

concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 3547, Space Launch Liability Indemnification Extension Act and the Omnibus Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2014.

Harry Reid, Barbara A. Mikulski, Benjamin L. Cardin, Christopher A. Coons, Patrick J. Leahy, Brian Schatz, Jack Reed, Tom Udall, Jeanne Shaheen, Tim Kaine, Patty Murray, Richard Blumenthal, Jeff Merkley, Mark Udall, Tom Harkin, Mark Begich, Mary L. Landrieu.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent the mandatory quorum call has been waived. The question is, Is it the sense of Senate that debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 3547 shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 72, nays 26, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 12 Leg.]

YEAS—72

Alexander	Franken	Moran
Ayotte	Gillibrand	Murkowski
Baldwin	Hagan	Murphy
Baucus	Harkin	Murray
Begich	Hatch	Nelson
Bennet	Heinrich	Pryor
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Reed
Blunt	Hirono	Reid
Booker	Hoeven	Rockefeller
Boozman	Isakson	Sanders
Boxer	Johnson (SD)	Schatz
Brown	Kaine	Schumer
Burr	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Kirk	Shelby
Cardin	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Carper	Landrieu	Tester
Casey	Leahy	Udall (CO)
Coats	Levin	Udall (NM)
Cochran	Manchin	Vitter
Collins	Markey	Warner
Coons	McCaskill	Warren
Donnelly	Menendez	Whitehouse
Durbin	Merkley	Wicker
Feinstein	Mikulski	Wyden

NAYS—26

Barrasso	Grassley	Portman
Corker	Heller	Risch
Cornyn	Inhofe	Roberts
Crapo	Johanns	Rubio
Cruz	Johnson (WI)	Scott
Enzi	Lee	Sessions
Fischer	McCain	Thune
Flake	McConnell	Toomey
Graham	Paul	

NOT VOTING—2

Chambliss	Coburn
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 72, the nays are 26. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

Cloture having been invoked, the motion to refer falls as being inconsistent with cloture.

Under the previous order, the motion to concur with an amendment is withdrawn. All postcloture time is yielded back.

The question is on agreeing to the motion to concur.

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of New Mexico). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 72, nays 26, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 13 Leg.]

YEAS—72

Alexander	Gillibrand	Moran
Ayotte	Graham	Murkowski
Baldwin	Hagan	Murphy
Baucus	Harkin	Murray
Begich	Hatch	Nelson
Bennet	Heinrich	Pryor
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Reed
Blunt	Hirono	Reid
Booker	Hoeven	Rockefeller
Boozman	Isakson	Sanders
Boxer	Johnson (SD)	Schatz
Brown	Kaine	Schumer
Cantwell	King	Shaheen
Cardin	Kirk	Shelby
Carper	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Casey	Landrieu	Tester
Coats	Leahy	Udall (CO)
Cochran	Levin	Udall (NM)
Collins	Manchin	Vitter
Coons	Markey	Warner
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warren
Durbin	Menendez	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Merkley	Wicker
Franken	Mikulski	Wyden

NAYS—26

Barrasso	Grassley	Portman
Burr	Heller	Risch
Corker	Inhofe	Roberts
Cornyn	Johanns	Rubio
Crapo	Johnson (WI)	Scott
Cruz	Lee	Sessions
Enzi	McCain	Thune
Fischer	McConnell	Toomey
Flake	Paul	

NOT VOTING—2

Chambliss	Coburn
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 3547 is agreed to.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I move to reconsider the vote and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

PROVIDING FOR A CORRECTION IN THE ENROLLMENT OF H.R. 3547

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will report H. Con. Res. 74 by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 74) providing for a correction in the enrollment of H.R. 3547.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the concurrent resolution is agreed to and the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

HOMEOWNER FLOOD INSURANCE AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa is recognized.

FUNCTIONING OF THE SENATE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I would like to continue the discussion about the description of the Senate as a deliberative body and continue to echo the call for the distinguished minority leader for a return to a functional Senate. I have spoken on this issue before. I think it is best to go back to the Constitution and the people who wrote the Constitution for an understanding of what was intended when the Senate was set up. So I do not intend to dwell on the use of the so-called nuclear option related to the filibuster.

The reason I am not going to spend my time on the nuclear option today as in previous speeches is the majority leader claims the Senate's dysfunction is related to some unprecedented use of filibusters. I think that has been thoroughly debunked. This claim is directly refuted by the very source he has pointed to, the Congressional Research Service.

More importantly, it has been debunked by fact checkers in important media sources in America. Yet, as we know, the Senate is dysfunctional beyond a doubt. To get to the bottom of how and, more importantly, why the Senate is not functioning, we must have a clear understanding of just how the Senate is supposed to function. As I just said, we should turn to the Constitution.

For an understanding of what the Constitution means, there is no better source for this than going back to the Federalist Papers. I have referenced the Federalist Papers before on this subject, but it is worth the detail about what the Framers of the Constitution had in mind when the Senate was created.

Federalist Paper 62, which is usually attributed to the Father of the Constitution, James Madison, begins to lay out the rationale for how the Senate is to operate. He mentioned that the number of Members and the length of terms are different between the House and Senate. Then he said this—but before I quote, I hope you understand that when something was written in 1787 and 1788, they use a little different form of English than what we use. But it is pretty clear what they intended to say about explaining the difference between the House and the Senate. So here begins my quote of James Madison:

In order to form an accurate judgment on both of these points, it will be proper to inquire into the purposes which are to be answered by a Senate; and in order to ascertain these, it will be necessary to review the inconveniences which a Republic must suffer from the want of such an institution.

End of that quote, but I will have several other quotes from the Federalist Papers. In this specific quote, in

other words, Madison is going to tell us the purpose of the Senate, starting with the problems a Republic would face without a Senate and how the Senate is designed to correct those problems. As we hear from Madison about how our legislative process is supposed to work, I would encourage my colleagues to think about major legislation that has been considered in the Senate in recent years.

In fact, arguably the most major bill that has passed in recent years, President Obama's health care law, serves as one example. When that law was considered, one party held all political branches of government: the Presidency, the House of Representatives, and even had a supermajority in the Senate. That means they could run the Senate like the House, without the need to compromise with any in the minority.

At that particular time, my party was then and still is in the minority. We are now dealing with daily problems caused by the way the health care law was written, which is something to keep in mind as Madison describes in these coming quotes. The problems the Senate was designed to prevent, here is the first problem Madison discusses. It is a fairly long quote from the Federalist. First he says:

First. It is a misfortune incident to republican government, though in less degree than to other governments, that those who administer it may forget their obligations to their constituents, and prove unfaithful to their important trust. In this point of view, a senate, as a second branch of the legislative assembly, distinct from, and dividing the power with, a first, must be in all cases a salutary check on the government. It doubles the security to the people, by requiring the concurrence of two distinct bodies in schemes of usurpation or perfidy, where the ambition or corruption of one would otherwise be sufficient. This is a precaution founded on such clear principles, and now so well understood in the United States, that it would be more than superfluous to enlarge on it.

Then Madison goes on:

I will barely remark, that as the improbability of sinister combinations will be in proportion to the dissimilarity in the genius of the two bodies, it must be politic to distinguish them from each other by every circumstance which will consist with a due harmony in all proper measures, and with the genuine principles of republican government.

I see it this way: In other words, Madison is saying having a second Chamber of Congress designed to operate differently from the House makes it less likely that a partisan agenda that does not reflect the views of Americans will pass. That is not a function the Senate currently performs, as it has been run on a purely partisan term since 2007.

For example, we will recall that the President's health care proposal did not enjoy widespread public support. Yet it passed the Senate along strictly partisan lines with little input sought or accepted from the minority party. In fact, before a final bill could be passed reconciling the House and Sen-

ate bills, a special election was held in the liberal State of Massachusetts, resulting in an election of an opponent of the health care reform proposal.

Instead of moderating the proposal based upon public will and doing it maybe just a little bit so it could attract even one Republican vote, the House passed a draft Senate bill, then they used a budget tool called reconciliation to ram another bill through the Senate with a simply majority to change items in the first bill.

That is not how Madison intended a bicameral Congress to work. The next point Madison makes:

Secondly. The necessity of a senate is not less indicated by the propensity of all single and numerous assemblies to yield to the impulse of sudden and violent passions, and to be seduced by factious leaders into intemperate and pernicious resolutions. Examples on this subject might be cited without number; and from proceedings within the United States, as well as from the history of other nations. But a position that will not be contradicted, need not be proved. All that need be remarked is, that a body which is to correct this infirmity ought itself to be free from it, and consequently ought to be less numerous. It ought, moreover, to possess great firmness, and consequently ought to hold its authority by a tenure of considerable duration.

That describes what he thought the Senate should be, what the Senate is. But my point is, the Senate is not functioning that way. In other words, if we have just one legislative Chamber with a large number of Members, it is likely to make laws hastily based on a partisan agenda without thinking through all the long-term consequences. A hastily passed partisan agenda that ignores the long-term consequences, does that not remind you of the health care law? Remember how then-Speaker PELOSI said the House had to pass a bill to find out what was in it?

They were in such a rush they could not be bothered to read it.

The Senate is intended, as Madison just said, as I quoted, to be smaller, to be more deliberate, and to be less partisan. Imagine if the Senate had been allowed to operate in a deliberative fashion and craft a truly bipartisan health care proposal. If that had happened, we certainly could have come up with something more workable than the current law.

Madison continues his explanation of the rationale for the Senate:

Thirdly. Another defect to be supplied by a senate lies in a want of due acquaintance with the objects and principles of legislation. It is not possible that an assembly of men called for the most part from pursuits of a private nature, continued in appointment for a short time, and led by no permanent motive to devote the intervals of public occupation to a study of the laws, the affairs, and the comprehensive interests of their country, should, if left wholly to themselves, escape a variety of important errors in the exercise of their legislative trust. It may be affirmed, on the best grounds, that no small share of the present embarrassments of America is to be charged on the blunders of our governments; and that these have pro-

ceeded from the heads rather than the hearts of most of the authors of them. What indeed are all the repealing, explaining, and amending laws, which fill and disgrace our voluminous codes, but so many monuments of deficient wisdom; so many impeachments exhibited by each succeeding against each preceding session; so many admonitions to the people, of the value of those aids which may be expected from a well-constituted Senate?

A good government implies two things: first, fidelity to the object of government, which is the happiness of the people; secondly, a knowledge of the means by which that object can best be attained. Some governments are deficient in both these qualities; most governments are deficient in the first. I scruple not to assert, that in American governments too little attention has been paid to the last. The federal Constitution avoids this error; and what merits particular notice, it provides for the last in a mode which increases the security for the first.

That is a long quote. But Madison is essentially saying that the House is to be composed of a representative slice of American citizens while the Senate is supposed to be composed of individuals who have more experience and approach public policy more thoughtfully. I am sure many people might question whether individuals in the House or even in this Senate match those descriptions today that Madison lays out.

But it is true that the rules of the House allow for new ideas to be quickly translated into legislation.

By contrast, the process in the Senate has historically been slower and more deliberative to refine those ideas into law that can stand the test of time. Note that Madison complains about all the "repealing, explaining, and amending laws" that have had to be passed by the unicameral legislatures of that time—of the early days of our Republic.

Our early experiences with passing bills quickly, without thinking things through, led to the understanding that we should take our time and get it right in the first place.

Getting back to Madison and those quotes I gave, that is what the Senate is supposed to do. Failure of the Senate to take the time, examine, and take time to revise legislation is quite obvious. It results in bad laws that don't work.

We now have a situation with the health care law where the President claims the authority to unilaterally suspend or reinterpret parts of the law that are clearly unworkable.

That is very similar to the embarrassing situation Madison refers to, to have a constant stream of "repealing, explaining, and amending laws," except the President is doing all of the repealing, all of the explaining, and all of the amending, unilaterally.

Our constitutional system is not designed to pass a lot of legislation quickly, and that can be frustrating, particularly to any majority party anxious to enact its agenda.

Still, our deliberative process is a design and not a flaw. Based on experience, the Framers of our Constitution

determined that it was better to get it right the first time than to subject the American people to the upheavals of laws that need to be constantly amended or repealed. The House was designed to act quickly. The Senate was designed to be a deliberative body, implying a slower approach to legislating.

The fundamental problem is that the current majority leader is trying to run the Senate like the House, and the Senate was not designed to be operated in that way. Sure—with the majority then and now the majority, the same majority when they had 60 votes—it was possible to ram legislation through the Senate without any deliberation, but that is no longer the reality.

When the majority leader brings a bill to the floor, routinely blocking amendments and then rapidly moves to end consideration of the bill, that means the Senate is presented with a measure as a fait accompli and has to take it or, the opposite, leave it.

In other words, the majority leadership wants their agenda approved, no questions asked, or nothing at all.

The fact is, if the majority leader allowed the Senate to deliberate, we could get a lot more done than we have been doing. Sure, we might not get as many laws passed as some people might like. The full Senate, through its deliberation, may alter legislation somewhat from how the majority leadership would prefer. Still, we would be able to accomplish some important legislation. But, no, that is not acceptable, we are told. One week ago today there was a strong debate on that very issue. For all the talk about getting things done, the majority leadership has demonstrated repeatedly with cloture motion after cloture motion that it would rather grind this body to a halt than allow the slightest alteration of their agenda.

The latest message from the majority leadership is that they will respect the rights of Senators to offer an amendment only if they have certain assurances about the final outcome. The senior Senator from New York implied that is the way it used to be done.

Well, I want to assure that Senator that in the 33 years I have served in the Senate, it has never been done that way. I have managed a lot of bills over the years, and if I had tried to impose that requirement, I would have been laughed at, to say the least.

Since when did duly elected Senators have to negotiate for the right to represent their constituents? An open amendment process should be the default situation, not something that is granted at the sufferance of the majority party leadership.

We must get back then to what we call in the Senate regular order. I would say do things the way Madison intended. That means an open amendment process without preconditions or special limitations on what amendments will be allowed.

Cloture shouldn't even be contemplated until after a substantial

number of amendments have been processed. That was the standard practice when the Senate got things done, when we accomplished things.

Again, Madison describes a Senate that is to represent all Americans, not only one party. It was designed to be more thoughtful and deliberative and, whether we like it or not, slower than the House of Representatives.

The Senate's purpose is to make sure that Congress passes fewer but better laws. We saw what happened when the Senate was controlled entirely by one party while the voices of the minority party and the citizens they represented were ignored. We got a deeply flawed health care law and the American people are paying the price. Yet the majority leader insists on running the Senate as if he still has 60 votes, doesn't have to compromise, and even refuses to compromise. That is not how the authors of our Constitution intended the Senate to work and, of course, it isn't working.

The Senate is facing a crisis, and the only way to solve it is to restore the Senate as a deliberative body envisioned by the authors of the Constitution and express it in an explanatory way in the Federalist Papers.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

SENATE FUNCTIONING

Mrs. BOXER. I appreciate the fact that Senator GRASSLEY has given us his view of how the Senate ought to work. When the Senator says more deliberative and knowing how many filibusters have been supported on that side, that is what it says to me. As someone who didn't want to change the filibuster rules because I thought maybe we would come to some agreement, and we wouldn't be facing historic numbers of filibusters, let me say what the majority leader did was the right thing. It was the right thing.

I have been in Washington a long time. I came to the House in 1983. The Senate worked well. It isn't working well.

What the majority leader said is how can we have a President, be he or she Republican or Democratic, how can we have that President function without a team in place, a team, their team. One person can't run a country; they need a team. One Senator can't run our offices; we need a team.

My God, what if we were told that we couldn't put our team together unless we had a vote that wasn't a majority vote, it had to be a supermajority? We would never get anything done. We would be running in circles. It would be very difficult.

It sounds to me as if my friend wants to go back to the bad old days where we would have all of these nominees objected to, stalled. It took 154 days to get the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

My view, having been here, loved this institution, loved my work, and enjoyed my colleagues on both sides of

the aisle, the Senate has changed because the parties have moved so far apart. Let's call it what it is. In my eyes Republicans have moved so far to the right that, unlike years ago when I came, it is very difficult to get anything done legislatively.

That is why today is one of those bright, rare moments. My hat is off to Senator MIKULSKI, Senator SHELBY, and their House counterparts. We actually got something done. Half of the Republicans joined all of the Democrats to pass an Omnibus appropriations bill. This is a good thing for America. No side got everything it wanted, we know that. Do you know what the American people received? They got compromise, they got security, and they got stability. In the near future we are not going to have shutdowns, shouting matches, and debates through the night on whether we should have a government.

We need more legislating such as this. That is why I so look forward to getting the Water Resources Development Act done. This is so important to so many of our States. We need to do flood control. We need to do adaptation. We need to make sure there is recreation on our wetlands and so on. We need dredging in our ports. Those are the economic engines of our Nation.

We have a bill we passed. Over in the House they have a bill. We are now in the middle of trying to conference the differences, and I am very hopeful we are going to get it done. Senator VITTER and I are working together to get it done. It is a little slower than we would like in terms of progress, but I am convinced we are going to have a bill before this body. We need to take care of the people's business.

Guess what. The President of the United States has a right to get his team in place. It is as simple as it is.

The people know it. I go home and the people say: Hooray, thank God you people are doing something. You are getting people confirmed.

Then we have the courts. We have courts where the judgeships are vacant. Justice delayed is justice denied. We need those judges in their places. The Senator from Iowa, I remember, made a big, eloquent speech about how we wanted to "pack" the courts. Anyone who knows anything about history knows pack the courts means wanting to add more judges and put your people in it. It doesn't mean filling vacancies. I think he got off that. But that was something to listen to.

We need to take care of the people's business and not play politics depending on who is in the White House. Unemployment insurance was a perfect example of this.

Under George W. Bush, between putting in place the unemployment insurance and extending it, we did it five times, no offsets. Now all of a sudden the Republicans—people are struggling. I am stunned that we couldn't come together and extend unemployment insurance for the 1.5 million people right

now and the 250,000 Californians included in that 1.5 million who have run out of hope.

The Republicans said: Pay for it, even though the deficit has been cut in half. They have suddenly noticed the deficit. After George Bush it was \$1.4 trillion. They put two wars on the credit card, and they put a huge tax cut for millionaires on the credit card. Oh, no problem. Now they have discovered the deficit even though it has been cut in half by this President. Oh, we have to pay for it.

OK, we said, we have to pay for it, we will pay for it. We gave them an offset that we took out of PAUL RYAN's budget. It wasn't good enough for them. Then they said: We want amendments. We have to have amendments, just give us some amendments. I will give you some unemployment insurance for these struggling people.

Then HARRY REID: Twenty amendments, OK; 5 a side and 5 side-by-sides, 20 amendments.

Oh, no, that wasn't good enough.

It is childish. People are struggling. They are deciding whether they can put heat on in their house. They are wondering whether they can pay the rent, whether they are going to lose their homes, whether they are going to have to beg other family members for their help. This is outrageous. Outrageous.

Income inequality is outrageous.

Does the Presiding Officer know that 400 families are worth more in wealth than 150 million Americans? Let me say that again: Four hundred families in America are worth more than half the United States of America. And when there were tax cuts for those people, I never heard one word from one Republican about a pay-for. The deficit soared. They all voted to go to war. No problem. But we want to help these families who are desperate—middle-class families, people who have paid into the workers unemployment insurance fund, people who are looking for work because they can't get that extended unemployment unless they can prove that—and no. Nobody is home over there.

I appreciate that some of my colleagues made a speech about poverty. Great. How about doing something about it? How about doing something about it, and not just speechifying? Where are they in raising the minimum wage? I don't know, maybe they will come with us. I don't see it. I really don't see it. I hope so. I pray so. I do. So far, I don't see it.

In the last Presidential election of 2012, the Republican leader said his top priority was defeating President Obama. That is what the Republican leader said—not working for the people of this country, not passing legislation to make their life better, not moving forward and making sure the air we breathe is clean, the water we drink is safe, not making sure our kids have a good education and workers get job training—no. Top priority: Defeating

President Obama. President Obama won; so why don't you wake up and smell the roses and understand we need to work together. You have to accept reality.

Look. I have had my candidates in the past win and lose. I have been here through tough elections. We lost the Senate, then we won the Senate. We lost the House, then we won the House. We won the Presidency, then we lost it. Guess what. I had to understand that when it comes to legislating, we put that aside. We fight hard during an election, but once it is over you don't carry that over. You work together.

But too many on the other side are politically motivated. All they want to do is hurt our President, day in and day out criticizing him endlessly, not working with him. He has offered that olive branch over and over, whether it is on economic recovery, jobs, health care, the environment, income inequality—even foreign policy—day after day.

Here is the thing you never hear from the other side, so I am going to talk about it tonight. When President Obama took office, the economy was losing over 700,000 jobs a month. Now we have added 8 million private-sector jobs in the past 45 months. How does that compare to George W. Bush? After 8 years in office, President Bush's record was that we lost 665,000 private-sector jobs. So far we have added 8 million private-sector jobs in the past 45 months.

When President Obama took office—we remember those days, frightening days with the stock market collapsing. Now the stock market has gone up 10,000 points. That is unbelievable. The GDP—gross domestic product—was contracting at a rate of 8.3 percent in the fourth quarter of 2008 as we said goodbye to George W. Bush. Now we just learned that the GDP grew by 4.1 percent in the third quarter. Is this President satisfied? Are we? No. But have we turned it around? Yes. Does the President ever get one ounce of credit for any of this? No. No.

How about looking at our deficit. Let's look at that, something the Republicans claim is a very central part of it. This is it—a \$1.4 trillion deficit down now to 680, going down to 560, and falling at the fastest rate in many, many years, just as health care costs are not rising the way they used to. Do you think we would hear one word about it from the other side? No. No.

Even on foreign policy, even on foreign policy, politics used to stop at the water's edge. Senator GRASSLEY has a historic perspective. I do too. Politics used to stop at the water's edge when it came to foreign policy. No more. No more.

But you would never know the deficit has been cut in half, and you would never know that 8 million private-sector jobs have been created if you listen to my friends on the other side because they can't give any credit to President Obama. But history will. History will.

The last thing I am going to talk about is health care. I listened to my

colleague Senator CRUZ go after this President and the Democrats on health care. So let us look at a few things.

First fact: Even though we had a horrible roll-out of the health care site—not in California but the Federal site, healthcare.gov—and a couple of States had a horrible roll-out, let's put that aside. This is what we know.

There are more now, but I didn't have a chance to make a new chart. We are getting to 10 million Americans, but over 9 million Americans have new, secure health insurance; 3 million young adults have stayed on their parents insurance policies; 3.9 million are on Medicaid; and there are 2.1 million exchange plans, the private plans.

Let me show this another way on the private plans—the 2.1 million. Now we think it is more. It is a little bit more. Here we are. Very, very tough roll-out. Nothing worked. Now it is working, and it is spiking, and it is only going to get better.

But you wouldn't know that because Senator CRUZ keeps saying over and over: What have the Democrats in the Senate done to protect the people from ObamaCare? I have to protect the people from him because if he had his way, he would repeal ObamaCare. I ask you: What is going to happen to those young people if Senator CRUZ has his way and we repeal ObamaCare? What happens to the 3 million young adults? They are back on their own. They have no insurance. They are back at the emergency room. What happens to those on expanded Medicaid? Forget it. What happens to the exchanges? They would be gone.

So while Senator CRUZ says we have done nothing to protect the people, the opposite is true. We stand in support of the people—the people's right to get affordable health care. Do we have the perfect answer on every front? No. Do we have to make corrections? Of course.

We had a meeting with the President yesterday. He is reaching out his hand to the Republicans and Democrats. If we can fix this in any way and make it work better, we will.

Let's look at some of our other charts as far as what our Republican colleagues want to do when they say repeal ObamaCare. I am telling you, 400,000 Californians have enrolled, and now it is 500,000. It is 500,000 Californians who have enrolled in an exchange plan through—coveredCA.com. This is working in my State. It is working.

I am not going to allow Senator CRUZ to take the benefits away from my people who are writing me letters—and I have some of them here, and I will read a little bit of those stories.

John Nunnemacher is a 43-year-old freelance graphic artist from San Jose, and the last time he had health insurance was 15 years ago, when his employer paid for coverage. But as of January 1, John is covered by a plan he can finally afford. This is what he told the San Jose Mercury News:

I hoped this day would come. I worried that it wouldn't. And I'm very glad that it finally has.

So he is happy, and I am not going to let Senator CRUZ take away his insurance. Let's be clear. Let's be clear. He waited for a long time, and I am not going back. We can't go back to those days when there was no insurance for our young people. We can't go back to the days when being a woman was a preexisting condition, and you got charged double that of a man. We can't go back to the days where kids were thrown off their parents' policies. We just can't go back.

Amy Torregrossa, 27, is from San Francisco. She had been without insurance since July, when coverage through her partner's company ended because he changed jobs. She has a congenital heart defect and a history of high blood pressure. She no longer runs because she says "if I twist my ankle or get hit by a car . . . any doctor visit is so expensive."

She signed up on Covered California for a silver plan costing \$310 a month. She made sure her cardiologist was in the insurer's network and plans to schedule a checkup for early this year.

Amy, I am not going to let anyone take this away from you. I am not.

Michelle Strong, 57, is a self-employed product designer. For many years she could not afford any insurance at all because of a false-positive—a false positive—test for lupus, which incorrectly flagged her as having a preexisting condition. For the past 15 years she could only afford catastrophic insurance. Now, thanks to a tax credit, she will pay \$55 a month, with no deductible, and a \$3 copay. Here is what she said:

It just blows my mind that I can get health insurance at this price. I can finally afford checkups, tests, and age-related visits.

Michelle, I am not going to let anyone take your insurance away from you. You deserve it.

Elaine Post, 64, from West Hills, CA. She told CNN:

When I first got laid off, I tried to get private insurance through the big companies. They all rejected me . . . wanted to charge me really, really high premiums for not very good insurance.

Now Elaine has coverage through a bronze plan through Covered California that costs \$461 a month.

Elaine, you are going to keep your insurance and we are going to protect you.

Judith Silverstein, 49, is a Californian who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2007. Her family helps her pay the \$750 monthly cost of her existing plan—which she only had because of Federal law requiring that insurers who provide employer-based insurance continue to offer coverage if the employer goes out of business, as hers did; otherwise, she would be uninsured because of her MS. "I researched the options," she says. "Nobody's going to sell you insurance in the individual market if you have MS." But next year she will get a subsidy that will get her a silver level plan for \$50 a month.

Last summer Ellen Holzman and Meredith Vezina, a married couple in

San Diego County, got kicked off their long-term Kaiser health plan, for which they had been paying more than \$1,300 a month. When they applied for a plan with a new insurer, they couldn't get coverage because Ellen disclosed that she might have carpal tunnel syndrome. Through Covered California, they found a plan through Sharp Healthcare that will cover them both with a subsidy for a total premium of \$142 a month. Holzman says, "If not for the Affordable Care Act, our ability to get insurance would be very limited, if we could get it at all."

Jason Noble, 44, who has his own property management firm in Southern California, found a gold plan that will cover his wife and their three children for a little less than \$1,300 a month. That is slightly more than they would be paying this year for the plan they had in 2013, but the benefits are much greater, including pediatric dental coverage. Their family deductible will fall from \$3,400 to zero. Last year, the family had a health scare that ran them \$1,800 in out-of-pocket expenses, but next year, a similar event would cost them nothing. "It's definitely a good deal," Noble says.

Barbara Neff of Santa Monica, who had been stuck in a bad plan because of a preexisting condition, said she is relieved that under Obamacare, she will get life-saving preventive care at no cost. Neff said, "I have been paying for my mammograms out of pocket, and that's \$400 to \$450 per year," Neff says. "That type of care is 100 percent covered under this new policy."

Rakesh Rikhi of San Jose, CA, paid \$950 a month last year to insure himself, his wife and two children with Kaiser. Through Covered California, he will be able to get a similar Kaiser plan that saves his family \$400 a month.

Tim Wilsbach, a 40-year-old TV editor who lives in Culver City with his family, had been paying for a bare bones policy with an \$11,000 deductible for himself and his 4-year-old son, and another policy with a \$5,000 deductible for his wife. Wilsbach checked out his options on the Covered California website, and was pleased to find a plan for the whole family that offers broader coverage, a much lower \$4,000 deductible and a more affordable monthly premium. "Our premium went down, not quite 100 bucks, and just looking through what the plan covers versus what used to be covered, yeah, I'm quite happy about it," Wilsbach said.

Allan Pacela, from Santa Maria, CA, is a retired engineer on Medicare. His wife was insured through Cigna, under a group plan offered by her husband's engineers' society, and because of preexisting conditions, could not leave the plan even though premiums had gone up to \$20,000 per year, because no other plan would take her. This year, her insurer canceled her entire plan, leaving her with no insurance. "So we turned to Obamacare," Allan told his local paper. "She found it simple and easy to sign up through an agent in a 10-

minute phone call. She obtained their best plan, providing much, much better coverage than in the past. . . . My wife would not have insurance coverage at all as of January 1, if not for Obamacare. And, here's the kicker—we now are saving \$8,000 per year, for a very much better plan."

Megan Foster, from Kern County, CA, said, "My mom is finally able to get health insurance after being denied for so long because of her Crohn's disease and epilepsy, and it's for an affordable price. She works full time but her job doesn't offer benefits and she can't work without her medicine. It's not a perfect solution, but I am happy that my mom doesn't have to choose any more between medicine or groceries."

Lori Greenstein Bremner is a cancer survivor, a single mother and a self-employed real estate agent in Sonoma, CA. Before the Affordable Care Act, she struggled to obtain and afford health insurance because of her pre-existing condition. Now Lori says, "In January, for the first time since my diagnosis 36 years ago, I will have an individual health plan that offers quality coverage for me and my family. I will save \$628 every month on premiums. Best of all—I wasn't even asked if I've ever had cancer."

Mr. President, I just want to say that when you listen to the naysayers and the bad news bears and everyone who comes here and starts criticizing, you should get to the bottom of it. Look at this 9 million number, headed toward 10 million, and understand what is happening in our Nation. People are getting health coverage.

Here is the deal. The way we did it, ObamaCare, is just like it was in Massachusetts when Governor Romney put it through. That is where the ideas came from. We did not do another plan. We did that type of plan, and it is working in Massachusetts where I believe 95 percent of the people are covered.

Now, I will close with a couple of other protections that are in effect, so that you can see why, when TED CRUZ and my other Republican colleagues and friends come to the floor who want to repeal ObamaCare, I'm saying: No way. You want to work with us to make it better? Absolutely. But I am not going to let my constituents lose their insurance. You want to tell your constituents they can lose their insurance, that is your business, but don't mess with California.

Look here: Already in effect, 3 million young adults insured through their parents' plans; 71 million Americans are getting free preventive care, such as checkups and birth control and immunizations.

You want to take that away from Texans, be my guest. You are not going to do it because we are not going to let you do it.

Health reforms in effect: 17 million kids with preexisting conditions, such as asthma and diabetes, cannot be denied coverage. Insurers cannot cancel

your health insurance because you get sick. No lifetime limits on coverage. No annual limits on coverage.

You can't deny coverage or charge more for preexisting conditions. You can't charge women more than men. You can't put annual limits on a plan.

Women. Women. Two-thirds of women are on the minimum wage. Two-thirds of minimum wage workers are women. So if you don't support raising the minimum wage, you are taking on the women, and that is a fact. They are not students. They are not youngsters.

Look. Women now can get contraception so they can plan their families. Well-women visits, STD screening, breastfeeding support, domestic violence screening, gestational diabetes screening, HIV screening, HPV testing, this is all happening because of ObamaCare.

So I say to anyone within the sound of my voice—if I haven't put you to sleep—when anyone gets on the floor and starts complaining about ObamaCare and wanting to repeal it, just say to them: Why do you want to hurt the people of this country who have waited so long to get health insurance, who have suffered so much, who have gone bankrupt because somebody had the misfortune of getting cancer? Why do you want to go back to those days? That is not good for America. Just because it was President Obama who signed the bill?

The Affordable Care Act is now called ObamaCare. What a wonderful thing for this President. Anyone who stands and says they want to take away these benefits is hurting the American people and I am going to collect these stories and I am going to come to the floor and read them. This is about real people getting secure insurance for the first time in their lives, and it is affordable. No one is going to turn back the clock. We can't go back to those days.

So we have to deal with making this health care bill work the best it can. We have to work on income inequality. We have to come back and still work for unemployment insurance extension for the 1.5 million Americans who desperately need help. We have to work on making sure there is a bright future for our families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

PENSACOLA NAVAL AIR STATION

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I am going to get to another issue in a moment, but there is a special anniversary in Florida I wish to commemorate, and it is Naval Air Station Pensacola which is now celebrating its centennial anniversary. NAS Pensacola, as it is more commonly known, is a Florida institution and is known as the Cradle of Naval Aviation.

The first naval airplane flight from Pensacola took place on February 2, 1914. Over 325,000 alums have gone on to bravely serve with honor in our wars, and they have also delighted crowds

across the country as part of the Blue Angels. They have made their mark on the Florida Panhandle and on our Nation's defense in the process.

In fact, one of our colleagues, JOHN MCCAIN, trained there. He of course went on to serve our country heroically and admirably and then has also served us in the Senate. Others who have passed through there include many NASA astronauts. Alan Shepard, Neil Armstrong, among others, began their aviation careers at NAS Pensacola, and of course eventually went on to become astronauts and made an immeasurable impact on American and world history.

NAS Pensacola is also the final resting place for thousands of fallen warriors at the Barrancas National Cemetery, a place which truly humbles visitors and reminds us to be thankful that America has been blessed with so many courageous patriots throughout our history.

Today there are over 17,000 service men and women who continue their service to America at NAS Pensacola, and there are an additional 7,000 civilians who support the base's operations. They are part of a real community, where parents are raising their kids, and where many veterans who once served there decide to make it their permanent home. We are proud of this in the Florida Panhandle. It makes our State a better place.

So as the celebrations get underway this weekend, I join our State and our entire Nation in celebrating 100 years of military excellence at NAS Pensacola. We truly give thanks to all the brave men and women who have made this military installation the crown jewel of our national defense and contributed to America's exceptional history.

OBAMACARE TAXPAYER BAILOUT PREVENTION ACT

I also wish to take a moment to talk about an emerging problem with the health care law which has only begun to filter out in the news cycle but bears watching in the days and weeks to come.

As we all know, a key part of the health care law is the exchanges, which are theoretically supposed to be competitive private marketplaces where individuals can go online either through their State exchange or the Federal exchange and buy health insurance at a competitive price, and they can choose between different plans. That is the idea behind a health exchange.

In and of itself, the idea of an exchange is not a bad one, if appropriately administered and it doesn't come accompanied with all the other things the health care law came accompanied with. But there is a problem with the way the exchanges are now designed which has not yet received the attention it deserves but, I promise, we are going to be hearing a lot about in the days to come.

The technical term is risk corridors. What it basically means is companies

that participate in an exchange or a marketplace of insurance are told there is a reinsurance plan in place which will protect them in case of loss or catastrophic loss.

For example, let's say you are an insurance provider and go into a marketplace, and then it turns out the demographics of the groups that signed up for your plans didn't turn out the right way or there was an enormous spike in health care costs, whatever it may be, and you suffered dramatic losses. A risk corridor is in place to protect you.

The reason is, No. 1, a safety net per se for the industry on a short-term basis. The reason that is important is because we want patients' bills to be paid and their providers' bills to be paid. The problem is applying that to the health care exchange is going to prove extraordinarily problematic.

What has happened over the last few weeks, as we predicted would happen, is not enough young people are signing up through the exchanges. In order for health insurance to work, you have to have enough younger and healthier people on it. If you have a health insurance plan largely composed of people guaranteed to get sick, economically it doesn't work. There is no dispute about that.

In fact, by the administration's own statistics, they say at least 38 percent of the enrollees in the exchanges had to be under the age of 34 in order for the exchanges to work in an actuarially sound way.

So based on the assumption that was going to happen, insurance companies bid on these exchanges, offered a product and have begun to sign up people. The problem is so far that figure is not being met.

The numbers are just starting to come in. We don't know the full picture yet, but the trends are troubling.

No. 1, not enough people are signing up. The target goal is a total of about 7 million people or more by a deadline which has now been extended to March 31. The number is less than 2.2 million. There are still 8 weeks left or so, so we will see what happens, but the trends are not positive.

Here is an even more troubling trend: Only 30 percent of national enrollees are from that demographic I described. Only 30 percent are under the age of 34. In Florida, it is only 25 percent.

Here is the fundamental problem we have right now with the exchanges, beyond all the other ones we have already discussed ad nauseam: Not enough people are signing up and not enough people under the age of 34 are signing up.

The result is that the way this is trending now, the exchanges are becoming more like a high-risk pool and less like a true competitive exchange. Here is why that is problematic: If companies lose money, as they are going to if we look at these figures and as the companies themselves anticipate—in fact, in some of the early disclosures these companies are making,

we are starting to see the forecast of losses.

If these trends continue and companies lose money because not enough people under the age of 34 signed up for them and not enough people signed up, under the ObamaCare law they will be entitled to a payout from the high-risk pool. This is a program in place for the first 3 years of these exchanges.

What that means is a taxpayer-funded bailout of ObamaCare. For taxpayers of the United States, this means your money is going to go from your pocket into the pocket of these private companies.

What the private companies will tell us is: Look. We bid on this product when you said the rules were going to be this. But since then you changed the rules even more, and so what was already bad has gotten worse.

There is not enough awareness about this, but we are going to be hearing about it in the weeks to come. As we get closer to the reality that billions of dollars in taxpayers' money is going to be used to bail out these exchanges, there is going to be growing outrage around the country and people are going to want answers. I hope my colleagues are starting to think about what we need to do.

That is why I filed a bill in November called the ObamaCare Taxpayer Bailout Prevention Act. What it would do is eliminate this provision which allows for the tax-funded bailouts of these exchanges.

As we get closer to this problem, the numbers are as bad or worse than we anticipated. So in the months to come, here is what we can expect to see:

First, we can expect to see that companies are now going to say: We need our money. Under the law, we were promised this high-risk bailout. We signed up for it under that assumption. Now we need taxpayer money.

I predict the second thing we are going to see is as companies begin to prepare their filings for next year, some companies are going to decide that they are not participating in ObamaCare exchanges next year at all, which means less choice and less competition and, therefore, higher premiums. Other companies are going to say: We will participate but only at these premiums; and they are going to be significantly higher than the ones we have seen this year, meaning it will be even less affordable, meaning even less people under the age of 34 will sign up, meaning even more money will have to go from the taxpayer to bail out these exchanges.

We are still in mid-January and these numbers could change, but nobody realistically expects them to. In fact, I have yet to hear from anyone knowledgeable about this subject who has said to me: Oh, don't worry. In the next 8 weeks, another 5 million to 6 million will sign up and we are going to get to over 30 percent of national enrollees. We are going to get to over 38 percent of the people signing up being in the demographic of 34 or under.

So it is only mid-January. But I come to the floor to sound the alarm that this is coming so people across this country know we are weeks and months away from transferring potentially billions of dollars from taxpayers to private companies to bail out these exchanges. I promise you, this will not be the last time we hear about this.

I encourage my colleagues, as they go home on this recess and talk to people, get informed about this subject because we are going to be hearing a lot about it in the weeks and months to come. This is a very serious threat—to the law itself, by the way. This is unsustainable.

At a time that we have a \$17 trillion debt, when so many Americans are struggling to find employment which pays them enough to live off of, when so many Americans have seen the jobs they once had disappear and cannot find a job to replace it, when so many Americans are struggling with a growing cost of living in every aspect of their lives—childcare, student loans, utility bills, you name it—to be told that at a time when all of these challenges are happening in the personal economies of so many people that billions of dollars of taxpayer money is going to go to bail out this law, there is going to be collective outrage across the political spectrum in this country and rightfully so.

Here is the last point I would make: If this law has to be bailed out, it is one more reason why it doesn't work. These exchanges are supposed to be private competitive marketplaces, where companies could actuarially and soundly price a product and sell it at an affordable rate. That is not where they are headed. We are headed toward a day soon, as early as next year—and we will see the filings this year—when companies are going to decide either not to participate or to participate but only if they can charge substantially higher premiums with higher copayments and higher deductibles; and, on top of that, the only way they will participate is if they are promised this bailout.

We are going to hear a lot about this in the weeks to come, and I encourage my colleagues—irrespective of how you feel about this law, I cannot imagine any of us believing we are at a time in our Nation's history, given the challenges we face now, where we should be bailing out this plan with taxpayer money being transferred to private companies to keep them in business.

That is where we are headed and we better be able to do something about it soon, because people are not going to stand for it.

I yield the floor.

THANKING MEMBERS

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I take a moment to thank all the members of that committee for their hard work over the last year. At a time when there is obviously an enormous amount of divisive-

ness and partisanship here in the Senate, I am happy to report that by and large there has been a great deal of bipartisan effort being made in the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and I think very productive work as well.

(The remarks of Mr. SANDERS and Mr. BLUMENTHAL pertaining to the introduction of S. 1950 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

THANKS TO PATRICK KILCUR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I spend long periods of time on the floor compared to most Senators. That is my job. In doing so, I get to know people more than probably a lot of people. Over these many years, I have talked about a Senate family, and it really is a Senate family and, for me, it really is my family. I know I am being way too protective, and a lot of people say it isn't my business, but that is how I feel. When people leave, I really feel badly because you get to know people and you feel comfortable with the people you know.

The reason I mention this today is because one of the people I have learned to really admire and appreciate and joke with and have a good time with is one of the Republican staff members who is leaving. His name is Patrick Kilcur. I have no idea whether I pronounced his name right, K-I-L-C-U-R. I really don't know the name very well, but I have known him for a long time. We call him Patrick. He is a Republican floor assistant. If I have an issue and there is not a Democratic floor person around, I go to him, and he always gives me the answer that is honest and truthful. That is how we are so well served by these people who fill these spots in this wonderful, historic Chamber.

Patrick came to the Senate from Pennsylvania. He is from Pennsylvania. He worked for a famous Pennsylvania Senator, Arlen Specter. He spent time working with him and worked his way here to the cloakroom and became a floor assistant as he is now. He is going to leave to go to work with one of my dear personal friends—Chris Dodd.

I asked Patrick to come spend a few minutes with me this week before he left and we had a nice visit. I talked about my relationship with Chris Dodd. I said what a good opportunity to be working for one of the great orators we have had during the time I have been in the Senate and one of the nicest people a person could get to know—Chris Dodd.

So Patrick will be missed here. I will miss him. I wish him the very best. He is always—I have to be very careful; I don't want to bring him any bad luck. He is engaged now. He is going to have a job. He can afford it. So I really wish him well. I will miss him, but I will say this: At least he has a first name. The people he works with, they don't even call him by his first name. They call him Duncan.

So, anyway, enough of that. I really will miss you. You have had such a

positive effect here. You are always happy, in spite of the pressure placed on you from people in the well: How should I vote? How much longer? Trying to get people here to go late—how much longer is it going to be? So thank you very much. You have been great, and I look forward to visiting with you and, hopefully, you and Dodd will let me watch one of those movies some time, because Chris Dodd is the leader of the Motion Picture Association of America.

THANKING THE PAGES

Mr. President, another short thing I wish to say. Over the years I have come to admire so very much our pages. They sacrifice to come here. It is not easy for them to come here and go to school for a semester, but they do. This school they go to is no soft school. It is hard. They start school at 6 a.m.—I think it is 6 o'clock—and they go for a couple of hours. I know they are supposed to get up around 5. It is such a good environment. We have gone out of our way to have a pleasant place for them to live, the so-called dorm. They have monitors who watch them so very closely. Their parents don't have to worry about them. It is a good experience. They see what happens on a daily basis in the bowels of government, the Senate, and they all go different ways. They are all juniors in high school. They will go back to their high school and then go on to college, but in their entire life they will never forget their experience here.

I went just for a few days when I was a junior in high school—maybe I was a senior; it was right after my junior year—to Boys State, and I made friends during the five days we spent there, and they are my friends even today, after all those many years ago, and that is the relationship these pages have developed.

So I say to them, thank you very much for the work you do.

I was walking out, as I do, this back door the last night or two, and I see one of the pages. They have a door open, and I see this list of stuff on the wall. So I say: What is that? What they have to know, among other things—each of us can be pretty—what is the right word—demanding, although I don't know if that is the right word. Senator McCONNELL and I have these podiums here all the time, but we are the only two. So when a Senator comes to speak, they need a podium. But they have to get the right podium and the pages have to know, when a Senator wants to speak, what podium to get. Is it going to be a low one, middle-sized, half middle-sized, or a big one? Anyway, they have to know that. They have a big chart up there to make sure they don't make mistakes.

They make sure we have water. I don't like warm water. I don't like cold water. I don't like ice. The pages have learned we all have our demands for water—sparkling, half sparkling, half regular, half tap. Anyway, I am so grateful they took the time to leave

their homes to come here to go to school, to be students in the Senate.

FLOOD INSURANCE

Mr. President, finally, we are going to have a vote when we come back on flood insurance. Senators MENENDEZ, LANDRIEU, and ISAKSON have worked on this for a long time. Senator LANDRIEU has been—what is the right word—persistent, and that is an understatement. She has been on this as she can get on something and never get off of it. We have come, over the last several months, within just inches, we thought, of being able to have an agreement and move it to the floor. But she and Senator ISAKSON have worked hard to get a unanimous consent request to bring it to the floor, and they are always just a little bit short. So I am filing cloture in just a few minutes on a motion to proceed on this matter, and that will be the vote when we get back. If they are able to work out an agreement, then we can always modify having that vote and move forward. As I understand it, there are five or ten amendments they want to have to that bill, and we have all agreed that is OK. So I hope we can do that when we come back, and I thank those Senators for their good work.

Mr. President, could I ask what the pending business is before the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The pending business is the motion to proceed to S. 1926.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I have a cloture motion at the desk relative to that measure.

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

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

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 motion to proceed to calendar No. 294, S. 1926, a bill to delay the implementation of certain provisions of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Robert Menendez, Mary L. Landrieu, Sherrod Brown, Richard Blumenthal, Joe Manchin III, Tom Udall, Patrick J. Leahy, Bill Nelson, Christopher A. Coons, Christopher Murphy, Mark R. Warner, Kay R. Hagan, Amy Klobuchar, Tim Kaine, Thomas R. Carper, Dianne Feinstein.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum required under Rule XXII also be waived; and the vote on the motion to invoke cloture occur at 5:30 p.m. on January 27.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO PATRICK KILCUR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to say a fond farewell to Patrick Kilcur, a Republican floor assistant who has decided to move on after 7 very eventful years here in the Senate. Patrick has been a real asset to the conference but also just a great guy to have around. And that is something that has been true for everybody from the pages to the Senators. Anytime morale stated to flag in the late hours around here, Patrick was usually the one who gave everybody a lift. He has got a great spirit and a great sense of humor, qualities that we are always in great need of on the floor, especially late at night or during the various crises we have had to deal with over the past several years. And he has just been a very thoughtful member of the team. On a trip to China a few years back, Patrick returned not just with some new custom shirts but with a panda hat for all the Senate pages. He has always been quick to offer guidance to the pages and to thank them. And he always made time when the end of their terms arrived to take them out to lunch and send them off the right way. Patrick is a proud native of West Chester, PA. He first came here as a floor monitor for Senator Specter in 2006 and moved to the cloakroom 2 years later. He became floor assistant in 2012. We will miss his ready smile and his knowledge of the floor. I know the pages will miss him too. On a happy note, we are glad that Patrick found his future wife Julie here in the Senate. Patrick and Julie just got engaged last month, and we wish them all the very best in their future life together. So to Patrick, I say thank you on behalf of the entire Senate. Best wishes in all your future endeavors.

ELECTIONS IN BELARUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, 3 years ago, the country of Belarus held a presidential election that marked—instead of finally joining the rest of democratic Europe—a brutal crackdown on freedom of expression and basic democratic principles. There was a glimmer of hope that perhaps this would finally be an opportunity for the Belarusian people to freely choose their own president in an honest and open election. No longer would the Belarusian people have to endure under the “Last Dictator of Europe,” strongman Alexander Lukashenko.

Tragically, those hopes were quickly dashed when Lukashenko simply claimed another term as president amid elections described by international monitors as seriously flawed.

On election night, December 19, 2010, hundreds of Belarusian citizens were beaten and arrested by KGB henchman—that is right, Belarus still has a KGB security service—for having the