

manage this threat and pass it off to his successor, well, we need to know that too because Americans are worried and they are anxious. They want and deserve the truth. Most of all, they want a plan, and that is what I am hoping for tonight.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

LANCE CORPORAL MATTHIAS N. HANSON

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to mourn the loss of a U.S. marine and a Kentuckian from the hometown of Abraham Lincoln. LCpl Matthias N. Hanson hailed from Lincoln's birthplace of Hodgenville, KY, and was killed on February 21, 2010, of wounds suffered as a result of conducting combat operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. He was 20 years old.

For his service in uniform, Lance Corporal Hanson received several awards, medals, and decorations, including the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and the Purple Heart.

"Matt's our hero because of how he lived," says the Reverend Norm Brock, who spoke at Matt's memorial service. "Matt didn't miss life. He lived life."

Service was a proud tradition in Matt's family. His father Lowell R. Hanson, Jr., served in the Army. One of Matt's brothers is currently Active Duty Army, while the other is in the Army Reserve. Matt himself was born in Germany on a military base. As Mary Huff, Matt's mom, puts it: Matt "had to go rogue and join the Marines."

Matt had a strong work ethic in high school says his father Lowell:

He used to get up at 4:00 in the morning to milk cows on a nearby farm, then go to school, then onto football practice, and back to work on the farm. Other people noticed and were impressed by his work ethic, and I was proud of him. He was determined that when he got old enough, he would join the Marines and serve his country.

Growing up, Matt was known for his blue eyes and sneaky smile, and he had a way of talking himself out of anything.

He had an easygoing manner and a lust for life. "He was quiet, a trickster and a charmer," says his mother. But ultimately, he was a country boy who wanted to do right by his country. Matt was a country music fan who particularly liked the song "Way Out Here" by Josh Thompson. He was "funny, energetic, really outgoing," says family friend Emily Johnson. "He could make anyone laugh. He had the brightest blue eyes ever. That's what we'll remember him as."

Matt graduated from LaRue County High School in Hodgenville, where he was a member of the football team and the Student Technology Association. Next to his picture in the school yearbook he put the following quote: "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't look around and pay attention, you could miss it."

Soon after graduation he enlisted in the Marine Corps in the spring of 2008.

"He was very proud of what he had done when he signed up to go to the Marines," remembers LaRue County High School football coach and assistant principal Rodney Armes. "He got his hair cut short and he was a Marine from the day he signed up."

Matt was trained as a rifleman and assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force based in Camp Lejeune, NC. He was deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in January of 2010. Matt played a key role in a crucial multiday battle in Afghanistan just days before his death in mid-February 2010. Matt's platoon came under fire from Taliban forces in the town of Marjah. Matt walked up, under air cover, to the fortified bunker where the enemy fire was coming from and fired a grenade launcher into the bunker with great poise and accuracy, killing the enemy forces. "The battle was over," said Matt's father, thanks to his bravery. "He played a critical role," says Capt. Gordon Emmanuel, Matt's platoon commander. "Anytime he shot he was on impact. Marines were cheering with his shots."

Matt's father was told by Matt's platoon sergeant and by Captain Emmanuel that Camp Hanson, once the biggest U.S. position in Marjah and well known to any Marine who has served in the area, was established at that site in Matt's honor because of his actions.

"The last time I saw [Matt] was on Christmas Eve 2009," said Matt's father. "He hugged me around the neck and said: Daddy, don't worry about me. Everybody dies. Not everybody has Jesus. Not everybody gets to be a Marine."

We are thinking of Matt's family as I recount his life for my Senate colleagues today. They include Matt's mother and stepfather Mary and Larry Huff; his father and stepmother Lowell R. Hanson, Jr., and Cynthia Hanson; his siblings Megan, Samantha, Erika, Lowell, and Brendan; his grandparents; and many other beloved family members and friends.

Matt was buried with full military honors in Hodgenville. The town that is the birthplace of one of America's greatest patriots, Abraham Lincoln, is also a fitting resting place for this brave young man and Marine. The Commonwealth of Kentucky will never forget the life and service of LCpl Matthias N. Hanson or his ultimate sacrifice given freely to his country. It is thanks to men like him that our Nation is free.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES RELATING TO CONTRIBUTIONS AND EXPENDITURES INTENDED TO AFFECT ELECTIONS—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S.J. Res. 19, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 471, S.J. Res. 19, a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relating to contributions and expenditures intended to affect elections.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask that I be allowed to proceed as in morning business for up to 4 minutes.

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

ISIL

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I believe the President will lay out a strong approach against ISIL tonight. That approach will include going after them wherever they are located, including Syria. The President and Secretary Kerry are making every effort to help lead a broadly based coalition which is so critically important to avoid the consequences of a Western go-it-alone approach which was mistakenly used when we invaded Iraq.

This President, like all Presidents, will welcome bipartisan Congressional support, even though he has the authority in this situation to act without explicit Congressional authority. I hope our friends on the other side of the aisle will lay aside partisan attacks and make a true effort to find a way to take on ISIL in a united manner. A strong bipartisan approach here in the United States will help the President and Secretary Kerry attain the explicit open support of a broad cross section of this world, including Arab and Muslim countries.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about our constitutional amendment. I think we have had a very good debate this week—an overdue debate. I want to thank my colleagues for coming to the floor and for speaking out. But there have also been many misrepresentations by the other side about what our constitutional amendment would do.

Michael Keegan, the President of People for the American Way, wrote a piece in the Huffington Post yesterday. He summed up the debate from the other side of the aisle quite well. He said, "a good rule of thumb in politics is that the scarier someone sounds, the more you should doubt what they're saying."

We heard some scary things in the last couple of days. Lorne Michaels is

going to jail. And he is sharing a cell with a little old lady who put up a \$5 political yard sign. Books and movies are banned. The NAACP, Sierra Club, and moveon.org have been prohibited from speaking about politics—scary stuff but none of it is true.

Erwin Chemerinsky, a great constitutional scholar, recently wrote an op-ed in the Hill, rebutting many of the claims we have heard. He wrote:

The amendment—

He is talking about our constitutional amendment here.

—gives no authority to the government to ban or limit anyone's speech. It provides the government no power to "muzzle" messages the government doesn't like. It does not change in any way the longstanding First Amendment principle that the government cannot restrict speech based on the content of the message or the views expressed. The amendment would do no more than allow the government to regulate spending in election campaigns.

That is the heart of what we are doing, regulating spending—out-of-control spending—in election campaigns, dark money, big interests weighing in in an unprecedented way.

Professor Chemerinsky is right. S.J. Res. 19 reaffirms the First Amendment principle of equality. It will undo the damage done by the Court over the years, most recently with Citizens United and McCutcheon that said: Those with the most money have the most free speech. Nothing in the amendment would permit the arrest of anyone for engaging in political speech. It would not allow books or movies to be banned.

All the amendment does is restore to Congress and the States the power to set reasonable limits—reasonable limits—on campaign contributions and expenditures, a traditional power that the Court has stripped from us. The amendment returns the First Amendment to its pre-Buckley interpretation when money and speech were not the same thing.

Prior to Buckley, we did not see the kind of legislation against free speech that my Republican colleagues envision, offering extreme examples of laws Congress could pass. That is one way to argue against this amendment. But it ignores the long history of laws Congress did pass to protect the voices of individual voters.

These reforms were not radical. They were narrowly tailored responses to restore America's faith in the political system after a lack of regulations led to scandals and corruption. Let's not forget that any law must pass both Houses of Congress and be signed by the President. That is a significant check against any radical legislation getting passed or these days, against almost any legislation getting passed.

Critics also fail to acknowledge something else. Our amendment does not give Congress free reign to pass any and all campaign finance laws. When the Court interprets any amendment to the Constitution, it reads in a

reasonableness requirement. This means that even if Congress did abuse its authority and passed the extreme laws that conservatives suggest, they could still be overturned as unreasonable.

But more importantly, Members of Congress who pass extreme laws can be held accountable by their constituents. The same cannot be said for Supreme Court justices willing to strike down sensible regulations by a narrow majority.

We also heard a quote from the late Senator Ted Kennedy. Senator Kennedy did oppose a similar amendment in 1997 and 2001. The truth is, we do not know if he would oppose the amendment today.

Citizens United and McCutcheon changed the landscape and changed it dramatically. Senator Kennedy was a champion for the underprivileged throughout his career—in civil rights, education, health care, the minimum wage. He stood up for those who did not have a voice, the very people who are harmed by most of these misguided Supreme Court decisions.

We do know some of Senator Kennedy's colleagues who also opposed the amendment in the past are still here in the Senate. They have reconsidered. Chairman LEAHY, Senator DURBIN, the chairman of the Constitution subcommittee. Thoughtful Senators who felt an amendment was unnecessary in the past now see that it is the only way to fix a broken system.

Changing the Constitution is a big step not to be taken lightly. In the Federalist Paper No. 49, James Madison argued the Constitution should be amended only on "great and extraordinary occasions." I agree. I also believe we have reached one of those occasions.

Thank you, Mr. President. I ask unanimous consent that the op-eds I referenced by Michael Keegan and Erwin Chemerinsky be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Huffington Post, Sept. 9, 2014]

THE FIRST AMENDMENT ACCORDING TO MITCH MCCONNELL

(By Michael Keegan)

Have you heard that Senate Democrats are working this week to repeal free speech? I did, yesterday morning, from Mitch McConnell.

Have you heard that Democrats are going to go out and "muzzle" pastors who criticize them in the pulpit?

We did, from Ted Cruz.

Did you hear that Democrats are going to shut down conservative activists and then "brainwash the next generation into believing that this is how it should be"?

We did, last month, from the Family Research Council's Tony Perkins.

A good rule of thumb in politics is that the scarier someone sounds, the more you should doubt what they're saying. Another good rule in politics is not to trust what Mitch McConnell says about money in politics.

Because, yes, that's what we're talking about here. Not a secret new Orwellian re-

gime. Not a new anti-pastor task force. What we're talking about is simply limiting the amount of money that corporations and wealthy individuals can spend to influence our elections.

This week, the Senate is debating a constitutional amendment that would overturn recent Supreme Court decisions that have paved the way for an explosion of big money in politics. In those decisions, including Citizens United and this year's McCutcheon, the Supreme Court radically redefined the First Amendment to allow corporations and the wealthy to drown out the speech of everyday Americans with nearly unlimited political spending. The Democracy for All amendment would restore to Congress and the states the power to impose reasonable restrictions on money in politics, just as they had before the Supreme Court started to dismantle campaign finance laws.

So, what are Mitch McConnell and Ted Cruz so scared of?

In fact, it wasn't that long ago that Mitch McConnell supported the very laws that he is now dead-set on blocking. Back in 1987, McConnell said he would support a constitutional amendment to allow Congress to regulate independent expenditures in elections—just as the Democracy for All amendment would. And then he introduced that very constitutional amendment. Either McConnell has dramatically changed his mind regarding what constitutes a threat to the First Amendment, or he's motivated by something more cynical.

So, if Mitch McConnell doesn't actually think that limiting the amount of money that wealthy interests can spend on elections is a violation of the First Amendment, what is he up to? Could it be that he now finds it more useful to court the dollars of major donors than the votes of his constituents?

Washington is the only place where campaign finance reform is a partisan issue. A poll this summer found that 73 percent of voters support a constitutional amendment to get big money out of politics. Americans know that our First Amendment is about protecting the speech of citizens, not the interests of wealthy campaign donors.

Faced with a large, bipartisan grassroots movement that threatens their big-spending friends, the only arguments that Mitch McConnell and Ted Cruz have left are wild accusations, flat-out falsehoods, and outlandish interpretations of the Bill of Rights.

[From thehill.com, July 3, 2014]

TED CRUZ SHOULD BE ASHAMED

(By Erwin Chemerinsky)

Reasonable people can disagree on whether it would be good to amend the Constitution to overcome the Supreme Court's decision in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, but Sen. Ted Cruz's (R-Texas) false claims about the proposed amendment have no place in an informed debate. In a series of speeches and writings, Cruz has lied about what the amendment would do. Surely we can and must expect more from our elected officials.

The occasion for Cruz's wrath is a proposed constitutional amendment concerning campaign finance that is now being considered in the Senate Judiciary Committee. The amendment's purpose is to overturn the Supreme Court's recent decisions that have limited the ability of Congress and state governments to regulate campaign spending.

In Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, in 2010, the Court, 5-4, declared unconstitutional a provision of federal law and held that corporations have the right to spend unlimited amounts of money in independent expenditures in election campaigns.

This year, in *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission*, again by a 5-4 margin, the Court held unconstitutional another provision of federal law that regulated the total amount that a person could contribute to candidates or political parties in a two-year period. As Justice Breyer lamented in his dissent, these cases “viscerate” federal campaign finance law.

The proposed constitutional amendment seeks to restore the power of Congress and the states to enact laws of the sort that the Court declared unconstitutional in these cases. These laws existed without problems for many years until the Supreme Court declared them unconstitutional. In fact, seven years before *Citizens United*, the Supreme Court upheld the very provision that it invalidated in that case.

The proposed constitutional amendment, in its key provision, simply would say: “To advance democratic self-government and political equality, and to protect the integrity of government and the electoral process, Congress and the States may regulate and set reasonable limits on the raising and spending of money by candidates and others to influence elections.” Another provision would make clear that the government can limit campaign spending by corporations.

It is impossible to reconcile this language with Cruz’s claims about it. In a statement to the Senate Judiciary Committee, Cruz declared: “This amendment here today, if adopted, would repeal the free speech protections of the First Amendment. . . . This amendment, if adopted, would give Congress absolute authority to regulate the political speech of every single American, with no limitations whatsoever.”

Similarly, in an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*, Cruz said, the amendment “gives Congress power to regulate—and ban—speech by everybody.” In remarks at the Family Research Council, Cruz declared: “What it [the proposed amendment] says is that politicians in Washington have unlimited constitutional authority to muzzle each and every one of you if you’re saying things that government finds inconvenient.”

The amendment does nothing of the sort. It gives no authority to the government to ban or limit anyone’s speech. It provides the government no power to “muzzle” messages the government doesn’t like. It does not change in any way the long-standing First Amendment principle that the government cannot restrict speech based on the content of the message or the views expressed. The amendment would do no more than allow the government to regulate spending in election campaigns.

Cruz’s repeat statements are more than just political hyperbole. They are false assertions intended to scare people into opposing the proposed constitutional amendment.

In a statement before a subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Cruz said, “Any politician who put his or her name to an amendment taking away the free speech rights of every American, in my view, should be embarrassed.” But it is Cruz who should be embarrassed by his false assertions. Ted Cruz is a lawyer who had a very distinguished career in government and private practice. I have debated him on several occasions and know that he is a person of great intelligence. He knows exactly what the proposed amendment would do and yet has chosen to vilify it by misrepresenting it.

Whether it is desirable to try and amend the Constitution to allow campaign finance regulations is the question to be debated. In this, and all debates, we should expect and demand honesty from our elected officials. Cruz, in his statements about the proposed campaign finance amendment, is far below the most minimal standards of honesty.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized.

AMERICA’S NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, most Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives and the American people are awaiting the President’s speech this evening. It is a critically important speech about America’s national security from our Commander in Chief. It is going to address the horror of terrorism in the Middle East and particularly the Islamic state, a terrorist group like few others—maybe like none we have ever seen.

This Islamic state, known as ISIS or ISIL, has been moving in full force in Syria and in Iraq. They are different than other extremist terrorist groups because they take and hold territory. That has not been seen in the past. They are also hell-bent on establishing resources and ongoing visible treasury. Some say they generate \$1 million a day in revenues from the oil production they are in charge of. They swoop into a city and take over the banks, raiding them of all the money they can get their hands on.

In addition, they are engaged in some of the most barbaric and depraved tactics we have seen. The beheading of two Americans comes to mind instantly. It is a heartbreaking situation for their families and friends but an enraging situation for all of America, to think that innocent journalists would be subjected to such horrific treatment. And they threaten to do more. It isn’t just Americans who are in their sights. They have targeted minorities. They have targeted those who are struggling in Iraq to survive, and they are prepared to literally force them into starvation or death. It is a harrowing situation. To think that some 11,000 or 12,000 of these ISIS terrorists have wreaked such havoc on the country of Iraq and the neighboring country of Syria really is a wakeup call for America.

The President is going to speak to the situation this evening. We, of course, want him to lay out the threat, and he will. We want him to spell out why this threat is important to the security and the future of the United States. I am certain he will. I want him to speak as well to our approach and how we are going to deal with this threat, and I believe he will, in some detail. I want to know who else is on

our side in this effort as we move forward, what the scope of our activities will be, and the limitations of that scope of activities. The duration and the justification, the constitutionality and the legality are all critical issues, and we await the words of the President of the United States.

Most of us have held back at this point, waiting for the President’s statement, but some have not. Some have already come to the floor of the Senate this morning to criticize the President when it comes to this issue of foreign policy. That is unfortunate. I think the President is entitled to at least present his case this evening before people come to the floor and condemn the President’s foreign policy. We need to hear from the President what his plan is. And my hope is—and it would be nothing short of a political miracle in Washington, DC—that there would actually be bipartisan support for a plan emerging from the President’s statement tonight.

Some of us may have our differences with some part of it. That is natural. That is our responsibility in the legislative branch of our government. But we should try to find common ground where we can. When America speaks in unity, with one voice, with one determined effort, that is when we are strongest.

There was a time in the history of this country—and I have lived through part of it—when there would be vigorous debates on foreign policy on the floor of the House and on the floor of the Senate, leading up to a vote on a critical question such as the invasion of a country or a war. Even after a contentious and sometimes partisan debate, without fail—without fail—there would be bipartisan support for the emerging policy.

People remember the war in Kuwait. I was one who voted against it. Do my colleagues know there was offered on the floor of the House immediately after the vote in favor of the President’s policy a bipartisan resolution supporting the President’s policy? That was considered the natural, reasonable thing to do.

We can look back to the war in Iraq. Go back to October 11, 2002. On the floor of the Senate we had a debate that ended in a vote on the invasion of Iraq. It is one of those moments in my career I will never forget because 23 of us voted no, including 1 Republican, Lincoln Chafee, and 23 Democrats. We voted no on the invasion of Iraq.

It wasn’t long thereafter, though, that we were presented with appropriations bills to fund the military effort in Iraq. I voted for them. The reason I voted for those appropriations is pretty obvious. If it were my son, my daughter, my spouse fighting in Iraq, I would want them to have every resource necessary to accomplish their mission and come home safely.

So there was a bipartisan consensus, even though there was a difference in the formulation of foreign policy. I

hope that is what emerges tonight. I hope once the President has stepped forward and said that this is a plan, let us work together toward that plan, that we will see some bipartisanship emerging in the Senate and the House of Representatives.

We can have our differences and questions, but at the end of the day we need to come together as a nation. This horrible terrorist group, which has beheaded two innocent Americans and is absolutely depraved in its conduct, is going to continue. It is going to create chaos in Iraq. It is going to destabilize that country, and it is going to endanger not only innocent people but it is going to endanger innocent Americans. Let's listen carefully to what the President has to say.

This morning the majority leader HARRY REID of Nevada came to the floor and talked about a chance occurrence yesterday. Who should return to the Halls of the Capitol yesterday? Former Vice President Richard Cheney. What a moment for him to return to Washington as we debate foreign policy. We remember the foreign policy of Vice President Cheney and others. We know the price we paid for what turned out to be some very questionable, if not wrong, decisions.

At the end of the day in Iraq, 4,476 Americans lost their lives; 30,000 came home with serious injuries. We added \$1 trillion to our national debt to pay for it.

It was Vice President Cheney's idea that the United States would be strong and muscular after the 9/11 attack, and he picked Iraq as a target. We would take out Saddam Hussein. The purported weapons of mass destruction never existed, never were found, but we invaded nevertheless. Now comes former Vice President Cheney again to inspire his troops in terms of this conflict.

I hope not only Democrats but Republicans as well will think twice about that advice. We have listened to this man's counsel before, and the world did not turn out to be the place he promised it would be.

Let us listen carefully, objectively, and honestly to the President tonight. Let us try to find some common ground as Americans where we can stand together against this terrorist threat.

The President has made it clear to all of us he is not going to be sending ground troops into this Iraq situation. We want to be careful that we don't engage ourselves in a long-term war involving the vulnerability of our troops for a long period of time, so I was disappointed with some of the statements made on the floor this morning on the other side.

I hope Americans will listen carefully, as I will tonight, to the President.

VETERANS SMALL BUSINESS ENHANCEMENT ACT

Tomorrow marks the 13th anniversary of 9/11. Our thoughts turn to the Americans we lost that day and to the

men and women who showed such heroism above and beyond the call of duty. Firefighters, police, first responders, and Americans from all walks of life showed on that day that although terrorists might try to destroy our way of life, they cannot keep us down. Americans do stand together when we are threatened.

Since that day, to support the global war on terror, the Defense Department says about 2.5 million Americans—members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and related National Guard units—have been deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq wars. Of those, more than one-third were deployed at least one time. More than 11,000 lost their lives in those two wars.

There are ways we can show our gratitude and help our veterans, including service veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, now that they are home.

Tomorrow I am introducing, along with Senator BLUMENTHAL of Connecticut, the Veterans Small Business Enhancement Act. It will allow veterans who own small businesses to participate in GSA's excess Federal property program. This program makes items that the Federal agencies no longer need available to nonprofits and other groups that have a justifiable need for the property. We are talking about everything from vehicles to computers, office furniture, tools, and even heavy construction equipment. Participants in the program can claim the items for their businesses if they demonstrate a justifiable need for the property and they agree to pay for shipping and handling so there is no expense to the Federal Government.

By keeping their equipment overhead low, in this way the small businesses can grow their businesses. If unclaimed, the Federal property has to be disposed of by our government as excess property—and that costs money. The items have to be organized into one physical location, then photographed, catalogued, and ultimately auctioned off to scrap dealers who pay pennies on the dollar.

The National Association of State Agencies for Surplus Property, which helps facilitate the GSA's excess Federal property program, estimates that taking surplus property off the Federal Government's hands, pairing it with those who could use it, saved the United States \$200 million last year alone.

Minority-owned small businesses participate in this program now and have since 1999. My bill would extend that opportunity to veteran-owned small businesses as well.

Veterans throughout Illinois have contacted me to let me know how the surplus property program might help their small businesses.

Jim Ward, for example, a retired Army veteran, owns a popular tile business in Mount Sterling, in west central Illinois. His small business could benefit from maintenance equip-

ment typically found in the Federal surplus program. Tile saws and cutters, kneepads, mixers, scrapers, trowels, and other hand tools are all items that appear from time to time in the program. He says he doesn't need state-of-the-art equipment. Getting his hands on something that works would be a big help to his veteran-owned business.

Then there is veteran Jim Sodaro. He owns a bar and a snow removal business in Springfield, IL. There are quite a few surplus items that could help him operate his business and free up resources for employees and overhead. Jim says he needs things such as tables, brooms, paint, and hand tools to run his bar. His snow removal business needs a pickup truck and other vehicles.

We heard from Jason Harris, a Marine Corps veteran who runs a popular landscaping business in Carbondale, IL. Shawnee Landscaping designs and installs patios, fencing, and retaining walls for gardens and porches. Mr. Harris would benefit from Federal surplus equipment too: Bobcats, tractors and loaders, hand tools and office supplies.

Tom Lomelino is a retired Army veteran and owner of the Lomelino Sign Company in Jacksonville, IL. Mr. Lomelino makes and installs advertising signs. He can use a bucket truck, a backhoe, or other equipment needed for installation and maintenance.

All of these Illinois veterans have a legitimate need for items that otherwise would go to waste and we would pay to destroy. Wouldn't it be better to put these items in the hands of veterans so their businesses can succeed and they can hire people in their local communities? I think so. Small business is the engine of the American economy. Our veterans have served our country well. Let us serve their next phase in life and make sure their businesses are successful.

I encourage my colleagues who want to support the veterans and dispose of surplus property in a productive way—not an expensive way—so that it continues to make money for the United States to join me in support of this legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. I ask to speak for up to 10 minutes in morning business.

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

Mr. MARKEY. I rise today to speak about an issue that is fundamental to our democracy and vital to the future of our Nation. This is an issue so important that it requires us to take the monumental step of amending our Constitution.

This is not an action any of us should take lightly, but our democracy is under assault and I will not stand by and watch the damage being done without trying to do something to repair it.

Because of the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United*, a tsunami of

undisclosed, unlimited campaign funding is corrupting our democracy. Our government is supposed to be about checks and balances. Citizens United and the recent McCutcheon decision make it more about who is writing the checks and how big is their bank balance.

In the 2012 election, 60 percent of the contributions to super PACs came from just 159 donors. Sixty-four percent of the money raised by the Senate candidates came from a mere .04 of 1 percent of the population.

Our government is in jeopardy of no longer being of the people but instead becoming of and for the wealthy. The voices of the majority of the American people, those of middle-class families, seniors on fixed incomes, workers making minimum wage, are being drowned out by an ocean of campaign cash. This is utterly undemocratic and it needs to stop.

Congress has tried to stop this tidal wave of unlimited money, but the Supreme Court interprets the First Amendment not as a guarantee of free speech but of who can pay to speak. As a result, our democracy is in peril.

Campaign finance limits don't limit our free speech. They increase it by ensuring that every citizen can be heard and that no one gets unfair access to our government at the expense of everyone else. Campaign finance laws don't stifle democracy, they enhance it.

We need to fix our broken campaign system. We need a constitutional amendment that overturns the Citizens United and McCutcheon decisions.

Our democracy is based on the fundamental principle that all voters, and each and every vote cast, are created equal. People, not dollars, are the true currency of our Constitution and democracy.

That is why I will be voting for Senate Joint Resolution 19, to support a democracy for all attitudes in the United States.

NET NEUTRALITY

I also rise in support of another principle that enshrines democratization to access of information and ideas: net neutrality.

Net neutrality is as basic to the functioning of the Internet as nondiscrimination is to the U.S. Constitution. In fact, net neutrality is just a fancy word for nondiscrimination.

The Internet is a success today because it is open to anyone with an idea. An open Internet enables freedom of expression and the sharing of ideas across town or across the world. Yet the vitality of this open platform is at stake. The FCC is currently considering a proposal that could allow broadband providers to charge Web sites, applications, and services more for faster delivery times to consumers. We cannot allow that to happen.

That is why I am proud to stand with the netizens—all Internet users—to show what the Internet would look like with fast and slow lanes.

Today is our battle for net neutrality. Today we demonstrate on our Web sites what paid prioritization really means: Web users stuck on a bumpy gravel path while the select few whiz by on a sleek highway with their Internet E-Z passes.

In solidarity with netizens everywhere, I have posted on my Web site a symbol familiar to Internet users everywhere—the loading symbol you get when your video is waiting to appear because there is congestion on the net. My Web site today, along with countless others, serves as a harbinger of the dark days that lie ahead if we let the broadband behemoths win.

I believe we should never forget that the net comes with a manufacturer's guarantee: No one should have to ask for permission to innovate.

To prevent this from happening, this summer I led 12 of my Senate colleagues in urging the FCC to reclassify broadband as a telecommunications service under title II, enabling the Commission to put the strongest rules on the books to prevent discrimination.

Internet access today is like traditional phone service was decades ago, it is essential for everyday living. But if the ISPs have their way, the FCC would turn the Internet from a democratic "Field of Dreams" into an exclusive set of gated communities.

But the good news is the online activist community—the Netroots and the startups, the Internet investors—have spoken out in favor of implementing title II to protect net neutrality.

I will continue to join with my colleagues in the Senate to fight for an open and nondiscriminatory Internet because the future of our country depends upon it.

I yield back the remainder of my time and 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. TESTER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, as many of you know, my wife and I still farm, and for part of August I had the pleasure to be able to be on the tractor and have some quality time to think about what makes our Nation great. There are many reasons, but one of them is the belief that everyone has a say in the decisions we make in this democracy, that each of us—from the richest to the poorest—has an equal stake in electing our leaders and impacting how we govern. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court has not figured that out.

From the Citizens United case to this year's McCutcheon decision, the Justices continually side with big money and corporations. They are siding with

those who think government should work for the rich and the elite. They are siding with those who think that money equals speech and think it is OK for the wealthy to drown out the voices of the working folks, of the middle class, of everyone else.

Our current election system is hurting our democracy by reducing public confidence in our elections and increasing apathy in the political process. After all, why should someone take time out to follow our political process and vote when our system leads them to believe their vote does not make a difference? We simply cannot let that happen.

I agree with my colleague from Arizona, Senator MCCAIN, when he says that sooner or later our current system is going to cause a scandal in this body. This body cannot afford to fall further out of favor with the American people. After all, negative numbers are right around the corner.

The unprecedented amount of money—much of it unaccountable and anything but transparent—is allowing corporations to have an outsized say in not just who gets elected but how they act once they get into office. And trust me, corporate voices already have plenty of influence in Congress. It is putting up walls between regular folks and elected leaders who spend more and more hours on the phone with donors or bowing to those who might finance an outside ad campaign on their behalf and leaves less time for constituents.

Too many of the Justices—and too many of our colleagues—do not understand that many of Washington's current problems are tied to our campaign finance system. A lot of folks in the Senate and the House talk about working together. They talk about reaching across the aisle for responsible solutions that move our country forward. So what is holding them back? In many cases, it is the threat of big money coming after them in their next election.

We are not talking about Rick who works at Walmart or Amanda who teaches third grade chipping in \$20 for a candidate they believe in. We are talking about corporate executives plowing millions—sometimes tens of millions—of dollars into independent and often secretly financed campaigns.

We have all seen colleagues hesitate to introduce legislation that is popular in their home State but were afraid it would spur big-moneyed outside groups to spend millions of dollars to defeat them. When that happens, it leaves constituents without any real say in who represents them.

Lawmakers are also held back by the hostile political climate that these expensive campaigns create. When you constantly see an ad that distorts your record, and then you see a fellow Senator from out of State endorse that ad, it makes it hard to compromise on legislation with somebody that, quite frankly, you do not trust.

Politicians also know that most of the money in campaigns is on the extremes of the political spectrum. And the extremes fight almost any sign of compromise and the folks who are willing to get things done. Heck, why are we having trouble confirming ambassadors? It is because “compromise” is a dirty word. It leads me to wonder: Could we do big things today like our predecessors did? Could we pull it together to build an Interstate Highway System or send a man to the Moon? Right now I think not.

Supporters of the current system defend their views by citing the Constitution. They put up some fun charts here on the Senate floor that cross out lines of the First Amendment, pretending as if this legislation actually changes the First Amendment. It is entertaining, but it is incorrect.

I guarantee you that our Founding Fathers—men such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson—would not want to see the Constitution used to justify our current campaign system. Leaders such as Washington and Jefferson had a vision for our Nation. They knew America would change with the times as new technologies were developed and new lands came into the Union. Back in 1787 there was no Montana.

If the Framers warned against political parties, I can only imagine what they would have to say about the rise of super PACs.

Folks who support Citizens United talk about protecting free speech and the First Amendment, but who is protecting the free speech of regular working-class folks? Who is protecting the voice of the schoolteacher or the repairman being drowned out by special interests? With this amendment, we are.

If the Congress needs inspiration, they should look at my home State of Montana. More than 100 years ago Montanans voted to limit the influence of Big Money elections. We were ahead of the curve. We called for fair elections after wealthy mining corporations bought influence, support, and even a U.S. Senate seat—and our laws worked pretty well for those 100 years. But 2 years ago the U.S. Supreme Court struck down Montana’s law, citing its own Citizens United decision.

In 2012, Montanans stood once again to Big Money and its influence over a democratic process. In a voter referendum passed by a 3-to-1 margin, Montana voters called on Montana’s congressional delegation to overturn Citizens United, and I proudly accepted that challenge. That is why I am cosponsoring Senator UDALL’s amendment. Together we are saying enough is enough.

Congress and the States should have the power to regulate campaign spending to ensure that election spending does not corrupt elections. States should be able to decide whether to allow corporations’ unchecked spending power in Governor and legislative races.

I heard one of my colleagues suggest yesterday that we are threatening to silence the voice of the little old lady who wants to put up a yard sign in front of her home. In fact, it is quite the opposite. We are working to ensure that her voice is louder than that Fortune 500 corporation—or at least as loud—when deciding the future of her town, her State or her country because that is what our country is supposed to be about, one person, one vote.

Spending for the Senate election in Montana in 2012 topped \$50 million. That is more than \$100 for every vote cast. In a State such as Montana, where the average household pulled in \$45,000 in 2012, that is a big sum of money. It is the kind of money that can buy a lot of ads come election season. It can give a platform to drown out any other voice.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, spending by outside groups in this 2014 election cycle is currently three times higher than the amount spent at the same point in 2010, and as of the end of August, outside groups have spent about \$170 million on Federal midterm races—just the Federal part. Folks don’t spend that kind of cash without thinking they are going to get a return on investment. Things are out of control, make no mistake.

Senator MCCAIN is right. Sooner or later it will lead to another Watergate or worse, and that is what is frustrating. We know how the story of unchecked money in politics ends. We have seen it before. Yet the Supreme Court has opened the door to yet another scandal. So it is time to overturn Citizens United, and it is time to overturn this year’s McCutcheon decision which invalidated a 40-year-old law that limits the total amount of money an individual can contribute to campaigns each cycle.

Since that ruling in April, about 300 folks have taken advantage of that ruling, contributing over \$11.5 million to political campaigns this year—just since April—300 in this Nation of 300 million. We must put regular people and their ideas back in charge of our elections.

Amending the Constitution is not something we should take lightly. The Constitution is our founding document, and it has held up under the test of time. But Big Money interests and defenders of Citizens United are distorting our First Amendment for their own gain. Getting Big Money out of elections is critical to improving how we govern, to make responsible decisions for all Americans. It is critical to electing leaders who put people first. I am proud to step forward in this fight. Our democratic system has worked for over two centuries. It has made our Nation the greatest Nation in the world, and I will not let that be jeopardized without a fight.

Back in Montana it doesn’t matter whether someone has 5 acres or 5,000 acres: They jump on that tractor, and

that tractor is still going to break down; the weather can be good, the weather can be bad. It is still going to happen.

The lesson is this. We are in this together, we all need to pitch in, and we all deserve a fair and honest say in how our election process works and our leaders are elected.

I urge my colleagues to support Senator UDALL on this important amendment. It is simply the right thing to do for our democracy.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

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

Mr. FLAKE. Madam President, I rise to speak against the bill before us, S.J. Res. 19. This is a constitutional amendment that would significantly curtail the free speech rights of all Americans.

I oppose this amendment because I believe that while it is critical to support speech with which we agree, it is even more crucial to support speech with which we disagree.

Whether it has been campaign finance laws or amendments to prohibit flag burning, I have consistently opposed amending the Constitution to limit the First Amendment.

As others have mentioned, if this amendment is adopted, it would be the first time Congress has limited rights protected in the Bill of Rights. This would be a very dangerous precedent to set.

By limiting the amount of money individuals and corporations can spend on elections, this amendment would clearly limit their rights under the First Amendment. The Supreme Court has made clear that this would be tantamount to a restriction on “the number of issues discussed, the depths of their exploration, and the size of the audience reached.”

This amendment would allow us to decide what amount of money is speech and who can use it. This is a perilous amount of power to place in the hands of politicians. I don’t think we need to protect incumbent politicians. I think we need to protect the rights under the First Amendment.

In addition to concerns with what we know this amendment will do, I am even more concerned about what we don’t know. Before we amend the Constitution, we are obligated to understand the effects of the legislation.

What does it mean to “influence elections,” as the bill states? Who is a “candidate”? What is the “press”? Does this include bloggers? What about a citizen who writes his or her own newsletter to their community association and prints it on her home printer? All of these terms and more seem ripe for litigation, which leaves the true meaning of this amendment in the hands of unelected judges.

It also bears mentioning that opposition to this amendment is not limited to Republicans or conservative organizations. The ACLU wrote a letter to the chairman and ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, on which I serve, opposing this legislation. The ACLU stated: "As we have said in the past, this and similar constitutional amendments would fundamentally break the Constitution and endanger civil rights and civil liberties for generations."

I could not agree more.

Amending the Constitution is serious business. I believe limiting the Bill of Rights for the first time in our history is a bad decision. I will once again vote to preserve and protect the First Amendment, and I urge my colleagues to do the same by rejecting S.J. Res. 19.

As an incumbent politician, I am the first to concede that elections are daunting. They are unpredictable. It is unnerving to see other groups and individuals spend money to run ads against you. But the alternative is to have me, as an incumbent politician, write rules and regulations to limit the speech of those who would run against me or support those who would run against me. That is wrong. It is wrong for people in this body to define speech and to define who is entitled to it.

We need to tread carefully. That is why we need to reject this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection.

RACIAL PROFILING

Mr. CARDIN. I rise today to discuss the tragic shooting of Michael Brown last month in Ferguson, MO.

Michael Brown did not need to die. This cycle of needless sacrificing of our teens to violent ends must end. It has been heartbreaking to see yet another American town gripped by such a tragedy. I welcome Attorney General Holder's decision last week to begin a pattern or practice investigation into the allegations of unlawful policing by the City of Ferguson's Police Department. I also strongly support the Justice Department's outreach efforts through their Community Oriented Policing Services Office. This office, known as the COPS Office, can help better evaluate and train local law enforcement to carry out fair and impartial policing.

In addition to the recent investigation announced by the Department of Justice, I urge Attorney General Holder to expedite the issuance of new guidelines that would, once and for all, prohibit racial profiling by law enforcement officers at all levels of gov-

ernment, including the federal, State, and local law enforcement officials. Congress should also examine the program that provides for the transfer of surplus military equipment to local law enforcement agencies to ensure local government is not inhibiting the First Amendment rights of people to peaceably assemble and petition their government for the redress of grievances.

Local government must also respect the First Amendment rights of the press to do their jobs, report the story, and help provide the truth to the American people.

For a more permanent fix, Congress should take up and pass legislation that I authored, the End Racial Profiling Act, known as ERPA, which is S. 1038. I want to thank my colleagues who have cosponsored this legislation, including Senators REID, DURBIN, BLUMENTHAL, COONS, HARKIN, MENENDEZ, STABENOW, LEVIN, MIKULSKI, WARREN, BOXER, GILLIBRAND, HIRONO, WYDEN, and MURPHY. I also thank Congressman JOHN CONYERS, the ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee, for introducing the House companion legislation, H.R. 2851, which has 54 cosponsors in the House of Representatives.

This legislation provides training and monitoring for law enforcement agencies at all levels of government. By enacting this legislation, we can begin to reduce the racial disparities that plague our Nation's criminal justice system. We need to better educate more of our law enforcement officials in the differences between specific suspect descriptions and sweeping generalizations or profiling that wastes valuable resources. Racial profiling is un-American. It has no place within the values of our country. It turns communities against the partnerships needed to keep our neighborhoods safe.

Two years ago, I want to remind my colleagues, the Senate and the American people were having this very same conversation. So it is heartbreaking to me that we are having this conversation again without having taken more definitive action. In 2012 the Nation's attention was riveted to the tragic avoidable death of Trayvon Martin in Florida in February 2012. As we all know from the news, an unarmed Martin, 17, was shot in Sanford, FL, on his way home from a convenience store while wearing a hoodie and carrying a can of iced tea and a bag of Skittles.

After the tragedy I met with the faith and civil rights groups at the Center for Urban Families in Baltimore to discuss the issue of racial profiling. Joining me were representatives of various faith and civil rights groups in Baltimore, as well as graduates from the Center's program.

I heard there first-hand accounts of typical American families who were victims of racial profiling. One young woman recounted going to a basketball game with her father, only to have her dad detained by the police for no appar-

ent reason other than the color of his skin.

Trayvon's tragic death led to a discussion in the Senate of the broader issue of racial profiling. The Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on "Ending Racial Profiling In America" in April 2012 which was chaired by Senator DURBIN. At the hearing I was struck by the testimony of Ronald L. Davis, the Chief of Police of the City of Palo Alto, CA.

I want to quote in part from Chief Davis's testimony, in which he said:

There exists no national, standardized definition for racial profiling that prohibits all uses of race, national origin, and religion, except when describing a person. Consequently, many State and local policies define racial profiling as using race as the "sole" basis for a stop or any police action. This definition is misleading in that it suggests using race as a factor for anything other than a description is justified, which it is not. Simply put, race is a descriptor, not a predictor. To use race along with other salient descriptors when describing someone who just committed a crime is appropriate.

Then Chief Davis continued:

However, when we deem a person to be suspicious or attach criminality to a person because of the color of his or her skin, the neighborhood they are walking in or the clothing they are wearing, we are attempting to predict criminality. The problem with such predictions is that we are seldom right in our results and always wrong in our approach.

After the hearing I was joined at a press conference by Baltimore's Reverend Dr. Jamal Bryant, a leading youth activist and adviser to the Trayvon Martin family. Reverend Bryant echoed the call of ending racial profiling by law enforcement in America, and let me quote him:

This piece of legislation being offered by my Senator, Senator Cardin, is the last missing piece for the civil rights bill from 1965 that says there ought to be equality regardless of one's gender or one's race. Racial profiling is in fact an extension of racism in America that has been unaddressed and this brings closure to the divide in this country.

I have called for putting an end to racial profiling, a practice that singles out individuals based on race, ethnicity, national origin or religion. My legislation would protect minority communities by prohibiting the use of racial profiling by law enforcement officials.

First, the bill prohibits the use of racial profiling by all law enforcement agents, whether Federal, State or local. Racial profiling is defined in a standard, consistent definition as the practice of a law enforcement agent relying on race, ethnicity, religion or national origin as a factor in their investigation and activities. The legislation creates an exception for use of these factors where there is trustworthy information relevant to the locality and timeframe which links a person of a particular race, ethnicity or national origin to an identified incident or scheme.

Law enforcement agencies would be prohibited from using racial profiling

in criminal or routine law enforcement investigations, immigration enforcement, and national security cases.

Second, the bill would mandate training on racial profiling issues and require data collection by local and State law enforcement agencies.

Third, this bill would condition the receipt of federal funds by State and local law enforcement on two grounds. First, under this bill, State and local law enforcement would have to "maintain adequate policies and procedures that are designed to eliminate racial profiling." Second, they must "eliminate any existing practices that permit or encourage racial profiling."

Fourth, the bill would authorize the Justice Department to provide grants to State and local governments to develop and implement best policing practices that would discourage racial profiling such as an early warning system.

Finally, the bill would require the Attorney General to provide periodic reports to assess the nature of any ongoing discriminatory profiling practices. The bill would also provide remedies for individuals who were harmed by racial profiling.

The legislation I have introduced is supported by a broad coalition of civil rights groups. These groups include the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the ACLU, NAACP, Rights Working Group, and numerous other national, State and local organizations.

Racial profiling is bad policy, but given the state of our budgets, it also diverts scarce resources from real law enforcement. Law enforcement officials nationwide already have tight budgets. The more resources spent investigating individuals because of their race, religion, national origin or ethnicity, the fewer resources are used towards suspects who are actually demonstrating illegal behavior. Using racial profiling makes it less likely that certain affected communities will voluntarily cooperate with local law enforcement and community policing efforts, making it harder for our law enforcement community to fight crime and terrorism.

Minorities living and working in these communities in which racial profiling is used may feel discouraged from traveling freely, which corrodes the public trust in government. This ultimately demonizes entire communities and perpetuates negative stereotypes based on an individual's race, ethnicity or religion.

Racial profiling has no place in modern law enforcement. The vast majority of law enforcement officials who put their lives on the line every day handle their jobs with professionalism, diligence, and fidelity to the rule of law, and they understand that racial profiling has no place in their work.

However, the Congress and Justice Department should still take steps to prohibit racial profiling and finally root out its use.

I agree with Attorney General Holder's remarks to the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee where he stated:

In this Nation, security and liberty are—at their best—partners, not enemies, in ensuring safety and opportunity for all. . . . In this Nation, the document that sets forth the supreme law of the land—the Constitution—is meant to empower, not exclude. . . . Racial profiling is wrong. It can leave a lasting scar on communities and individuals. And it is, quite simply, bad policing—whatever city, whatever state.

The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees the equal protection of law to all Americans. Racial profiling is important to that principle. It should be ended once and for all.

As the late Senator Ted Kennedy often said: "Civil rights is the great unfinished business of America." Let's continue the fight here to make sure that we truly have equal justice under the law for all Americans. I urge my colleagues to support the legislation I have introduced that will end racial profiling once and for all.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I rise to express my strong frustration—and the frustration of Nebraskans—with the Senate's current debate.

Similar to many of my colleagues, I spent the past 5 weeks traveling my State and meeting with constituents. I held over one dozen listening sessions in communities all across Nebraska. Not a single Nebraskan told me to go back to Washington and vote to limit free speech. Not a single Nebraskan told me to come and play politics or take show votes.

The message I received from almost every Nebraskan was the same: Get something done, turn the economy around, deal with overregulation, help control the costs of health care, and help businesses create jobs. Prevailing concern with the economy and weak job growth exists all across our country. According to several leading economists, 225,000 jobs were supposed to be created last month. Instead, the number of jobs created was just 142,000. The real unemployment rate—those who are unemployed or underemployed—remains unacceptably high at nearly 12 percent. That is 19 million Americans who are out of work or want to work more hours.

It is a disgrace the Senate is not debating policies that will help them. Instead, we are debating a bill to limit free speech. It is no wonder the American people have such a poor opinion of Congress. Seriously, what are we doing here? In Washington, those in power

are more concerned with winning elections so they can stay in power than with actually governing and making tough decisions that will protect our country and help our families, and that is what we are doing today with another show vote, another sound bite that is engineered by campaign strategists who don't have any interest in sound policy.

I wish to address the two proposals before the Senate this week—a resolution to amend the Bill of Rights and campaign legislation that is targeting women voters. The resolution offered by the Senator from New Mexico is, I believe, a clear attack on the First Amendment and a series of recent Supreme Court rulings. The measure grants unlimited authority to Congress and State legislatures to criminalize speech on any platform, and that includes the Internet.

This proposal guts the First Amendment and the principles of free speech that have endured since the Bill of Rights was ratified in 1791. It further empowers incumbent politicians to make decisions with less accountability, and it muffles the voices of private citizens. It is perverse that the Senate is actually devoting time to debating the constitutional amendment that would actually diminish democratic participation and decrease freedom.

What have we become?

In a letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee, the ACLU wrote that the proposed amendment "would severely limit the First Amendment, lead directly to government censorship of political speech and result in a host of unintended consequences that would undermine the goals the amendment has been introduced to advance—namely encouraging vigorous political dissent and providing voice to the voiceless, which we, of course, support."

The ACLU is not exactly an ally of the Republican Party, but their letter shows there is broad concern over this poorly crafted resolution.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to stand for free speech, to stand for democratic participation, and to reject this resolution.

PAYCHECK FAIRNESS

At this time I wish to address the issue of equal pay and the paycheck fairness legislation. Make no mistake, some women in this country continue to struggle with gender-based pay discrimination. Equal pay for equal work is a principle I strongly support. With 60 percent of women working as primary breadwinners, lost wages hurt families and single women alike. Republicans fully agree that gender-based pay discrimination in the workplace is unacceptable.

In April I worked with Senator COLLINS, Senator AYOTTE, and Senator MURKOWSKI on a reasonable proposal to modernize key portions of the 51-year-old Equal Pay Act. Our proposal prevents retaliation against employees who inquire about, discuss or disclose

their salaries. In fact, one of the President's April Executive orders also deals with nonretaliation, suggesting this is an area we can agree and work together.

Our proposal also reinforces current law which prohibits pay discrimination based on gender and it requires employers to notify employees of their rights.

Finally, it addresses the opportunity gap or the need to provide both men and women with good-paying jobs. It consolidates duplicative job training programs and provides Federal grants to States for the creation of industry-led partnerships. This program is meant to provide women and men underrepresented in industries that report worker shortages with the skills they need to compete.

I believe this proposal could pass the Senate. It is reasonable, it is targeted, and it is a serious solution. Instead, we have a Senate that is laser focused on election-year politics, bills that no Republican can support, and bills that even some Democrats reject.

The majority leader does not appear to have any interest in putting bills on the floor that can pass—bills we can work on together. That idea doesn't fit into that election-year playbook. At the end of the day, this is raw politics. That is all it is. Nebraskans expect more. Americans expect more. They expect us to do our jobs, to work together to offer solutions, to debate, to amend, and to vote.

There are so many proposals I would love to vote on. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose, but we should be voting. We have to start having meaningful debate. We have to start taking votes, and they better be real votes. That is the only way we are going to do our jobs, and that is the only way we will be held accountable by our constituents. We should be tackling those very important issues we spoke to our neighbors and friends about when we were at home traveling our States during the August recess.

Enough with the sound bites, enough with the show votes, enough speaking to cameras. Let's listen to the American people. Let's get back to the Senate we all admired when we were in school and read about in our country's history. As students we studied those debates—and many times very heated—debates that took place on this floor.

As Senators we may not always agree on what is the best policy, but we better start doing our jobs. We need to return to debating real policy that addresses the very real needs of the American people.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ISIS

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I was not scheduled to speak at this time, but there is something going on today that is pretty exciting and I wish to share with everyone.

There is a new group that has been formed that is called the IDC, In Defense of Christians. I just came from addressing this group's summit, and it is pretty amazing. There are over 1,000 people in the Visitor Center's big auditorium. It is the largest crowd that has ever been down there, and it has been quickly formed because of the persecution that has taken place throughout the world and primarily in the ISIS area.

Unfortunately I don't have charts that are big enough to project this issue well, but at least the President is there and can see them. This is the area where ISIS is working. They are not just in Syria and Iraq. They are in Jordan and other areas. It is a very large area. They are not confined to any particular area.

One of the problems that is being addressed—we know about what they are doing. We know they are probably the strongest force and greatest threat against the United States we have ever faced.

I was very proud of the Secretary of Defense, Secretary Hagel. He was very outspoken when he talked about the threat we are facing. He characterized it as a great threat.

Why is it a great threat? It is a great threat because they have already declared war on America, and that is why I stood here yesterday to get support in the Senate for authority to use military force—that is AUMF—and we are going to make every effort to get that done.

Tonight the President is going to speak about this issue. Hopefully he will come out stronger than he has in the past and say something meaningful about how he, as the President of the United States, is going to win this war. I am not expecting it, but I am hoping for it. There is no doubt that once we pass this resolution, he will have the authority to do it. This group is concerned with that matter, but the reason they are together is because they are concerned with the Christian and religious persecution that is going on.

I have a lot of background in this area. Way back—before a lot of you guys were born—in 1979, I was mayor of the city of Tulsa, OK, and I remember a man named Boris Penson. Boris Penson was sent to a Siberian gulag prison for 9 years. He was there because of the fact that he would not relinquish his Jewish faith. He was persecuted because of his faith, and we were able to get him out. That was a long time ago.

I had another experience in 1988 in Damascus. There was Christian persecution going on at that time. We were able to get them to change the geog-

raphy a little bit so the people there could openly pray to their lord and savior Jesus Christ. That was unheard of in Syria. It was not like it is today. Today they are killing them. Back then they were putting them in prison.

I think it is important for people to understand that ISIS is the most well-organized, well-funded terrorist group in history. More than 1 million people have fled their homes in Iraq after being given the ultimatum by ISIS to convert to Islam or be put to death. Since they invaded Iraq, hundreds and thousands of men and women have been enslaved and have been beheaded as a result of the ultimatum to Christians. I will read it to my colleagues because I don't want to be misquoted. They issued the ultimatum to Christians living in the region I just showed: "Convert to Islam or face death by the sword." That is what is going on today.

As I told this group a few minutes ago, now and then we have a happy ending. I have been active—and a lot of people know this—in Africa now for 20 years. I have actually made 135 African country visits. I have seen all kinds of things take place in terms of religious intolerance, persecution. But I remember very well being in the new country called South Sudan. South Sudan is to the south of Sudan. Sudan is up there near Khartoum. We are all familiar with that and the problems taking place there, and we know how intolerant they are there.

It happened there was a lady there named Mariam Ibrahim. I am going to show my colleagues a picture. We have never seen a prettier lady in her life. That is in her wedding dress. She is beautiful. She is Sudanese. She had been a Muslim. However, she renounced that and she now is a Christian. So they went to this beautiful young lady who had one baby and she was 8 months pregnant with her next baby, and they said, We are going to put you on trial. You have to renounce Christianity. She said, I can't do it. They said, Well, you have to do it. So she was found guilty of not renouncing her Christianity. She was sentenced to 100 lashes, which would kill her, and then they would hang her up by her neck for public display as an example of what happens.

Several of us were involved in this. We had a lot of cooperation from some of the surrounding African countries, including Uganda, President Museveni came through; President Kagame from Rwanda; President Kabila from Congo, and our State Department and others, and we were able to get them to have an appeal. As of today, she is now out of prison. She is back. She has two children, and she and her husband and children are living in the United States.

If it hadn't been for seeing what Mariam Ibrahim was facing and knowing that was going on and seeing the beautiful picture of her and a few of us finding out about it, she would be right now still hanging up for display.

This is what is happening. A lot of people out there are saying, Well, ISIS is a very serious thing, but this isn't our problem. Yes, it is. I can remember 3 months ago I made the statement that ISIS is a threat to our homeland and people didn't believe that was the case. There is a poll that came out yesterday that I thought I had with me and I don't. But the ABC poll shows that 71 percent of the American people believe ISIS is a direct threat to the homeland of the United States of America. That is 71 percent of the people. They also believe—the same 71 percent of the people—that our President does not have the strategy to win this war. So tonight we are hoping to hear something that is out of character for him. We are hoping it will be something strong that will allow us to win the war.

Let me wind up by welcoming those over 1,000 people who are downstairs right now in the Visitor Center who are from the Defense of Christians Summit that is taking place as we speak. We have a lot of people out there. They are doing the Lord's work and they will be richly blessed for it.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, I come to speak today on a question of enormous importance. Before I do so, I wish to take a moment, as I was just with the majority leader and the deputy leader and a number of our colleagues where we held a ceremony in commemoration of a Congressional Medal of Honor that was issued in remembrance of those who gave their lives on September 11, 13 years ago. Neither the Presiding Officer nor I were Members of the Senate at that time, but I think all of us remember where we were that early Tuesday morning, and the ceremony we just came from was an appropriate tribute.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT

Madam President, during the most recent recess in August, I crisscrossed Virginia in a variety of efforts. One that was particularly meaningful to me was where I did a statewide student debt tour, where literally I spoke with hundreds of students and graduates from families of nine Virginia colleges and universities about student debt and what this crushing amount of student debt is doing to their opportunities to get the same kind of fair shot the Presiding Officer and I both had.

The schools I visited ranged from big 4-year public universities, small, private liberal arts colleges, to one of our historically Black colleges, as well as a 2-year community college. The student debt figure right now is at \$1.2 trillion,

exceeding credit card debt. Student debt has exceeded the aggregate of auto loan debt, credit card debt, and home equity debt balances, becoming, next to mortgages, the second largest debt of U.S. households. That means that for far too many young people, and not so young people, they are forced to put off their decisions about starting a family, launching a startup business, or buying a home because of the burdens of student debt. Many young people find themselves working in jobs they didn't want or necessarily train for just to pay off their student debts.

At Old Dominion University I spoke to Carina. She is a bright and ambitious young woman who told me that in her sophomore year, she worked three jobs, at one point four jobs, to ensure that she met tuition. She mentioned that she was the first of all her family members to step foot on a college campus. She said: "College is a foreign field in my family." She said: "I am a pioneer." She is not alone. The challenges she faces are repeated time and time again.

At Virginia State University, one of our historically Black colleges, I met with Tobias, who mentioned that a lot of his peers had to drop out of school because they could not afford to take out any more loans or debt. He told me: Senator WARNER, I have made the decision to stay in school. It is the key to my future, but I do so knowing that I will have to spend a lot of years paying off student loans.

At one of our finer public institutions in Virginia, the College of William & Mary, I had a great conversation with Jacob, a junior originally from the far southwest part of our State, in Lebanon, VA. He is graduating from college in 3 years instead of 4 because of dual enrollment he took while he was in high school, at Southwest Virginia Community College. He told me that despite his ambition, it is financially impossible for him to go on to immediately get a graduate degree or buy a home or buy a car or start a business, because even with shortening college from 4 years to 3 years, he still has a tremendous amount of student debt.

I have to tell my colleagues, across Virginia I have heard over the last year more about this issue than virtually any other issue, from young people, from families, from parents. I remember somebody in Virginia Beach not too long ago, a young man, 31 years old, who actually served in elective office. He had graduated from the University of Michigan Law School, had worked as a lawyer, had been laid off, and was moving back in with his parents at the age of 31. I could almost see his ambitions being crushed because his student debt payments amounted to \$2,000 a month. Where does he get the same kind of fair shot that many of us had?

I am the first member of my family to graduate from college. I got out of

college and law school and worked for a while, started businesses, failed miserably twice. The third time I managed to do well in a startup industry called cell phones. But I came out of that experience with a total of \$15,000 worth of debt. I am not sure I would have taken the first shot or second shot or, Lord knows a third shot, if I had come out with \$50,000 \$60,000, \$70,000, \$80,000, or \$100,000 of debt that many people come out of school with now.

We have to get on this issue. This issue is having an effect on our economic recovery. I meet with homebuilders on a regular basis and with realtors on a regular basis. They are saying, The real estate market is recovering for everybody except people buying starter homes. Why are they not buying starter homes? Time and again because of crushing amounts of student debt.

I hope during this shortened period we will get a chance to have a conversation about a broadbased proposal to refinance student debt at lower rates. I am not sure we are going to be successful in that proposal, but I think it is a conversation and debate we ought to have. I look forward to supporting that effort. But if we are not able to get that effort across the finish line right now, we can't walk away from this issue.

I have worked on a series of bipartisan, targeted reforms that would reduce costs, increase transparency, and allow students to better manage their amounts of debt. Any one of these proposals isn't going to completely solve this problem, but this should not go into the bucket of issues we continue to kick down the road. The issue of student debt, the affordability of college, are issues of enormous economic proportion and, frankly, one that shouldn't be viewed as a Democrat or Republican issue.

Let me speak briefly about a couple of my proposals. First is a proposal I partnered with Senator WYDEN and Senator RUBIO on that in any rational place should be a complete no-brainer. It is a bill called Know Before You Go. The idea is quite simple. Let's do with higher education what we have done in real estate with the Zillow Web site or what we have done with the travel pricing, with Travelocity and a series of other Web sites, and try to take every 4-year institution, 2-year institution, career and technical education program, graduate program, and make them totally transparent on a single user-friendly Web site, where before you go, you know what your chances of graduating are, how much debt you might want to take on, if you major in art history, the way my daughter did, what your chances of getting a job are and how much it is going to pay, so that we can actually make people better informed consumers before they choose higher education.

Probably next to buying a house, higher education is the most expensive investment you will make in a lifetime. Maybe students will find out that

if they go to UVA and drop out after 3 years and come out with a lot of debt, they will not have much with which to get into the job market, whereas if they went to Piedmont Community College and actually came out with a 2-year degree in medical tech fields, they will have a 90-percent placement opportunity.

This Know Before You Go Act—we have collected most of this data already, so it should not be that big a stretch to put this in a user-friendly fashion. What if Tobias's friends at Virginia State had a better idea before enrolling in college how much they would be expected to pay, how this would actually break down grants versus loans, a recognition of the actual graduation rate and their job prospects upon graduation? Maybe some of them might choose a different path.

Better informed consumers of higher education would be one no-brainer step.

A second opportunity—and I do not know where it falls on the ideological spectrum, but on the commonsense spectrum it makes an awful lot of sense. Why does college have to be 4 years anymore? Why can't we have more students—particularly first-generation students—getting a jump-start on college with dual enrollment in high school? The key on this is to make sure the credits they get in their dual enrollment at community college actually count toward their degree requirement, which requires what are called articulation agreements between the 4-year institutions and the 2-year institutions. It does not do much good if you come into college with a lot of course credit but it does not count toward your degree requirements. Let's try to make sure more students can knock off a semester or a year of college in high school. That would save families \$10,000, \$20,000, \$30,000, in effect, if we could make that happen.

If you are a low-income student and you qualify for a Pell grant, why not be able to use part of those Pell grant proceeds in high school if the credits you receive in high school in dual enrollment actually count toward your degree requirements? Again, that is a jump-start on college. It would make sure that a student such as Jacob at William & Mary, rather than being the exception, would become more the rule.

Let me talk about another proposal. Again, I am working with my colleague from Florida, Senator RUBIO, on this legislation. Senator RUBIO has a story similar to mine. He is the first generation in his family to graduate from college and law school. He tells stories as well of years of repaying student debt.

In our student debt processes, we already have a series of payment proposals. Unfortunately, most of them are confusing. Many of them end up like the student I know or the young person I know in Virginia Beach who is on a fixed payment proposal. This individual, as I mentioned—\$2,000 a month,

completely crushing his abilities to take any chances at all.

So what Senator RUBIO and I have done is we put together a proposal that would say the first option—it would still be the young person's option to opt out of, but the first option would be an income-based repayment proposal that would cap your student debt repayment at 10 percent of your income. What would this do? Ten percent of your income would allow you to take that chance on that startup business. Ten percent of your income, capped, would maybe give you the ability to say: Oh gosh, if I hit a rough spot, I will not get crushed. I will not have to move back in with my family.

This better structured, financially sustainable, income-based repayment proposal would allow young people to better manage their debt and avoid the impact of default.

Part of our proposal includes loan forgiveness programs that will provide borrowers such as Jacob in southwest Virginia the kind of relief they want.

Even if we cannot agree on a grand refinancing proposal, this income-based capping at 10 percent—which has been greeted by left and right alike as a dramatic step forward—ought to be part of our discussion.

Then I come to another proposal—one that, quite honestly, even this body with all of its dysfunction ought to be able to get done. I partnered with my colleagues Senator THUNE and Senator AYOTTE on a very business-friendly proposal that would be an option for an employer and employee. Right now, if an employee wants to continue with their education, an employer can take up to \$5,000 of that employee's salary and apply it to their tuition, tax free, on continuing education. Well, if we are allowing an employer to do that for an employee to continue their education, to increase their skills, why not provide that same kind of option for an employer to apply that same amount—up to \$5,000 of a person's salary—directly against an employee's student debt pretax and tax free as well? It does not cost the employer another dime. This is purely at the option of the employee. It would be a great retention tool for a company to say: Hey, keep working with us. We are going to give you this benefit.

That young or not-so-young person will get this money pretax going against their student debt. It is common sense, bipartisan, and something on which—even with all of our bitter battles back and forth—we ought to be able to find common ground.

As I mentioned at the outset, like many Virginians, like many probably in this body, as the first in my family to have graduated from college—I could not have gotten to college; my family did not have the resources. I had to work. I got grants. But I also had to take out student debt. The student debt that I had at \$15,000 pales in comparison to the average amount of debt with which people come out of

even public universities in Virginia right now—more than \$25,000. I had \$15,000 of debt after college and law school. Look at people who come out of graduate school. On average those numbers more than double.

This is an issue whose time has come for us to address. In America in the 21st century, you should not go broke if you decide to go to college. We all encourage our young people to get that education that will allow them to prosper in a knowledge-based economy, but we hold out a false hope when we say: Go get that education, but we are going to put you into such debt that for the next 20 years you are not going to be able to exercise that education in the way you wanted to because you are going to be scrambling to repay the obligations it took you to get those skills.

I say this as a former Governor. This is the case. I was proud of the amount of the investment we made in higher education when I was Governor. Quite honestly, if we look across the board at every State in our Nation as a whole, over the last 20 years Federal and State direct aid to higher education has been virtually a straight line down. The cost of a higher education has been a straight line up. How have we filled that gap? We have filled that gap with basically an unfair deal to a whole generation. We have said: Do not worry about the cost; just take out more debt. For a while, when the economy was good and you could get a job pretty much guaranteed coming out of college or graduate school, this did not present a crisis. In the last 4 or 5 years, as we have seen college graduates, law school graduates, graduate school graduates coming out without job opportunities, we have seen this house of cards collapse.

I again remind my colleagues that there is \$1.2 trillion of student debt—greater than credit card debt. The cost of a higher education is continuing to escalate at a rate even higher than health care costs.

For those of us who are lucky enough to serve in this body, we all got our fair shot. If we are really going to honor our commitment to this next generation—and, quite honestly, the parents who are also helping to pay off this next generation—we have to deal with this crushing issue of student debt. I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle as we address this problem in a reasonable, responsible, and timely manner.

I yield the floor.

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

ISIL

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, we all are anticipating the President's speech tonight in which hopefully he will make the case for why it is in America's national security interest to eliminate the ISIS or ISIL threat from the Islamic State that is forming a new

caliphate in what used to be called Iraq and Syria and which hopefully will be restored.

When the President first campaigned for President in 2008, I know he did not promote himself as a future war President—just the opposite. He told supporters that on his first day in office he would give U.S. military forces in Iraq a new mission, which was ending the war. But just because one side of a war quits does not mean the war ends. I think now we found that to be painfully obvious.

When the President was running for reelection, time and time again he boasted that he upheld that 2008 campaign promise and brought the Iraq war to a close. He further assured us that the tide of war was receding. I am sure if he had a chance he would probably take back those words because history has disproved those very arguments.

As recently as mid-June, even after the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria had conquered the second largest Iraqi city, the city of Mosul, a national security spokeswoman was still repeating the White House talking points that are 3 years old, telling the Wall Street Journal that President Obama promised to responsibly end the war in Iraq and he did.

Of course, America's complete withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 did not end the war, as I suggested a moment ago. It just ended the U.S. involvement in the war in Iraq until now. But it did make the resurgence of war much more likely. It was, in hindsight, a tragic mistake. We were the glue that held Iraq together, but once we left and pulled the plug without—because we did not negotiate a status of forces agreement or a bilateral security agreement, the old sectarian strife that is perhaps centuries or more old came back to the forefront. Iran continued its aggression in Iraq, as it had been doing all the time we were there, as well as their support for Bashar al-Assad and his support for Hamas and other terrorist organizations. Meanwhile, in Libya—remember, NATO went to war in Libya as well, primarily using U.S. assets and money.

Our complete and utter neglect of Libya following the neglect of Muammar Qadhafi did not end that war either; it merely created a security vacuum that was quickly filled by radical militias and terrorist groups with ties to Al Qaeda.

If we learned anything from 9/11—and I just returned from a Congressional Gold Medal service in the Capitol—if we learned anything 13 years ago, it is that vacuums get filled. If we do not fill the vacuum with constructive self-governance and respect for the rule of law and individual human worth and dignity, then that vacuum will be filled by terrorists and others who reject all of those fundamental values of our country. We did not learn it. We did not learn the lesson. We did not learn it in Libya. We did not learn it in Iraq.

Eleven months after Qadhafi's death and less than a week after President Obama told the Democratic National Convention that Al Qaeda was on the path to defeat, Al Qaeda-linked terrorists killed four Americans in Benghazi, including our U.S. Ambassador—less than a week.

I mention all this recent history because it all comes back to the issue of credibility, not only of our Commander in Chief in the United States, but of the American people. It comes down to our Nation's credibility around the world.

Will we be trusted by our friends and allies? Will we be feared by our would-be adversaries, the bullies, the tyrants, the thugs, and the terrorists who will take advantage of the vacuum left once America withdraws?

From the Middle East to the Far East, from Baghdad to Beijing, to Mosul, to Moscow, this administration has done tremendous damage to America's credibility.

America is the one indispensable nation in the world. We may not like that sometimes; it may seem like too big a responsibility, but no one else can fill a void left when America retreats. Ronald Reagan understood that. That is why he stood for what he called peace through strength, and you know it works.

But when the President announced a withdrawal date from Afghanistan in the very same speech in which he announced a U.S. troop surge, he damaged America's credibility again. Is that any way to encourage people to support the United States and NATO's mission in Afghanistan, to tell them: Well, we are going to surge troops today, but we are going to be gone tomorrow, so you better make your bets in terms of your long-term interest—which, in Afghanistan, means they are betting with America's adversaries.

Of course, as we saw in Iraq, tragically—the investment the United States made in terms of blood and treasure, which was squandered in Iraq—he created another prospect of the squandering of America's blood and treasure in Afghanistan unless we have learned the lesson of Iraq.

Then there is Syria. The President has given speech after speech. The Department of State, Hillary Clinton, others, the national security advisors, have said it is American policy that there be regime change in Syria, that Bashar al-Assad has to go.

But then nothing happened—well, I take that back. Something did happen; 200,000 civilians have died in Syria as a result of that civil war.

The President came to Congress to ask for authority to conduct air strikes in Syria, but then when he couldn't explain what his strategy was, he got a lifeline from Vladimir Putin. Putin said: We will help you get rid of those chemical weapons in Syria. And the President retreated from that red line and nothing seemed to happen.

In addition to those 200,000 Syrian civilians killed since the civil war start-

ed, we have seen millions of Syrians displaced in refugee camps in Turkey, in Lebanon, in Jordan.

Then there is Ukraine. When the President promised to help Ukraine defeat Russian aggression, and to help it maintain its full territorial integrity and sovereignty, he subsequently refused to give the Ukrainians even modest defensive weapons. I think we sent them MREs, meals ready to eat. We sent them, maybe, some medical supplies which are important. But they needed not MREs but weapons to defeat Russian aggression, to raise the cost to Putin and his regime in their continued invasion of Ukraine and Crimea.

Then the President decided: Well, we are just going to use economic sanctions against Putin. Putin could care less about the economic sanctions.

Again, as to the extent to which our allies and friends can rely on us when they get in trouble, they begin to doubt our credibility. The bullies, tyrants, and terrorists lick their lips and take full advantage of the situation. We have seen that time and time again.

Then there was when the President—I bet this is another couple of words he wished he could take back in light of subsequent events—dismissed the Islamic State terrorists as the JV team. Even though they were gaining a stranglehold over eastern Syria and western Iraq, again the President—by underestimating a threat, a threat I am sure he will confront head on tonight—undermined America's credibility.

Make no mistake. America's credibility does matter. And when America loses credibility, the world becomes a much more dangerous place. That is exactly what has happened over the past several years.

I would say that despite the criticism I have made of the President's policy, I believe he has an opportunity tonight, starting tonight, to reverse some of that damage. Beginning with this speech on U.S. policy in Iraq and Syria, he has an opportunity to reverse the impression that he is aloof and detached from the ongoing chaos. He has the opportunity to lay out a clear strategy for destroying perhaps the richest, most well-armed terrorist group on the planet. He has an opportunity to describe how our strategy might utilize Syria's more moderate anti-Assad rebel groups and describe how he plans to work with Congress on implementing that strategy. He has an opportunity to sell the American people on his strategy.

Make no doubt about it. While the President thinks he can go this alone and he doesn't need to come to Congress for additional authorization, he does need and we do need the support of the American people. There are practical reasons why the President should come to Congress. Because if he makes the case to a bipartisan Congress and Congress issues the authorization for him to act because we actually believe he has a strategy that can

work, then I think the American people will be much more inclined to support that strategy.

Tonight I hope he will speak not only to Congress, he will speak to the American people candidly about the threat and about our military goals and how he intends to achieve those goals by the strategy he lays out.

He has an opportunity to explain the evolving nature of the terrorist threat and also explain what he is going to do and what we can do together to defend U.S. interests and to keep America safe.

Yesterday the Washington Post-ABC News poll revealed some very important data with regard to the American people's understanding of the threat and their support for what the President is talking about doing. In some ways it seems as if the American people were way ahead of their leadership in Congress and in the White House. From the Washington Post-ABC poll I will read three questions.

No. 1:

As you may know, a group of Sunni insurgents called the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, also known as ISIS, has taken control of parts of Iraq and Syria. How much, if at all, do you see ISIS as a threat to the vital interests of the United States?

Ninety-one percent of the respondents responded said they see it as a serious threat to the vital interests of the United States.

No. 2:

Do you support or oppose U.S. air strikes against the Sunni insurgents in Iraq?

Seventy-one percent support.

No. 3:

Do you support or oppose expanding U.S. air strikes against the Sunni insurgents into Syria?

Sixty-five percent support.

So we can see from the first question people recognize ISIS as a threat. Fewer support kinetic strikes against the insurgents in Iraq and Syria, but still a two-thirds majority do.

My point is, while the President of the United States may take what I think is a very generous view of his authority as Commander in Chief and under the Constitution to do this without congressional authorization, I think it is a terrible mistake for him to do so for two reasons, one I just mentioned, which is he needs and we need the support of the American people before we send any American into harm's way to deal with this threat. We need to have a robust debate and there needs to be bipartisan support for this effort in order for the American people then to see we are united and thus to unite them in common cause against this terrible threat.

Then the last reason is practical too. The President wants, it is reported, \$5 billion. We have already burned up about \$½ billion with air strikes in Iraq. War is expensive, and if the President says this is going to go on for another 3 years, which is one estimate I saw, he needs to come to Congress in order to get the appropriations, to get the money, in order to carry this out. If he thinks he can just come and request \$5 billion and Congress is going

to rubberstamp that or write him a blank check without any strategy, I think he is terribly mistaken. From what we have seen, since our Nation has been at war in Afghanistan and Iraq for these many years, 13 years in Afghanistan, we know war is expensive and \$5 billion is a very minimal down-payment on what it will cost the American taxpayer to conduct this effort.

The President may have a very narrow view of his responsibility to come to Congress and get authority, but there are very practical reasons why he should, as I said—both in terms of gaining the support of the American people for this effort before he sends more Americans into harm's way, and the fact that under the Constitution the Executive, the President, can't appropriate one penny. That is going to have to come from Congress.

One party can't do this. Heaven forbid our national security would break down along purely partisan lines. But if the President doesn't have a plan and if he doesn't lay it out tonight, it is hard to see how he will get either the support of Congress, whether it is official or not, or of the American people.

It is hard to see where this is going to go if he thinks he can fund this on the cheap when, in fact, by his own estimate and others' it is going to take 3 years or more to defeat ISIS.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

INCOME EQUALITY

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, as the Presiding Officer is well aware, as one of our great leaders on our economic agenda, of what we are calling a fair shot, it is incredibly important in the time we are in session that we have an opportunity to vote again on each of those items and hopefully pass each of the items at the front line of what American families, American people, care about in terms of lifting their standard of living and creating more opportunities.

It is great that we have seen the stock market more than double in the past 5, 6 years. It is great that someone who is living off of interest earnings has a better portfolio. That is great.

But the person who is getting up every day, going to work, and maybe takes a shower after work, ought to have the same fair shot to get ahead so that this economy is growing—and that is great—but it needs to grow and create opportunity for everyone.

We can help with that by having the right support and the right policies, and that is what the fair shot agenda is all about.

This afternoon we are going to be voting on a very important piece—which I frankly can't believe we are even having to talk about in 2014—whether we are going to actually enforce equal pay for equal work laws.

When I think about my own family, my daughter, daughter-in-law, and

granddaughter at 7 years old—I hope by the time she grows up we are not still going to be talking about this issue. I think about they are working hard every day and the assumption they have is that they will get paid just as their male counterparts are.

There are those who have said: Well, this is a distraction. This isn't really an issue. There are some in Michigan who have said: Women don't care about equal pay. What they care about is flexibility.

My response is flexibility doesn't buy my groceries. It does not buy my daughter's groceries. It does not put gas in her car. It does not pay her mortgage.

The reality is, in America, in 2014, there is absolutely no reason—zero—that we would not have a 100-percent vote not just on the procedural vote to proceed but on a final bill to make sure enforcement is in place on equal pay—a pretty big deal. An awful lot of women who are the sole breadwinners in their families are counting on us to get this right so they can make sure their kids, who are now going back to school, can have the school clothes they need, they can put the food on the table, they can put the gas in the car to get them to school and get to work, and so on.

Another big piece of all this agenda in terms of creating opportunity for people is to make sure you can afford to go to college. That same person who is trying to put food on the table would love to put money aside in a bank account for their kids to go to college and would love to know that, when they are doing the right thing—they are making the grade, they are going to college—they will not be stuck with mounds of debt, buried in debt, because we do not have the right kind of system that provides funding for higher education and access to low-interest loans.

So another piece of the fair shot agenda, which is absolutely critical, is to make sure—let's start with ground zero, which is "at least"—that anybody who has a student loan now will have a chance to refinance it, just like you would a house, at the lowest possible interest rate, which is impossible today.

Now, what does that do? We know there is more student loan debt today than credit card debt. Think about that for a minute. There is more student loan debt than credit card debt—\$1 trillion. There are mortgage bankers in Michigan saying to me: You have to fix this because I have folks who want to buy a house and they cannot qualify because of their student loan debt. They want to start a small business and they cannot get a loan because of their student loan debt. We also know there are actually people who are on Medicare who are holder than 65 years

of age in this country who are still paying off student loan debt. When we talk about opportunity and a basic value of America: Work hard, go to school, have opportunity, it seems to me this flies in the face of that.

So another really important piece we want to get to and we want to pass is the ability to allow people, step one, to renegotiate and to refinance their student loans at the lowest possible interest rate from last year, which is 3.86 percent for undergraduate students. So that needs to get done so we are addressing one of the huge burdens and costs on middle-class families.

We also know that, unfortunately, we have another agenda item that came about because of the Supreme Court deciding that for women—that for women only—our choices on preventive health care, on birth control—if we are on the job covered by insurance our boss can actually overrule personal decisions about what type of birth control a woman will choose for herself, for her family. So we have a bill called Not My Boss's Business. I think it is pretty clear. It is not your boss's business what decisions you make, and you should be able to have your birth control decisions and what you need covered just like anything else in terms of preventive health care for men are for women.

So that is another piece of all of this that needs to get passed to make it clear. This is an economic issue for people. I know in my own family, when I think about my daughter and son and nieces and nephews who are planning their families and making decisions, these are economic issues about health care coverage.

We have two other critically important economic issues that are part of what we want to get done before this session ends in September. One is raising the minimum wage. It seems to me pretty basic that if you are working 40 hours or more a week you should not be in poverty, plain and simple. If we are going to reward work, if we are going to expect people to work, then working should pay more than not working. If you are working 40 hours a week, you ought to be making more than the poverty level. It has been way too long for American workers to get a pay raise.

So that is an important part of it.

Then finally there is a bill that I have introduced that, to me, ought to be a no-brainer. I do not understand; we tried to pass it a couple years ago. It was blocked. And it was blocked again by Republican colleagues a few weeks ago. We need to get this done. It has to do with a part of our Tax Code that allows a company that packs up shop and moves the factory overseas to write off the cost of the move, so the American taxpayers, including workers who just lost their job, would be paying for it.

Unfortunately, over the years, we have seen too much of that in Michigan. Now things are coming back. Man-

ufacturing is coming back. We are very happy about that. But we want to send a very strong message that if you pack up shop and decide to move overseas, American taxpayers, the workers and their families, the communities are not going to pay for the move. But if you want to come back, we are more than happy to allow you to write off those costs through the Tax Code, and we will even give you another 20 percent tax credit for those costs on top of it.

So it is very simple. The Bring Jobs Home Act simply says: If you want to come back to America, great, we will help you do that. We will help you pay for those costs to come back to America. But if you want to leave the country, you are on your own.

So those are the five items that we want to get done before the end of this month that all relate to whether we are going to have opportunity and we are going to focus on the middle class of this country. Too many folks are barely holding on or are not holding on or used to see a path to get to the middle class and cannot anymore. That is not going to work for America. If we do not have people who know they have a fair shot to make it—that they have opportunity, that they see opportunity for their children—if they do not have money in their pocket so they can take care of their family and invest in the future, we are not going to have a strong economy. That is just a fact.

So we are glad that Wall Street is doing well. But it is time to focus on Main Street, middle-class Americans. That is what the fair shot agenda is all about, and I hope colleagues will come together and help us get this done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, when I was home last month, I heard a lot from Missourians, for really the first time over and over: What about all of the bills the House has passed that the Senate has not taken up? What about funding the government? My good friend from Michigan just mentioned the five things she would like to get done before we get to the end of the year. I think everybody on the other side of the aisle knows those five things, for various reasons, will not happen this year.

But what are we not doing? We are less than a month away from the beginning of a new spending year. We have not voted on a single one of the appropriations bills. There is no budget. The fundamental work of the government is not going on while we continue to debate the same things over and over because there are some people who think there is a good title to the bill or a good headline: The five things we want to get done.

Equal pay. Who is not for equal pay? The law requires equal pay. In fact, when the President signed the Lilly Ledbetter Act, he said: This solves the problem. Well, suddenly, it does not solve the problem because we want to

get that title back out there again where we can talk about the title.

Access to college. I am the first person in my family to ever graduate from college. I had the chance to be a university president. I believe people's lives are affected by the right kind of education after high school. Nobody is opposed to access to college. We ought to be talking about that. But we ought to be talking about that in a way that can produce the right kind of result.

When the people of Missouri are saying: You are not getting the work of the country done, that is clearly right—just the fundamental things that need to get done, and here we are back in Washington, reminded by our friends on the other side that really we are here to just hold votes we have already had. Not a single thing was mentioned in the preceding remarks that we have not voted on already and not a single thing was mentioned in the preceding remarks that has any chance of passing both the House and the Senate and, frankly, has no chance of advancing in either the House or the Senate. But here we take these critical 2 weeks—the government is unfunded, no budget to talk about, with work not being done—to talk about these things.

Right now, the joint resolution we are on—with all the critical challenges we have not solved, we are talking about changing the Constitution. The only person in the Senate who can decide what bill comes to the floor is the majority leader, and the majority leader has brought a joint resolution to the floor, an amendment to the Constitution, an amendment that would take 67 votes in the Senate to pass, an amendment that has 45 sponsors, all from the other side—not very close to 67. Nobody believes this is going to happen.

To amend the Constitution, two-thirds of the Senate has to agree. That will not happen. Two-thirds of the House has to agree. That will not happen. Two-thirds of the States have to approve the amendment. That will not happen. More importantly, it should not happen. We are talking about amending the Constitution of the United States when there is no chance of doing it. So the only thing we are surely talking about is just trying to score some kind of last-minute election-year points. But if people are paying attention, the points that will be scored will be scored by those defending the Bill of Rights and those defending the Constitution.

What is being proposed here would have a chilling effect on the First Amendment, which says "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging [among other things] the freedom of speech." We are thinking, for the first time ever, we would amend the Bill of Rights? Now, nobody really thinks we are going to do that so apparently everybody thinks, as long as it is just a show vote, it does not matter. But if you can take these freedoms today and decide they are worth bandying around as a show vote, I suppose you could

take them tomorrow and actually think about taking these freedoms away.

The Constitution would not have become the Constitution of the United States without the promise of the Bill of Rights. The Founders got a lot of things right. They did not get everything right. But one of the things they got right was the Bill of Rights. One thing that the States demanded when the Constitution was shown to them was: We can do that, but we are not going to do that unless we are promised that these fundamental rights that make us who we are and have the potential to make us more than we are—that these fundamental rights are guaranteed. We have never amended the Bill of Rights. So suddenly 45 Members of the Senate—with no enthusiasm for this anywhere else that I can find in the country—45 Members of the Senate have decided that for the first time ever we would amend the Bill of Rights.

Now, what does the Bill of Rights give us? It gives us freedom of religion—the first right. There will be another debate, I assume, late in the next 2 weeks to once again talk about how important is that right of conscience, that the Constitution in the Bill of Rights guarantees—the very first freedom it gives us is the freedom to believe what we believe. In fact, President Jefferson said in the decade after the Constitution was written that of all the rights, that is the one we should hold most dear: the freedom to hold our beliefs and not let the government decide how you conduct yourself in ways that violate your faith beliefs.

But right after that comes—what we are talking about—freedom of speech, the second of all those freedoms. There may be people here not at all offended by the fact that we can just bandy that around with no chance we are going to change this amendment. It is not like there are 67 cosponsors of this amendment.

I find it offensive we would talk about this as if it is a freedom so easily discussed and so easily utilized for political reasons that we just bring it up here a few weeks before the election and talk about it, even though there is no chance it could possibly be changed at this point and shouldn't be changed in the future.

The right of conscience, the freedom of speech, the freedom of press, the right to peaceably assemble, the right to petition the government—those are the five freedoms given in the First Amendment to the Constitution, and here we are talking about them as if they are nothing more than political talking points. They are who we are as a nation.

The chilling effect this discussion has on the First Amendment is concerning. I suppose part of it is to convince people: You don't want to participate in the system because you are going to be criticized if you participate in the system.

One of the great rights we have as Americans is the right to criticize those who are participating and, if we do participate, the right that others have to criticize us. This is an effort that if it occurred would certainly be a great thing for the current occupants of public office because you begin to write the rules in a way that makes it harder for those who don't hold public office to challenge those who do. No one likes being criticized, but in our country it is a fundamental part of who we are.

The Constitution wouldn't have been agreed to without the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights, as I said before, hasn't been changed. The freedom of the press is one of those rights, but it is not the only one. This amendment would go a long way toward making the press the only way people get their information and news. The press—the media generally—has a guaranteed right to do what they do, but individuals have a guaranteed right to say what they want to say, to participate as the courts and the Constitution allow in this great debate we call America.

To see that dealt with in this way—I actually wonder what people would think if they thought this was going to happen. Nobody believes this is going to happen because it is not going to happen. We are taking the people's time. We are taking the time given to us by the Constitution and the people to do the people's work, to instead talk about things that shouldn't happen, to talk about things that will not happen.

To suggest there is a real debate going on in Washington, when this is exactly what people are tired of—people in Washington not doing their job and trying to convince the people whom Washington should be working for that somehow great debates are going on, when all we are doing is getting ready for the next election, I am tired of that. I think most citizens of our country are tired of it.

For those who want to defend the Constitution, count me on their side.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

SCHOOL CERTIFICATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, on Thursday this country will commemorate the 13th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

We learned many lessons from that day. One key lesson was that terrorists can and will exploit our immigration system and policies to enter and remain in the United States and now and into the future potentially harm Americans.

The 9/11 attacks were carried out by 19 hijackers, some of whom entered on student visas and trained in flight schools in the United States. The 19 individuals applied for 23 visas. They lied on their applications. They failed to abide by the terms of their visas. This

was a wake-up call that we needed better oversight of our visa programs, especially student visas. But this wasn't our first wake-up call.

In 1993 the American people were confronted with the first terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. One of the instigators of that attack was on an expired student visa.

Since 1993 we have mandated the tracking of foreign students and gave schools and universities a responsibility to help us monitor these programs while these students are on U.S. soil. Unfortunately, while this tracking system is up and running today, it is still antiquated and the Federal Government remains incapable of ensuring that those students who enter the country are truly attending our educational institutions.

Today nearly 10,000 schools across the country accept foreign students, and those schools are responsible for communicating with our government about the whereabouts of these students. Enrollment of foreign students is increasing.

According to the Brookings Institution, the number of foreign students on F-1 visas in U.S. colleges and universities grew from 110,000 in 2001 to 524,000 in 2012. Despite this overwhelming increase, the technology and oversight of the student visa program has insufficiently improved.

Now, 13 years after 9/11, we have sham schools setting up in strip malls with no real classrooms. We have foreign nationals entering the United States with the intent to study but then disappear and never attend a class. I will give just two examples of sham schools.

In 2011, Tri-Valley University reported that they would bring in less than 100 students but actually brought in over 1,500. Tri-Valley University officials were caught giving F-1 visas to undercover agents posing as foreign nationals who explicitly professed no intention of ever attending classes. Students paid \$5,400 per semester in tuition to the school to obtain those student visas until that school was shut down.

On May 29 this year, the Micropower Career Institute in New York was raided by Federal officials. Its top officials were arrested on student visa fraud. Allegedly, school officials did not report foreign nationals when they didn't attend classes, and they falsified those student records so the school could continue to collect Federal education dollars for those students. But despite the indictment of officials at this so-called school, it still remains open for business.

The Government Accountability Office reported to Congress in 2012 that sham schools posed a problem. We put a lot of faith in the work of the Government Accountability Office. The GAO said the Immigration and Customs Enforcement does not have a process to identify and analyze risks across schools. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has overlooked