights problems are not limited to solely Russia or Ukraine, from Bahrain to China, to Bangladesh, from Belarus to Ethiopia, to Venezuela, from the Sudan to South Sudan, Syria, the list goes on and on and on.

The report lists all of the gross violations of human rights that have occurred. Unfortunately, this list is too long. I can name another dozen countries that are spelled out in this report. Human rights are universal, and it is our responsibility to act and show international leadership.

It takes time to pass good laws, as it should, which is why we must act with urgency now. The measures contemplated in my legislation have great

corrective power, but they are strongest when deployed in a timely manner, preferably before the outbreak of violence.

The year 2013 was a particularly challenging year for human rights and we cannot afford to be silent. The Global Human Rights Accountability Act serves as an encouragement for champions of democracy, promoters of civil rights, and advocates of free speech across the globe.

As the great human rights defender Nelson Mandela once said: "There are times when a leader must move ahead of the flock, go off in a new direction, confident that he is leading his people the right way."

In this great body, the Senate, we have a responsibility to lead the way in accountability for human rights. We have done that in the past. We have shown through our own example and we have shown through our interest in all corners of the world that this country will stand for the protection of basic human rights for all the people. We now have a chance to act by the passage of the global Magnitsky law. I hope my colleagues will join me in helping enact this new chapter and the next chapter in America's commitment to international human rights.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, yesterday, while relaying to the Senate some anecdotes he believed proved the success of ObamaCare, the majority leader stated this:

Despite all the good news, there are plenty of horror stories being told. All of them are untrue, but they are being told all over America.

Well, that statement, quite frankly, shocked me, and I am sure it would have shocked millions of Americans, if they had heard it, who are feeling the detrimental effects of this very unpopular law, the Affordable Care Act.

I have heard directly from countless Kansans about the devastating effects ObamaCare has had on them and their families. Most of the Kansans I speak with are concerned primarily about what the future will hold for their children and grandchildren. What type of life will we as parents and grandparents be passing on to future generations?

I can assure the majority leader that Kansans are salt-of-the-earth people. They are, most assuredly, not liars. They do not deserve to be called liars by any Member of this body.

Take Philip and his wife from Lenexa who are in their midfifties. Philip has been self-employed for the last 20 years but had maintained coverage through his wife's employer for most of that time. She now works for a much small-

er company which can only pay a fraction of the cost of their insurance, so it was much cheaper for him to purchase insurance in the individual market starting in 2013. Finding affordable coverage now, in 2014, has been a much greater challenge. He writes:

With the changes in health insurance due to implementation of the ACA for the next year, we shopped the Kansas exchange for 2014 plans. What we found was shocking.

They found that for the same level of coverage, they would now have to pay a premium more than double what they paid in 2013. On top of the higher premium, they would be faced with double the deductible and nearly double the out-of-pocket maximum.

In his letter Philip says:

Frankly, we anticipate a decline in income for the next two years, but still won't qualify for subsidies; this simply makes the "Affordable Health Care" unaffordable for us.

He continues:

The icing on the cake—my wife's employer has told her they expect to drop their health care coverage for their employees altogether in 2015 because of the added expenses of the ACA! I honestly don't know what we will do; we are not wealthy by any means and have not been able to fund our retirement plan for a couple of years now. We do not have sufficient money to retire at any time soon and ACA will take everything we could afford to save. We hope Congress can come up with a logical and truly affordable option to the ACA soon!

This is common criticism I have heard many times, and I can assure the majority leader that Philip's story is true.

I have also heard from members of the Kansas Disabled American Veterans service organization who have shared the difficulty and struggle of veterans having to relinquish their preferred health care plans due to cost increases caused by ObamaCare. They are now pursuing care through the VA, which presents a whole other host of new obstacles to receiving the care they deserve. So we have veterans who are unable to afford health care under the Affordable Care Act now coming to the veterans system and being unable to, anytime soon, enroll. In fact, their biggest concern is they will now have to wait 3 months to 6 months to get their first appointment.

The bottom line is that veterans will either pay more for their health benefits through ObamaCare and lose their preferred doctors or be forced to join the backlog of veterans seeking care. Neither is a good option for our veterans. Veterans in Kansas and across the Nation are feeling the burdens of ObamaCare. They have sacrificed so much for our country, and I can assure the majority leader that they are telling the truth.

Another example of how ObamaCare is hurting Kansans is from Salina, a town in the middle of our State. The nonprofit YMCA in Salina will be capping the schedules of part-time employees at 25 hours per week to avoid having to provide them health insurance benefits as part of ObamaCare. The administrator says:

It is unfortunate. We have a lot of good people who you'd love to have working more hours that we're going to have to make the cut. This is hitting nonprofits hard. A for-profit company, this cuts into their profits, but we don't have profits to cut into.

This YMCA is not alone in their efforts to trim costs. Numerous companies and organizations across Kansas are having to cut back the hours of part-time employees because of ObamaCare. And I can tell the majority leader once again that those people and those organizations are telling the truth.

Yesterday afternoon the majority leader came to the floor once again and read an opinion column from *The Hill* newspaper. This article, authored by Mark Mellman, supported the majority leaders' efforts to discredit the stories being told of Americans who are having very real struggles and those who have lost their health care coverage as a result of ObamaCare. The majority leader read this column on the Senate floor literally word for word; however, he stopped just short of the end of the column, and I wanted to finish reading the footnote of the column which he chose not to read. It was about the author.

Mellman is president of The Mellman Group and has worked for Democratic candidates and causes since 1982. Current clients include the Majority Leader of the Senate and the Democrat whip in the House.

I just wanted to complete the record, that the majority leader is reading an article by a Democratic consultant, employed by the majority leader, to furnish evidence that what he is saying about the untruths of people who are complaining about ObamaCare is based upon fact. Mark Mellman really is not the person to be quoting as to whether the Affordable Care Act is working.

I would also point out that ObamaCare has been heavily debated for years now. For 5 years we have been talking about the Affordable Care Act. During this time there have been so many broken promises, so many falsehoods, and so many direct lies. We heard them all.

"ObamaCare will lower all of our health care costs."

"ObamaCare won't cut Medicare."

"ObamaCare will create jobs."

And who can forget "If you like your doctor or health plan, you can keep them."

These were lies. These were untruths. They were promises made and summarily broken. This is why so many Americans are outraged. It is time for Washington to stop dismissing their concerns and start listening to them.

Another disturbing moment—in fact, I think perhaps the most disturbing part of what the majority leader said—after he read the column from *The Hill*, he said this:

It is time the American people spoke out against this terrible dishonesty and about those two brothers who are about as un-American as anyone I can imagine.

This really bothers me. Accusations about who is un-American are deeply troubling, and to me that is an unfor-

tunate comment when we refer to anyone. From the earliest days of our Republic, it has been a tactic exerted by those in power to humiliate and discredit those who come from different backgrounds or have a different point of view that challenges the people in power, and it is part of a strategy to convince ordinary Americans that sinister forces are working to undermine our country and our institutions. Ironically, by charging some person or group with being un-American or disloyal, the effort to stifle an exchange of ideas erodes the very foundation of our democratic government.

These accusations have been leveled during times of war, but they are just as prevalent during times of peace. We know of the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1797, the Know-Nothing Party taking aim at immigrants in the 1800s, and the Red Scare after the First World War.

In the process leading up to women's suffrage, critics of giving women the vote belittled them. One even suggested that women were too emotionally delicate to take on the task of voting. Thankfully, these ridiculous assertions could not derail the passage of the 19th Amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote.

Yet perhaps the most famous example is a Senator using his position to charge people as diverse as Hollywood actors and Army generals and Secretary of State George C. Marshall of political views which differed with the Senator's. In fact, the Senator believed their views were traitorous. He referred to such people as "enemies from within." Why would a Senator reach such a conclusion? Because those political views disagreed with his own. Maybe it was also for the headlines and attention he craved or perhaps he was just paranoid, in search of a bogeyman. For more than 5 years this Senator leveled the charges of "disloyalty" without any real evidence. Because of his flip-pant claims, he did untold damage to so many lives, with very little consequence to himself. Not until enough of his colleagues had enough and put an end to his campaign against other citizens did this unfortunate episode in our Nation's history come to an end. This tactic didn't end in 1950 and, indeed, it continues today.

I am disappointed by those who impugn President Obama, questioning his legitimacy and sincerity as he seeks to do what he believes is his best for the country. Yet it is undoubtedly a two-way street. The President dismissed those who opposed his candidacy in 2008 as people who "cling to guns or religion" or have "antipathy toward people who are not like them."

When I served in the House of Representatives in 2009, Speaker NANCY PELOSI said in the town hall meeting in August of that year that those with concerns about ObamaCare were "un-American."

No one has the right to determine whose beliefs are American or un-American—certainly no one in the

House of Representatives or the Senate.

It is troubling that there is a reflexive reaction in Congress to label political critics as un-American or disloyal. Recognizing disagreement is part of the decisionmaking process of our democracy, and a respectful dialogue between all Americans is critical to a well-functioning Republic. Certainly anything short of that is not worthy of the Senate floor.

I'm weary of repeated attempts to distract the American people from the rollout and poor performance of ObamaCare.

This week a New York Times/CBS poll found that only 6 percent of Americans believe that ObamaCare is "working well and should be kept in place as is." I ask the majority leader: Does that mean that the other 94 percent of Americans surveyed are liars?

In fact, ObamaCare is a disaster to our Nation's health care system, and it is a disaster to our country's economy. The American people have made their opinions known, and rather than remedy the situation and address their concerns, the majority leader and others are trying to change the conversation and attack the very Americans who have real, life-impacting concerns about their access to health care.

My friends on the other side of the aisle act as though the majority of Americans support ObamaCare. They do not. They never have. We didn't listen to them when ObamaCare was passed. We have not listened to them since. In fact, the same New York Times/CBS poll found that Americans "feel things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track" by a margin of nearly 2 to 1. This poll was comprised of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents, of which 63 percent feel things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track.

I agree that we are headed in the wrong direction, and I fear—like most Americans—that instead of righting the course, we have a Senate majority leader who will want to distract the hard-working Americans busy with their families, struggling, and living their lives.

Speaking of dysfunction, the majority leader is speaking about dysfunction in the Senate that he alone has the ability to control. The pilot of the plane cannot and should not blame the passengers for the turbulence.

I'm glad the majority leader mentioned the Senate feels like "Groundhog Day" or groundhog year. He is absolutely right. Over and over, how many times has the majority leader obstructed the Senate debate and votes on amendments? Over and over we see the same strategy from the majority leader to run the Senate according to his rules and his alone. He controls the Senate operations. He controls the ability to move past "Groundhog Day," and he controls whether or not his colleagues can advocate for amendments and have votes.

Republican Senators are not alone in this thinking—although I'm sure the majority leader wishes that it was just the Republicans complaining. Many Senate Democrats also feel the same way. They too have legislation. They too have amendments they would like to see in front of the Senate that would see the light of day.

One such amendment that the majority leader is using in his blame game is a bipartisan amendment offered by Senators Menendez and Kirk, a Republican and Democrat, with 59 Senate cosponsors. There is an overwhelming amount of Senate support for this amendment. So why can't we get the issue of Iran's nuclear capabilities to the Senate floor? Why does the Senate majority leader continue to obstruct the Senate process rather than return to regular order and allow the Senate to operate the way it was intended?

The dysfunction of the Senate ultimately hurts the American people, and the majority leader has the ability to change that. My hope is that we move beyond this time in the Senate's history, that we move beyond the same old, same old, and that we have the opportunity to chart a new path forward to restore the Senate to function as it should.

I have no interest in serving in a Senate that doesn't do its work. Neither the majority leader nor any other Member of this body has the ability to represent individual Americans' interest at any given moment.

We each represent people from our respective States who have different points of view. I understand that people have a different point of view depending upon where they live, their background, their experience, and their philosophy. This diversity of opinion is what makes this country and, by extension, the Senate such a force for good in the world.

These opposing viewpoints are by their very definition American. The diversity and disagreement among ourselves is actually American, not un-American. Whether it is the Kansas small business owner who fears losing health insurance or the brave participants of the Seneca Falls Convention, Americans have the right to be heard and the right to play a part in the American political process. No one has the right to call those people un-American.

The litmus test for what is or is not American behavior cannot be administered or measured in partisan terms. Yet the bulk of the comments made by the majority leader attempted to do just that.

I am disappointed that it is even necessary for me to be on the Senate floor to talk about these disparaging comments, but the American people deserve an accountable legislature.

Whether you agree or disagree with the direction of our country—if you disagree with the direction it is heading in or you think we are doing OK, you are still an American, and you

have the right to voice that opinion without having your allegiance to the United States called into question.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations on today's Executive Calendar: Nos. 568, 569, 565, and 571.

I further ask unanimous consent that the nominations be confirmed en bloc, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to any of the nominations; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; that President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, Senator GRASSLEY, the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, is unable to be on the floor at this time, and on his behalf I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I will read into the RECORD—maybe tonight, but if not, I will do it Monday—statements made in the past by the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee where he talked in detail about how foolish it would be to have cloture on nominations for judges—his exact words.

I am disappointed that there has been an objection, but as I indicated yesterday, we are in groundhog year. Why would this next week be any different than the rest of this year?

They have objected and obstructed—they meaning the Republicans in the Senate—everything. Look at what we just finished—and I mean finished. We just finished a bill that had been worked on for a long time by the junior Senator from Vermont, the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

This is a bill that would help veterans. No one disputes the bill would help veterans. All 26 veterans organizations, including the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, supported that legislation—plus 24 other veterans organizations. So what happens over here with the Republicans? They figured out a way to say no. They always do that. But the way they say no is to obstruct, and that is what they did on this veterans bill.

I hope every veteran in America understands the fact that we had some-

thing that would improve the lives of the fighting men and women who came back from Iraq and Afghanistan, and those Asian veterans from Vietnam and some from Korea and some from World War II who are still with us. Because of the continual obstruction over here to do anything they can to slow down the Obama administration, they are even willing to hurt veterans.

This was a bill that didn't take a single penny. It was paid for with leftover war money. We agreed to have amendments, but that is just all hot air from the Republicans. We would be willing to do these bills if they would allow us to have amendments, and they figured out a way to say no again.

So we have to invoke cloture on district court judges that my friend, the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, has said time and time again should not happen.

Either tonight or Monday I will read verbatim into the RECORD what he has said in the past.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

##### NOMINATION OF DEBO P. ADEGBILE TO BE AN ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL

Mr. REID. I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 659.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Debo P. Adegbile, of New York, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

##### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there is a cloture motion at the desk.

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

##### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Debo P. Adegbile, of New York, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Richard J. Durbin, Patty Murray, Barbara Boxer, Sheldon Whitehouse, Jack Reed, Carl Levin, Debbie Stabenow, Tom Udall, Martin Heinrich, Christopher Murphy, Michael F. Bennet, Maria Cantwell, Amy Klobuchar, Richard Blumenthal, Tom Harkin.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum required under rule XXII be waived for the cloture motion with respect to Calendar No. 659.

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

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. I move to proceed to legislative session.