

BANK ON STUDENTS EMERGENCY
LOAN REFINANCING ACT—MO-
TION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 409, S. 2432. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 409, S. 2432, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide for the refinancing of certain Federal student loans, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture vote with respect to S.J. Res. 19 occur at 1:45 p.m. today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Delaware.

WEST AFRICA

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, this is an uneasy time in our world. There is no shortage of crises that demand our attention and our action. The President called on us last night to step up to the very real challenge posed by the terrorist group ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Russian aggression against Ukraine demands our attention. A fragile ceasefire continues between Hamas and Gaza. There is the Central American exodus to our southern border that riveted the attention of many this summer; and there is continuing negotiations to seek an end to Iran's illicit nuclear weapons program.

Behind all of this there is another and equally important challenge I wanted to draw this body's attention to for a few minutes today—the spread of a quiet and vicious virus throughout West Africa. While the Nation's attention today for good reason is on remembering the tragic events of 9/11, and the President's strategy for combating ISIS today, I would like to speak to another urgent challenge to our country and world, and that is the need to dramatically increase our support as communities across West Africa struggle to confront and combat Ebola.

I met and have spoken with Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. She is a Nobel Prize winner and impressive leader who has brought her country back from a terrible civil war and was making huge progress toward the development of Liberia. I had the honor of meeting with her here and visiting her country. In my role as the chair of the African Affairs Subcommittee, I have met few others who have impressed me as much as President Johnson-Sirleaf.

Leaders throughout this region are doing everything they can to save lives, but in my most recent communications with President Johnson-Sirleaf it is clear that Ebola is rapidly getting beyond the capacity and ability of these communities and countries to contain it and to recover from it. They need our action.

Individuals on the ground from groups such as Doctors Without Borders and Samaritan's Purse have done remarkable, heroic, and extraordinary work by putting their own lives on the line to help others, and they have borne the overwhelming majority of the risks, service, and sacrifice so far.

The news has just been announced that the Gates Foundation will contribute \$50 million to this fight, which is critical, as public funds alone will not be enough to end this crisis.

Our own people, through the U.S. Government, can and must do more. It need not be the role of the United States alone to resolve this problem, but it is our responsibility to stand side by side with those working tirelessly to stop it. It is our responsibility to not just lend a hand but to help lead in ways that only we can and to use our unique capabilities to address this crisis. If Ebola's spread reveals one thing it is that we are more interconnected today than we have ever been in our human history and that disease truly knows and respects no borders. We need to continue to act, not only because we are morally compelled to help the tens of thousands who are facing an immediate threat, but also because we have a direct stake in the resolution of this crisis.

This is a manageable public health crisis that we know how to solve, but doing so requires our focus, our attention, our resolve, and our resources, tools that only the United States has.

Let me briefly outline five specific steps I believe we should take now.

First, I think it is critical the United States has one leadership point—that the White House designate a coordinator to oversee the U.S. whole-of-government emergency response. There are many ways the United States is currently helping across many agencies from the Department of Defense to the Centers for Disease Control to the State Department and USAID. Those agencies are doing great work as part of the disaster assistance response team on the ground.

At a time when the U.S. Government is also facing and addressing crises in Iraq, Ukraine, and elsewhere, I think we need one organizer, one coordinator, one responsible figure addressing this crisis who is appointed by the White House to coordinate all of our resources and all the people necessary from the U.S. Government for this growing effort. President Obama should designate an official to manage our country's response both overseas and here in the United States, including preparing us for the remote chance this virus might reach American soil.

Our ambassadors on the ground in the three most affected countries are playing the primary role in coordination right now, and they are doing remarkable work, but I will remind my colleagues in this body that in Sierra Leone there is no currently confirmed U.S. Ambassador. The nominee, John Hoover, has been waiting almost 8

months to be confirmed. This is just one painful reminder that the dysfunction of this body has prevented us from confirming nominated ambassadors to dozens of countries around the world. To be effective we need to coordinate our U.S.-based and our field-based efforts through ambassadors on the ground.

Second, we must begin to deploy U.S. military support to the maximum extent possible. Let me be clear: I don't mean combat capabilities, I mean the unique logistical capabilities of the U.S. military, their ability to deploy through their logistical capabilities. We have resources that no other country can bring to bear as quickly and as successfully as we can.

I was encouraged to hear an announcement this past week from the administration that they plan to use our military to establish a new hospital facility in Liberia to distribute equipment, to provide infrastructure and transportation support. I will admit I am concerned it will take weeks to deploy.

On my visit to Liberia last August, I was struck at how poor and underdeveloped this nation of brave and inspiring people currently is and how paved roads and the ability to move at any speed rapidly ends just a few miles from the capital, and how strained the infrastructure and the public health systems are by this rapidly growing crisis.

This is not everything we can and should be doing. We need to build more field hospitals for civilians in Liberia and beyond so there are facilities for health workers and civilians fighting the disease. We also can and should provide airlift of supplies from private donors.

I have heard from organizations that have worked at the transportation facility and have donated supplies that can fill cargo plane after cargo plane, but they are having difficulty getting it from here to West Africa. We need to deepen our coordination with foreign militaries. Other Nations possess similar advance capabilities, as we do, and we will be able to combat this crisis more effectively if we all work together.

I appreciate Ghana's efforts and partnership as it allows us to use some of their facilities as an air bridge for logistics. As more air resources are poured into this fight against Ebola, we need other countries in the region to lend a similarly open hand.

My third point is directed to our private sector, to international organizations, to the American people, and to citizens of other developed nations. We need your support and your generosity and we need it now.

This is a letter that Liberia's President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf sent to President Obama this week, and I wish to read from it briefly.

Mr. President, as you know, the outbreak has overwhelmed the containment and treatment measures we have attempted thus far.

Our already limited resources have been stretched to the breaking point and, up to now, only a private charity, Medecins Sans Frontiers, has responded robustly in all the affected countries. But they, too, have reached their limits.

My friend President Sirleaf is right: It is time for the rest of us to step up.

The World Health Organization has issued an Ebola Response Roadmap that calls for \$490 million and more than 10,000 additional health workers, and we are far short of reaching those goals today.

So far the U.S. Government has contributed more than \$100 million and has announced a commitment of another \$88 million that we in this body will hopefully approve before we end this session.

The Gates Foundation, as I mentioned, has also made an impressive and incredible addition of \$50 million, but the fact remains we need more.

I have heard from many in my State and across the country eager to give support. If you have the means, I urge you to go to usaid.gov/ebola for links to some of the impressive nongovernmental organizations that are doing what they can on the ground to stem this humanitarian crisis.

As much as this crisis needs money and equipment and supplies, it most importantly needs nurses and doctors, paramedics, and other medical professionals—literally thousands of them. The health systems of these countries, which were already among the least well resourced in the world, are overwhelmed, and so I am asking today for your help. We are asking for you to save lives. If you are a trained medical professional and willing to help, I urge you to please go to usaid.gov/ebola and consider how you might serve to help in this crisis.

Fourth, we need to develop and deploy a treatment and vaccine as rapidly as possible. Here is where in some ways America's unique gifts, our talents, and our strength in terms of the development and discovery of new pharmaceuticals, of new treatments, and of a new vaccine are a unique contribution we can make.

American scientists are making progress on both fronts, but the reality is it will be hard to confront and ultimately end this disease in the long term without either. Much of the \$88 million President Obama has requested from Congress will go toward this most important goal. It is critical we support that funding in this Chamber on a bipartisan basis and prepare for the reality that this is only the first investment we will need to make to quickly develop and deploy these lifesaving drugs and these critically preventive vaccines.

Lastly, we need to invest in the governing and economic institutions in the countries that have been so devastated by this disease.

It is not a coincidence that this outbreak has emerged in countries with some of the weakest health care sys-

tems on Earth—countries that face severe shortages of health care workers, labs essential for testing and diagnosis, clinics and hospitals required for treatment, and the medical supplies and protective gear such as latex gloves and face masks that are commonly available in the United States but are now completely exhausted in the countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia.

We know how to combat this disease with practices such as isolation, meticulous infection control, good public health and burial practices, case investigation, and contact training. But all of these things require trained personnel and many more resources than are currently available.

In the short term we absolutely can fill many of these gaps with the additional resources I have just outlined but we need to act quickly. In the long term we need to think more deeply about why investing in local health care systems and institutions in the developing world is so critical, why a little preventive investment can go a long way toward making the country more resilient in a crisis such as this.

As we act now to do what we must to stop Ebola, we also must consider the actions we can and should take together to prevent the next public health crisis.

To that end, yesterday I introduced a resolution in the Senate with my colleagues Senators MENENDEZ, FLAKE, DURBIN, and CORKER, outlining some of these very steps and recognizing the severe and real threat the Ebola outbreak poses to West Africa and, if not properly contained, to other regions across the globe.

Here is the bottom line: We have what it takes to halt the spread of Ebola in West Africa and to save tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of lives in the process. Unlike other foreign interventions, doing so will take neither bullets nor bombs but rather our willingness, our compassion, our generosity, and our determination to act. The lives of thousands and the stability of entire countries is at stake. It is my hope and prayer that we will rise to this occasion with everything we have.

ISIS STRATEGY

Mr. President, I have come to the floor this morning to speak about our military's critical mission to defeat and degrade the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, a terrorist organization that threatens the stability and security of tens of thousands across these two nations.

As we consider more deeply involving the U.S. military into a new combat mission, I am reminded of the brave young men and women who will carry out that mission with unparalleled courage and professionalism.

This past Saturday I had the opportunity to join hundreds of fellow Delawareans to welcome home and celebrate 70 men and women of the 3rd Battalion of the 238th Army National

Guard Aviation Regiment who were returning from 1 year of service in Kuwait. Many of them were returning not just from one tour of duty but from what was their second or third deployment, having previously served in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet these volunteer citizen soldiers were and remain willing to continue serving. I have had the honor of knowing several current and former members of this unit, and my heart was heavy this weekend, thinking about how many more units such as these, how many soldiers and airmen and their families will be asked to continue serving in combat or in distant and difficult places supporting combat missions in the years ahead.

After more than a decade of conflict in the exactly 13 years since September 11, 2001, I know Americans are tired of war. I know we are weary of war. As the President spoke last night, it was clear he is as well, as am I.

But I would challenge my colleagues and my friends, as I challenge myself, that though we are weary, we cannot ignore the very real threats we face today. We cannot ignore the brutal events that have taken place in northwestern Iraq and in eastern Syria. We cannot ignore the threat that brutality poses to America and our allies. ISIS is a brutal terrorist organization. It has killed innocent Americans, such as the two brave journalists, James Foley and Steven Sotloff, whom they beheaded. Thousands of innocent Iraqis and Syrians have perished at their hands, and it will continue to do so unless the world comes together to stop it.

Let us not forget, one of the biggest reasons we first acted against ISIS militarily in Iraq this summer was to prevent the imminent genocide of a religious minority, the Yazidi people in Iraq. Images of tens of thousands of Yazidis and Christians who were being hounded and persecuted and threatened by ISIS and who then ultimately retreated to the top of a mountain I think transfixed the American people this August, and the action our President took and our military executed, to allow them to safely flee, encouraged all of us to know there are times and places when American military might can and should be used for good.

Just as the ISIS terrorists threaten the Yazidis, they too threaten the very survival of Christians, Kurds, Turkmen, and other ethnic and religious minorities in the region.

Last night, with my Republican colleague Senator KIRK, I cochaired the first meeting of the Senate Human Rights Caucus. We heard from representatives from Iraq's minority communities in a conversation that focused on ISIS's atrocities against innocent civilians simply because of who they are or how they worship. As we expand our campaign against ISIS, we must continue to engage with the people of Iraq and Syria and the region to learn from the past and continue to prevent massacres of innocent men, women, and children. ISIS is a group

bent on the destruction of all people, of whatever background or religion, who do not subscribe to their hateful ideology.

Our President is right. What makes the United States a global force for good is that we are still willing to do what is hard because we know it is right. That is the responsibility that comes from being a nation uniquely founded on principles of freedom, of liberty, of justice, and of having built one of the most capable and powerful militaries in the world, of being a nation and a people born of immigrants who came from all over this world and who remain connected to it and touched by the things that happen in the far reaches of our globe.

Last night President Obama addressed our Nation to make the case for expanding military action against ISIS. Already, sadly, today there are critics of his strategy, just as there have been over the past few weeks. In fact, in the 4 years I have served here, I have rarely seen a day in the Senate when the President isn't challenged, criticized, blocked, and harried by his opponents. There is always some way he could have acted more quickly or with more strength. Critics claim we would be better served by a sterner tone or a more eager finger on the trigger. I must say I was struck when former Vice President Cheney this past week criticized President Obama's restraint, as he has throughout President Obama's tenure. I remind my friends we can do better—we could do better—than to listen to the voices of those who misled this country into war in Iraq a decade ago, especially when it is clear they have learned none of the lessons of that tragic strategic blunder. Surely, as we consider carefully taking expanded military action now, we should applaud our President for proceeding with caution and humility.

Critical to our current strategy and what sets it apart from some past actions is this fact: We are not going alone. Seeking to lead a multilateral coalition is not leading from behind. It is not weakness. A muscular multilateralism is recognizing we are an indispensable nation, we are a leading nation, but we are not the only Nation that should take on and tackle the challenge ISIS presents. Much of the allure of ISIS is the illusion they have created that the Muslim world is at war with the West, when the truth is ISIS does not reflect or represent Islam and ISIS has killed more Muslims than any other people. The President's strategy of building a broad coalition of support, including across the Arab and Muslim world, is crucial to our success.

This is not just an American problem, it is a regional and global problem, and it will not be solved without the hard work of those living in the communities and countries most at risk, most affected, most harmed by ISIS.

We cannot and should not do this alone. That is the only way this works.

It is a critical reason I support the President's strategy for expanded action.

Central to this strategy's success is our military action as well as diplomatic resources and pressure. Let's remember one of the reasons this has even happened is because of the abject failure of Prime Minister Maliki and his Iraqi Government to act in a pluralistic, inclusive way, as he had pledged he would, and has instead acted more as a Shia warlord over the last few years, sewing the seeds of dissent and of disconnection with his Sunni citizens that created the very vacuum into which ISIS has charged.

That is why this administration's diplomatic efforts to build an inclusive Iraqi Government—to demand an inclusive Iraqi Government—have been so important. We cannot defeat ISIS without Iraqis working hand in hand on the ground, and that requires a united Iraq whose future every Iraqi has a stake in preserving.

As we deepen our involvement, it is also necessary that we broaden our strategy. The fact is we cannot defeat ISIS by attacking it in Iraq alone. As we hit ISIS from the air, we also need to be cognizant of the fact that most of its strength and support is in Syria and that the boundary line dividing Iraq from Syria is today on the ground largely a fiction. So we need in Syria a strong and a moderate and an armed and a trained Syrian opposition ready, willing, and able to fight ISIS on the ground.

The President referred last night to our successful counterterrorism strategy in several places in the world. Let me, as the cochair of the African Affairs Subcommittee, briefly mention ways in which this strategy in Syria is similar to what our strategy has been in Somalia in combating al-Shabaab, a deadly Al Qaeda affiliate, which has governed, ruled, and terrorized much of Somalia over the past decade. There has been a similar strategy to the one articulated last night, where the United States has combined training, equipment, logistics, and tactical support with an African ground force drawn from Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia, where those troops have done the hard work of retaking and holding territory while the Somali Government and security forces get reestablished.

In the case of Syria, Saudi Arabia has just stepped up and agreed to provide the facilities, the funding, and the space to train and equip Syrian coalition fighters.

In Congress, we must act swiftly and decisively to support that training and equipment mission that the President has asked us to support by granting our President the authority and funding he needs.

Air strikes could happen soon, and we cannot make the mistake of taking out ISIS while giving Bashar al-Assad, the dictator who still terrorizes Syria, the opportunity to rush in. By helping build a cohesive, trained, and equipped

moderate Syrian opposition, we can help prevent the expansion of ISIS and the Assad regime.

In the long run, in Syria and in Iraq, it is Syrians—moderate Syrians—who must retake their country from ISIS and undertake the very difficult and daunting challenge of rebuilding a stable and inclusive and hopefully someday peaceful society, after decades of dictatorship and more than 3 years of a withering civil war. The United States and Syria's neighbors and the entire international community need to be invested and engaged to help them along this difficult path.

We need to be direct with the American people. This is not going to be easy and it is not going to be swift. We must ensure our military has the resources it needs to carry out this mission. As President Obama said last night, the lives of brave American pilots and servicemembers will be put at risk. But we must also be clear. In their courage and service, they will be part of an important effort to eradicate from this Earth one of the greatest threats currently walking the planet.

Last night President Obama asked for the support of the American people as our Armed Forces and our partners begin in combination to carry out this mission. Let me say, he has mine. I am committed to working with my colleagues as later today all Senators attend a classified briefing, an update on ISIS, and as next week committees in this Senate hear testimony from Secretary of State Kerry and Secretary of Defense Hagel. I am committed to working with my colleagues and with Chairman MENENDEZ on the Foreign Relations Committee to review, consider, draft, and approve an authorization for the use of military force when submitted to us by the President that gives Congress an appropriate role in oversight and the President the authorization he needs.

We need to do everything we can together to ensure that ISIS will be stopped. It has already shown itself, demonstrating its capability to commit unspeakable crimes. If left unchecked, these terrorists will spread their reach beyond our ability to stop them. We cannot let that happen. As my colleagues discuss and debate this mission, I only ask that we leave the politics of the moment out of it. With an election soon upon us, the temptation is strong to use every opportunity to achieve any short-term partisan advantage. But this is too important. Too much is at stake.

Today all over this country we call to mind and honor the sacrifices of Americans who served and those who lost their lives 13 years ago today. We must consider this new mission with the utmost gravity, humility, and caution. I am eager then to work with my colleagues here in the Senate and with the administration in a bipartisan way as we move forward to take on the difficult task of defeating ISIS and strengthening the forces of inclusion

and moderation in Iraq and Syria. I urge my colleagues to work together to support this mission every step of the way.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN.) The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WALSH. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

The Senator from Montana.

SUICIDE PREVENTION FOR AMERICAN VETERANS ACT

Mr. WALSH. Mr. President, I rise today to remember September 11, 2001.

We all know the changes that came out of that terrible day. I watched the events unfold with my colleagues at the Montana National Guard, and we all knew it would change the course of America's long-term military strategy. That is what I want to talk about today, the victories, the consequences, and the true costs of sending America's men and women to defend our country.

In the 13 years that have passed since that awful day, we have experienced more tragedy and adversity. What hasn't changed is how as a nation we triumph over adversity. Throughout our history, Americans have united to face our biggest challenges.

Past and present, the need to work together to support each other, to lift each other, and to inspire each other is what makes the United States a nation that triumphs over adversity.

Our Nation is not living up to the promises we made to the men and women we sent to war following the attacks of 13 years ago. The President and Congress have stepped up to provide more direction and more resources to the VA and to the Defense Department. We are addressing the unacceptable waiting times, and we have taken steps to improve the services our veterans have earned.

But when it comes to the health care of our Nation's veterans, we still have a long way to go. Twenty-two veterans die each day by suicide. Let me say that again. Twenty-two veterans die each day by suicide. It is simply intolerable. Imagine. If 22 servicemembers were dying each day on the battlefield, our Nation would act.

Too many veterans have returned to their homes, to their families, to their communities changed people. They are suffering from the unseen wounds of war: PTSD, traumatic brain injury, and post-concussion syndrome. As the only Member of this body who has fought in Iraq, I can state these unseen wounds are real.

Our Nation's veterans and their families are crying out for help. They are suffering, many of them in silence and isolation, and we must provide them with the support they have earned from the grateful Nation they fought to protect.

One of the first bills I introduced when I came to the Senate was the Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act, the SAV Act. With the partnership from the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, the bill now has bipartisan support in the Senate and a companion bipartisan bill in the House.

Veterans who suffer from unseen wounds of war need access to specialized mental health care in order to be properly treated. In Montana, many veterans live in rural or frontier areas where access to mental health care means long journeys and long wait times.

In August, President Obama unveiled an important Executive order to tackle the challenge of helping our Nation's veterans better adjust to civilian life so that no veteran ever feels as if they are left alone. The President's action was a win for veterans and their families. This action included several elements of the SAV Act, including better standardization between the Department of Defense and the VA with regard to prescription medication, improved health record sharing between agencies, greater training to identify veterans at risk of suicide, a new focus on recruiting more mental health care providers to help our veterans and servicemembers, and important accountability measures to track the success of the VA's mental health care programs.

Recently, Secretary Hagel announced that the Department of Defense will more fully consider service-related PTSD when evaluating a veteran's petition to upgrade his or her discharge status.

All of these are the right steps in the right direction. But even with the President's important actions, there is still more we need to do to prevent suicide among our veterans. One essential component of the SAV Act addresses the need to extend combat eligibility.

PTSD can take years to manifest. We owe it to the men and women who return from combat to give them more time to come forward to receive treatment. Under this bill, veterans who have returned from conflicts can seek treatment for PTSD up to 15 years after returning home. I am committed to lengthening this eligibility time, which is currently only 5 years.

The SAV Act would also require the review of wrongful discharges for troops who struggle with mental health issues. Behavioral health issues are often caused by invisible wounds, and troops who have service-connected mental health problems may have been discharged incorrectly or cut off from the benefits and support they need to heal.

As we observe National Suicide Prevention Week and the horrific events of 9/11, we must remember our men and women who served our Nation so honorably. We must remember the sacrifice they made to defend us, and for many of them the sacrifices they continue to make after their return to ci-

vilian life. Our veterans deserve our support and we have a responsibility as a country to provide it.

Today I ask my colleagues to join me in the fight to live up to the promises this country has made to our veterans.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I ask to be recognized to speak as in morning business for such time as I may consume and engage in a colloquy with my colleague from South Carolina, Senator GRAHAM.

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

ISIS

Mr. MCCAIN. Today, Senator GRAHAM and I, on the 13th anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001—this anniversary—sadly, and unfortunately, we cannot agree and we cannot say, as President Obama did last night, that America is safer.

In fact, in many respects, America is in more danger than at any time since the end of the Cold War. We look around the world at the challenges, the aggression, the provocations, and the continued slaughter of innocent Ukrainians.

It is a classic example of what happens when the United States of America decides to withdraw from the world and create a vacuum. That vacuum is filled by the forces of evil, innocents throughout the world suffer, and America's security is threatened.

So I strongly disagree—and I believe that most objective observers would strongly disagree—with the President's assertion last night that America is safer. By no objective measurement is America safer. In fact, when we look at Twitter and Facebook, we will see that ISIS is threatening the United States of America and urging others to come to the United States of America and attack the United States of America.

Yesterday, from a hearing before the Department of Homeland Security, it was very clear that our border is not secure. That is a recipe for at least attempts by those of ISIS who have dedicated themselves to the destruction of the United States of America to be made possible.

Mr. Baghdadi, the head of ISIS, was once a resident in the U.S.-run prison camp in Iraq called Camp Bucca. He spent 4 years there and then left. On his way out he said to his American captives: "I'll see you guys in New York." I am not making that up. He said: "I'll see you guys in New York." The leader of ISIS, Mr. Baghdadi's message has been: Attack and destroy the United States of America.

So, no, Mr. President, America is not safer. In fact, because of a feckless foreign policy, America is in greater danger than it has been, in some respects, in my lifetime—not in all but in some.

The fact is the President of the United States sees ISIS as some kind of terrorist organization. It is not. ISIS is a terrorist army. ISIS has the largest area in history of wealth, of military equipment and capability than of any terrorist organization in history, and they spread in an area larger than the size of the State of Indiana.

I would like to say the President got some things right in his speech on ISIS. He seems to have read the op-ed piece my colleague Senator GRAHAM and I wrote in the New York Times 2 weeks ago because he adopted most of our proposals—most but not all.

The President compared his plan to the counterterrorism approach he has taken in Somalia and Yemen. It is so disturbing to think that a strategy against ISIS would be the same as against Al Qaeda in Somalia and Yemen. There are terrorist organizations in Somalia and Yemen and, yes, we have been killing with drones, but we have by no means defeated them.

To compare what ISIS has done and the slaughter that ISIS is carrying out to the terrorist organizations in Somalia and Yemen reflects a fundamental misunderstanding on the part of the President of the United States of the threat that we face.

The problem also is that even Al Qaeda has not been defeated in those countries. The President says he wants to degrade and defeat the way they are attacking Al Qaeda in Yemen and Somalia—but they are not defeated.

So what the President proposed last night can possibly, if done correctly, degrade ISIS, but it can't destroy ISIS. And we must destroy ISIS. Sooner or later, according to our heads of intelligence—whether it be the Director of the CIA or the Director of the FBI or the Secretary of Homeland Security—they want to attack the United States. Their goal is to attack the United States of America.

So let's start with what the President got right. He described the right goal: to degrade and to ultimately destroy ISIS. He called for expanding air strikes, to go on offense against ISIS. He explained the need to hit ISIS both in Iraq and Syria. He called for training and arming moderate Syrian opposition forces, and he described elements of a comprehensive strategy—diplomatic, economic, and military—all of which Senator GRAHAM and I have long championed.

He talked about the formation of a coalition—his Secretary of State has said he wanted as many as 40 nations. So far there are 9, and the interesting thing is there is not a single Middle Eastern country that has joined this so-called coalition.

Why is that? Is it because they are not afraid of ISIS? Of course they are afraid of ISIS. But they don't trust the

United States of America. I hear that directly from leaders all over the Middle East.

They don't trust us because of the President's bungling, incredibly bad decision after he once said that if Syria crossed certain reds lines and used chemical weapons, then we would respond. They crossed that line. He then said we were going to respond, and then, after a 45-minute walk with his chief of staff, he announced to the world that we were not going to strike; he was going to Congress, knowing full well he would not get that permission from Congress. That nuance was lost on countries in the Middle East that were prepared to join us with air strikes into Syria.

So it is not surprising. It is not surprising at all that so far the President and his Secretary of State have been unable to convince any of these Middle Eastern countries—and we need them. We need them very badly.

One of the main things the President didn't say and should have said is that he recognizes he made a mistake. Every President has made mistakes. Certainly George W. Bush did in Iraq. He at least had the courage to fire his Secretary of Defense and adopt the surge which basically stabilized Iraq. It had stabilized Iraq—before we made the decision not to do so.

Every one of the President's military advisers—the smartest people that any of us know: General Petraeus, General Keen, General Allen—I could go down the list—argued strenuously for leaving a residual force behind. The President of the United States decided not to. Now we are trying to rewrite history and say: Well, the President really wanted to.

Find me one statement the President of the United States made publicly that he wanted to leave a residual force behind, and I can find you 50 where he bragged about the last combat troop had left Iraq and we had left a safe, stable, prosperous Iraq behind—a lot of howlers about how well we had done in Iraq.

If we had left a residual force, the situation in Iraq would not be where it is today, which allowed Iraqi security forces to weaken, squandered our influence in Iraq, and harmed our ability to check Prime Minister Maliki's worst instincts.

Then there is his failure to support and arm the Free Syrian Army 2 years ago. I have been in Syria. I know how brave these people are. I know how disappointed they were when we failed to arm and equip them.

Two years ago, his entire national security team—including his Secretary of State, Secretary Clinton—strongly urged the President of the United States to arm, train, and equip the Free Syrian Army. The President of the United States turned them down. The President of the United States overruled the unanimous opinion of his national security team. That, my friends, was a huge impact—again giv-

ing rise to ISIS, giving Bashar al-Assad the ability and capability to slaughter innocent Syrians.

It breaks my heart that 192,000 Syrians have been massacred by Bashar al-Assad. He continues to drop these barrel bombs which are horrible killers.

Bashar al-Assad continues to have 150,000 Syrians dying in his prison camps.

I wish every American could see those pictures that were smuggled out of the tortured, killed, and starved-to-death Syrians—192,000 of them. We could have turned that around 2 years ago.

Then 3 years ago was when the President of the United States said: It is not a matter of whether Bashar al-Assad is leaving. It is a matter of when. He also said 3 years ago: It is time for Bashar Assad to leave.

Yet Bashar Assad today continues to slaughter innocent men, women, and children. Millions of refugees have fled the country. The horrors of this butchering continue, and what changed?

One aspect that changed the battlefield equation, when the President of the United States said it is not a matter of if but when, was when Iran—which some now are asking us to work with—sent in Hezbollah—5,000 of them from Lebanon—and it changed the momentum on the battlefield.

Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM and I were called over to the White House. We went in to meet the President, after the President had said that he was going to strike Syria. We sat there, and the President looked us in the eye and he said, I want to do three things: degrade Bashar Assad, upgrade the Free Syrian Army, and change the battlefield equation.

Senator GRAHAM and I, taking his word for it, went out in the driveway and said: We are backing the President of the United States.

Several days later, without being notified, we were stunned to read that the President had changed his mind. He had not told us the truth in the Oval Office. That is a unique experience for me, where I have been in the Oval Office under many Presidents.

I am confident the steps the President laid out last night can degrade ISIS. But that is not sufficient to protect our people. We need Special Forces and advisers on the ground.

The President continues to say there will be no boots on the ground. There are 1,700 boots on the ground right now. There will be more boots on the ground, but they won't be in the form of combat units. If we are really going to defeat ISIS, we are going to need close air support, forward air controllers, intelligence capability, Special Forces, and many others. We will soon have more than 1,500 there, and there will have to be more.

Tell the American people the truth, Mr. President. Those young men and women are going there, they are going to be in harm's way, and they are going to be exposed to combat. Tell the

American people the truth. We need to do a lot more.

I wish to mention one other aspect before I turn to my friend from South Carolina, who was with me in 2008 at a townhall meeting.

A man stood up at the town hall meeting and said: Senator McCain, how long are we going to be in Iraq?

I said: We may be in Iraq for a long, long time because although we have sustained this situation and we have stabilized it—that was after the surge had been implemented and succeeded—it is very fragile. We are going to have to leave a residual force behind—as we did in Japan, in Germany, Korea, Bosnia, where we have left residual forces behind for the sake of stability.

Well, in case any of my colleagues have forgotten, I was pilloried: McCain wants to stay in Iraq.

Yes, I wanted a residual force in Iraq—not to engage in combat but to provide stability, intelligence, and other capabilities. Now we know what happened when we left Iraq. Now we know the consequences.

I hope all those people who called me all of the names which I am not going to repeat here will render an apology, because I was right. I said that if we left Iraq completely, then we risked the great danger of it deteriorating.

I say to my colleagues, the situation today didn't have to be this way. None of the challenges we now face in Iraq and Syria had to be this dire. The rise of ISIS did not have to happen. We have lost too much time and missed too many opportunities. But we can still defeat our terrorist enemies, and we must protect our people and our partners and secure our national interests in the Middle East.

The President's plan, if he implements it—if he understands that this is not Yemen and Somalia, if he understands that this is a direct threat to the United States of America, if he comes to Congress and asks for—not welcomes, but asks for—debate and amendments and votes that show the American people's representatives will support them in this effort, then I think we have a chance of succeeding. But I have to tell my colleagues I am not very optimistic from the start I saw last night.

I would like to yield to my colleague from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Thank you. If I may, this is the anniversary of 9/11. Thirteen years ago on this date our country was attacked by radical Islamists who don't want your car, they don't want your bank account, they don't want your television. They are not criminals. They want to destroy your way of life. And the sooner we come to grips with the fact that there are people like this still out there, the better off we will be.

It is hard for the average American to understand why people think this way. I can't explain it. I have been to the Mideast more times than I can count, and I promise you there are

plenty of devout Muslims who worship according to the Muslim faith, the Islamic faith, who would have plenty of places for me and you to reside in this world without fear. There are plenty of people—the vast majority of people of that faith we could live with in peace. But there is a strain called radical Islam that would kill every moderate Muslim, kill every Christian, destroy the State of Israel, and would kill as many of us as they could if somebody doesn't stop them.

Thirteen years ago close to 3,000 Americans were killed in the attacks on our country by the bin Laden group. The only reason it was close to 3,000 and not 3 million is because they couldn't get the weapons to kill 3 million of us. If they could, they would.

So what do we do? We have to keep them away from those weapons. We have to keep the war over there so it doesn't come back here. And we need allies. I am here to tell you that contrary to what I hear in my own party, most people in Syria have two things in common: They don't like Assad and they sure don't like ISIL. If you don't believe that about Syria, you really don't know much about Syria.

This whole enterprise in Syria started when people demanded to be free from the dictator. Our lack of attention in not responding to the needs of those Syrians who would have defeated Assad and lived in peace with us has cost us greatly.

Three years ago Senator McCain said: It is in our national security interest to side with the Free Syrian Army to get rid of Assad because he is the guy who helped kill Americans during the Iraq war. He is the guy who is cozy with Iran.

We had them on the ropes. The Free Syrian Army was about to beat Assad, and then in came 3,000 to 5,000 Hezbollah fighters—Iranian-inspired militia from Lebanon—and the Russians doubled down, we withdrew our support, and the army eventually collapsed. That happened simultaneously with a decision by President Obama—President Obama's decision to withdraw all of our troops from Iraq. We disengaged from Iraq. We had no presence there, and the rest is history.

About the speech last night, what bothered me the most was the way it started. The President tried to tell us that as a nation we are safer today than we have ever been. Do you believe that? I don't. There are more terrorist organizations with more money, more capability, and more weapons to attack our homeland than existed before 9/11. We are not safer than we were before 9/11, and that is an unfortunate fact.

The President also said this operation against ISIL will be like other CT—counterterrorism—operations over the last 5 or 6 years. No, it will not. This is not a small group of people running around with AK-47s; this is a full-blown army. They were going to defeat the Kurdish Peshmerga—a pretty tough fighting group—if we hadn't in-

tervened. To underestimate how hard this will be will bite us.

Mr. President, please square. Be honest with the American people about what we face. Somebody has to beat this army. This is not a small group of terrorists. They have howitzers, they have tanks, and they are flush with money. They are getting fighters from all over the world. But they can and will be defeated, and they must be defeated.

To the family members who remember this as the day their lives were turned upside down, you will always be in my thoughts and prayers, like everybody else in the country. This is a day for most of us to remember with sadness, and it is a hurtful day, but if it were one of your family members who lost their life that day, it would be the day your life was turned upside down.

There are four other Americans who died on September 11 whom I won't forget—Chris Stevens, Sean Smith, Ty Woods, and Glen Doherty. They died 2 years ago in Benghazi. I am not going to forget them or their families, and we are going to get to the bottom of what happened in Benghazi. That is my commitment to you.

How do we move forward?

Mr. President, if you need my blessing to destroy ISIL, you have it. If you need to follow them to the gates of hell, I will send you a note—go for it. If you need Congress to authorize your actions, let me know. You say you don't. I agree with you, but if it makes us stronger for this body to vote in support of your plan to destroy ISIL, I will give you my vote. But here is what I expect in return: your full commitment to me.

I am tired of half measures. I am tired of misleading the American people about what we face. There is no way in hell we are going to beat these guys without an American ground component in Iraq and Syria. There is not a force in the Mideast that can take these guys on and win without substantial American help. We don't need the 82nd Airborne, but we are going to need thousands of troops over time on the ground holding the hands of the Arab armies that are going to do the fighting along with the Syrians to make sure we will win.

One thing I can promise the American people: If we take ISIL on and lose, we will unlock the gates of hell, and hell will come our way.

This is the last best chance to get this right, Mr. President. You made plenty of mistakes, and so have I, and so has Senator McCain.

And Senator McCain, nobody is going to apologize to you. I think they should, but they are not. I am not looking for anybody to apologize. We have all made mistakes. This is the time to do some soul-searching as a nation. You and I can do some soul-searching.

Those who have not seen the threat for what it is, all I ask of you is to be willing to embrace reality.

All I am asking of President Obama is to do what President Bush did: Change your tactics and your strategy because it is not working.

Senator MCCAIN and I went to the White House during the Bush years, and we told President Bush: This is not a few dead-enders, Mr. President. It is not working in Iraq. You don't have enough troops. And if we don't change course, you are going to lose the country.

To his credit, he went from training and advising the Iraqi Army to a full-blown counterinsurgency strategy, taking the fight to the enemy in the surge led by GEN David Petraeus, and it did work. That was an admission by President Bush that he had gotten it wrong and he had to change course.

Every President and every Senator makes mistakes. History judges you not by the mistakes you make but by what you learn from them.

Here is what I ask of the President: Quit caveating everything. Look the enemy in the eye and say, "We will destroy you" and stop. Look the American people in the eye and say, "We have to win. We will win. And I will do what is necessary to win." Come to the Congress and say, "We are in this together."

The American military is tired, but they are not too tired to defend this country. If you had a bunch of them in front of you and you asked them to follow you—"Would you go to Iraq and Syria to fight ISIL?"—they would say "Send me tomorrow" because they know what these people will do to the rest of us. Why do they serve over and over again? Why do they go to Iraq three and four times, Afghanistan three and four times? They have seen the enemy up close. They know what comes our way if we lose.

So this is the day to reflect as a nation. I am so sorry that 13 years after 9/11 we are having to deal with greater threats than before 9/11. Fifty years from now, long after I am gone, there is going to be an American soldier somewhere in Africa or the Middle East helping indigenous populations fight radical Islam. But over time, just as sure as I am standing here, radical Islam will fall because—here is the truth—what they are selling, most people don't want to buy. They don't have the capacity yet by themselves to stand and stare these people down.

As to Americans who are frustrated with the pace of democracy in the Middle East and who believe those people can't do this, all I ask you to do is to pick up an American history book. Within the first 100 years of our country, we were at war with Canada and Mexico. Within the first 100 years of our country, we were at war with ourselves, and it started in my State.

This is not easy. It is not easy to this day. To expect people who have lived under brutal dictatorships and had their society divided and destroyed for decades to get to where we are in 12 or 13 years is unrealistic.

Here is the hope for me. There is good news. There is plenty of will throughout the world to stand up to radical Islam. Our goal is to provide capacity to that will. Sometimes it will be with American soldiers; sometimes it will be clean drinking water; a small health care clinic that you wouldn't send your child to for 5 minutes that will save lives in Africa; a small schoolhouse where a young girl can get an education. If we are not willing to do these things over there, they will come here.

Mr. MCCAIN. If my colleague will yield for one question.

Mr. GRAHAM. Absolutely.

Mr. MCCAIN. I note the presence of our colleague from California, so I will make it short.

Last night I had an exchange with the former spokesperson for the White House, and again this issue came up and the assertion, the incredible assertion that it was the Iraqis who did not want to leave a residual force behind—a statement that continues to amaze me, that anyone would believe such a thing, particularly given the circumstances which the Iraqis were left under, including—by the way, every single one of our military leaders urged that we leave a residual force behind, and many of them, such as General Keen, General Petraeus, and others, predicted what would happen if we pulled everybody out.

I wonder if for the record the Senator from South Carolina would relate the experience we had in Iraq and our personal experience with regard to the issue of residual force behind.

Mr. GRAHAM. I remember getting a phone call from then-Secretary Clinton asking me and Senator MCCAIN and Senator LEVIN to go to Iraq and see if we could intervene and help the Iraqis make a decision about a residual force because we thought it was in our interest.

President Obama has always looked at this issue as fulfilling a campaign promise. He got the answer he wanted, which was zero. The military told him we needed some people, but he really was intent on ending the war in Iraq.

Here is the problem: Without a residual force, we have lost everything we fought for. When we met with Barzani, Allawi, and Malaki, I was convinced they were willing to accept an American follow-on force; we just had to put it on the table in a way that it mattered.

When we were talking to Malaki, they said: Senator GRAHAM, how many troops are we talking about?

I turned to General Austin and our then-Ambassador Jeffrey and said: How many?

He said: We are still working on that.

We went from 18,000 recommended by General Austin—the last time I got a number from the White House, it was below 3,000. This cascading downward from 18,000 to below 3,000 was not because the Iraqis said it was too many; it was because the White House

couldn't pick a number because they didn't want to stay. It is about as accurate to say the Iraqis didn't want us to stay as it is to say the President never called ISIS a JV team. The President did, but he is trying to rewrite that statement because it looks pretty naive.

Look forward. Let's beat on the Republicans for a minute. The Republican Party—the party of Ronald Reagan—embraced sequestration. For those who don't know what I am talking about, it is a budget proposal that will gut our military over the next decade. We have the smallest Army since 1940, the smallest Navy since 1950, and the smallest Air Force in modern history. Republicans embraced that concept.

If we want to defeat ISIL, we better change sequestration because we are about to gut the military at the time we need it most. There is plenty of blame to go around here.

Here is the key for me: We as a nation have one last chance to get this right.

I will make the same offer to President Obama that I made to President Bush: If you come up with a strategy that makes sense and you are understanding and learning from your mistakes, as I try to learn from mine, I will be there with you.

There was not much help coming from our friends on the other side when Iraq was bad. Bush got absolutely no support when his mistakes came back to haunt him. I will not make that mistake.

The mistakes President Obama has made are real, and they have to be corrected. If the President will correct them, I will stand with him no matter what the polls show about troops on the ground. And I know how the President stands with South Carolinians—not very well. It is not about the President; it is not about this Senator; it is about us.

So on this September 11 anniversary, I make an offer to my Commander in Chief, Barack Obama: If you will destroy ISIL and mean it, you will have an ally in Senator MCCAIN and Senator GRAHAM.

I yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 3 minutes, followed by Senator MERKLEY, who will speak for 8 minutes, followed by Senator VITTER, who will speak for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE WAR ON TERROR

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I watched every word of the President's address to the Nation last night, and I have this to say to him: Thank you for your clarity. Thank you for taking the time you needed to put the pieces together so that we don't march into another Iraq war.

When I hear my colleagues—cheerleaders for the war in Iraq who told us

it would be over in 6 months—come down here and try to lecture this President on how to deal with ISIL, I get the chills. When I watch Dick Cheney come up here to talk to House Republicans and lecture them about how they had it right—had it right? They couldn't have had it more wrong. Because we know that the tragedy of 9/11—and as we revere the heroes and mourn the loss of those on that horrific day—was an attack by Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda. It wasn't Iraq and Saddam Hussein.

Our then-President Bush turned around—he could have had the whole world in his hand—but instead marches into Iraq. Thank the Lord I voted no on that. I voted yes to going after bin Laden and no to going into Iraq.

All those sunny predictions—of the war being only 6 months, and they will have democracy, and we will get the oil and the money, and the rest—turned out to be the worst foreign policy disaster. These same people who backed that war now come down here and tell the President: Look me in the eye and tell me you want to do exactly what I want to do.

Well, Mr. President, since they addressed you, I want to address you. First, I thank you for taking your time in putting together a winning strategy to defeat ISIL. We have to. We cannot sit by and watch a group with tens of thousands of members who are vicious and trained—some foreign, some I believe from this country—go around and behead people who won't convert. They want territory. They want to make their own state. We have to stop them with the world, with combat boots that are combat boots of those in the region, such as we are seeing in Iraq, and we will see in Syria if we give the President the funds he wants to train the moderate Syrians.

Here is the deal from me: We are going to go after ISIL, we are going to do it with a coalition of the world, we are not going to have a drumbeat of going back into the Iraq war. This is a counterterrorism mission, and I voted for that when I voted to go after Osama bin Laden. I believe the President has this authority.

I also have no problem with voting to put my feelings right there and I would be happy to take that vote. But beware of the people here who were the cheerleaders of the Iraq war who want to get this President to now say he is going to put combat boots on the ground. That is the wrong recipe. We already learned that. There are 4,000 dead Americans and tens of thousands wounded.

Let's do this the right way and the way the President laid it out—with a coalition. Let's not make any of the same mistakes.

So, Mr. President, please keep on track—and Secretary Kerry—and keep building that coalition. We already have nine nations and NATO and the Arab League, and we are going to get the U.N. That is the way to go.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield the floor to Senator MERKLEY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. I rise to address an issue affecting millions of families across America, and that is our rising student loan debt and the impact it is having on the vision of opportunity for every single American. As college students return to campus this fall, they are thinking about their hopes and dreams for the future, but increasingly, they are also thinking about how that future might be constrained by the debt load they will carry by the time they graduate.

Education is the key to the pathway for the American dream. When I was young, my father took me to the schoolhouse doors and he said: "Those are the doors to opportunity. If you study hard, you can do or be just about anything here in America."

My father was a millwright, a mechanic who keeps the sawmill operating. The vision he had for America and the vision that I have for America is that every child should have the opportunity to thrive whether you are the son and daughter of a CEO or you are the son and daughter of a millwright. But the cost of college and the consequential student loan debt is diminishing, degrading, and destroying that vision.

I was the first in my family to go to college. I never dreamed I would have the chance to end up in this esteemed Chamber fighting for the vision of the American dream, but throughout my service in the Senate, that is exactly what I will do. It is the heart of what our Nation is about. It is the "We, the People's" vision, not the few and powerful's vision, but the "We, the People's" vision of our Constitution, that everyone should have the opportunity to thrive.

Today we are competing in a national and world economy that is much more knowledge based. It is a global knowledge economy, and we have to be able to compete, and that often means a path to career technical education and a path to college. But for too many young folks today, the doors to college are looking a little less like doors to opportunity and a little more like trapdoors. They see those doors and they are not sure they see opportunity and mobility. They are concerned they see a lifetime of unaffordable and inescapable debt.

I live in a blue-collar community, and I hear this all the time—parents wrestling with whether their children should incur the debt necessary to go to college, knowing that debt might be the size of a home mortgage and will be hung around their neck like a millstone and that possibly their monthly wages will not even be enough to pay the loan payments. The prospect of a high level of debt and low level of pay has parents sending a different message to their children—not the message my parents gave to me, that everyone has the opportunity to thrive in America, even from our blue-collar community.

They are sending the message to their kids that the path of opportunity is being diminished by the enormous debt load and cost of college.

This situation is unacceptable. It is a threat to the future of our children, and it is certainly a threat to our economy. The economies that thrive in the world are the ones where the students have the education to compete in the global economy, and that is certainly destroying the aspirational vision of America—the American dream. There is a lot we can do to take on this challenge. We are not helpless in this effort. We must control the galloping costs and galloping inflation of tuition. We need to invest more in our community colleges because it is the most cost-effective portion of our higher education system. We need to enhance the bridges between our community colleges and our 4-year colleges and our high schools. We need to make sure students have the opportunity to get some college credit in high school through AP classes, the cheapest possible place to get that credit, and that gives them a step up in their route to college so they can see that vision and that path.

We should explore new models of financing, such as the pay-it-forward model, that would eliminate the fears students have between high debt and low pay. When Pell grants are not enough, when the job you carry at college is not enough, when tuition is too high and students of modest means still need loans, then those loans should be at the minimum possible interest rate.

Loans should never be viewed, as they have been by my colleagues across the aisle, as a source of profit to the U.S. Government. That vision is the wrong vision for America. That is why I so strongly support Senator WARREN's proposal that our students get the same low interest rate on their student loans that our big banks get when they borrow money from the Federal Reserve.

Moreover, we should enable every American to refinance their student loans, taking advantage of today's low interest rates.

In my home State of Oregon, there are 500,000 folks with student loans, many of them at high interest rates. These students would benefit enormously from being able to refinance. Just as you can refinance a mortgage or refinance a car, they should be able to refinance those loans, and not only would that help those individuals a lot—500,000 people in a State of about 3.7 million, which is a lot of people—but the additional purchasing power they have would enable them to contribute to the economy and raise everyone up, making them more likely to buy a house, for example.

Did you know that for the first time we have a situation where those young adults 25 through 30 who have gone to college and have graduated are less likely to own a home than are high

school graduates? The reason is simple: They are burdened by massive student debt that doesn't give them the credit standing and income necessary to buy a home. That shows how much is wrong.

So those individuals on this floor who are trapped in the few and powerful vision of America and have forgotten the first three words of the Constitution—that we are fighting so we can enable every child to thrive—they need to rethink their position. They need to quit blocking the bill that would allow every student to refinance their student loan.

Forty percent of graduates with student loans have delayed making a major purchase such as a car, 25 percent have put off continuing their education or moved in with relatives to save money. In other words, this is not an imaginary problem. This is extraordinary. It is real, and it is having a dramatic impact.

Let us give a fair shot for every child to thrive. Let us let every parent say to their children with confidence: If you go through the doors of the schoolhouse and work hard, you can do just about anything here in America.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S.J. RES. 19
AMENDMENT

Mr. VITTER. We have a significant proposal. It is a constitutional amendment to rewrite the First Amendment to the Constitution, the first portion of the Bill of Rights, and it would fundamentally alter and take away certain free speech rights of millions upon millions of Americans—not a few, not a few ultrawealthy, but many Americans.

I have a real problem with that. I think it is misguided. Instead, I think we should focus on other proposals and other provisions that can address what we all see and feel and hear from our constituents. They see a huge gap between Washington and the real world, Washington and Main Street U.S.A.

It is also unfortunate that this is, I believe, the first time in Senate history that we are debating a constitutional amendment on the floor of the Senate with no opportunity so far—zero opportunity of floor amendments. That is unheard of, and that is unfortunate.

That is why I wish to bring up two proposed floor amendments that I will strongly support that go to the real problem in America—Washington placing itself up here, separate and apart, higher than the American people in the real world.

The first idea was a floor amendment offered by my colleague TOM COBURN of Oklahoma. I strongly support it. I have the leading bill regarding this proposal in the Senate—term limits for Members of Congress. I believe this is a significant step, but it is one, unfortunately, necessary and long overdue be-

cause of the separation I have described between Washington and the real world. Americans of all political parties, all backgrounds, all races think that Washington is on a different planet and Members of Congress just don't get it because they come here and "go Washington." We need to get back to the best traditions of our democracy, which include having true citizen legislators, to come here, to serve, to represent their constituents, yes, but for a limited period of time, knowing absolutely they are returning home after significant but limited service.

I strongly support Senator COBURN's amendment. I strongly support the same provisions in my stand-alone bill. I urge Senator REID to again open the floor of the Senate. Let's have the process the Founders intended. Don't be the first U.S. Senate leader in history to shut down all amendments under a constitutional amendment under debate on the floor.

The second proposal, which is a floor amendment I have at the desk, also goes to the same concern of Washington living on a different planet than real-world Americans, and it has to do with what I call the Washington exemption from ObamaCare. In the ObamaCare statute, we actually passed, through an amendment on the floor—through being able to pass a floor amendment—language that says every Member of Congress and all of our staff should be treated as all other Americans are treated, who are forced to go to the so-called exchanges. We will go to the exchanges for our health care—no special deal, no special exemption, no special subsidy, no special carve-out. Unfortunately, after that floor amendment passed, after the overall bill passed, I guess some folks took NANCY PELOSI's advice that we have to pass the bill in order to read it.

So after the fact, some folks around here started to read it and they got to that provision and they said, Oh, you-know-what; how are we going to deal with this? So a furious lobbying campaign began which resulted in President Obama issuing an Executive order—a special rule which is clearly illegal, in my opinion, because it is contrary to the statute—to create special treatment, a special carve-out, a special subsidy for Members of Congress and our staff. That is not right. We should live by that original language passed right here on the Senate floor in a floor amendment.

We should say, The first rule of American democracy should be that what Washington passes on America, it lives with itself, and we should treat ourselves the same way as we treat other Americans who have to go to the exchanges under ObamaCare. That should be the first rule of American democracy: What we pass for America, we live with ourselves, because that is the right thing to do. That is the right principle. Also, for a very practical reason: Because sometimes the chefs in

the kitchen should eat their own cooking, but sometimes that makes the cooking get a whole lot better. It is a very practical rule to follow.

I urge support for this proposal and I urge an open amendment process and a real debate which, unfortunately, heretofore has been completely shut down. I urge consideration of this amendment. I urge us to place ourselves along with everyday Americans in how we are treated under ObamaCare and everything else. I urge full debate and consideration of the measure, and then passage of it.

To further that, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate resumes consideration of S.J. Res. 19, that it be in order for my amendment No. 3786 to be called up.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Reserving the right to object, the Senate has heard the reasons for these objections before, but the fact is that staff and Senators are covered by the exact same plan that is offered under the exchange to millions of Americans. It works just as it has always worked before for employees here in the Senate, and, frankly, for millions of employees in the private sector. Senate employees, House employees pay their premiums and the employer picks up the employer share—no different than it has always been before.

Specifically, the law doesn't allow for any employees here to take advantage of the tax credits that are available to many other Americans.

This is, of course, just another attempt to undermine the law that is, by every available metric, working. The uninsurance rate in this country is plummeting. Health care inflation is at a record low—

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I think there was an objection to my unanimous consent request, and I wish to reclaim the floor.

Mr. MURPHY. Outcomes are getting better, and for that reason, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, reclaiming the floor, as the Senator knows, it is simply not true that we are being treated on the exchange as other Americans are treated. That is flat out not true. No other American at our income level is getting the huge subsidy that Members of Congress are getting—I am not accepting it—but that Members of Congress are getting under the President's illegal rule. No other American in our country, no other American gets that deal, and that was nowhere mentioned and nowhere included in the amendment we passed on this topic during the ObamaCare debate. So what the Senator says is just flat out misleading. If he wants to truly be treated as other Americans are treated under the exchange, absolutely. That is what I am asking for. But don't pretend that

present practice does that. It does exactly the opposite.

The American people are sick and tired of it. The American people are sick and tired of being put down as second class and Congress and Washington lifting itself up as above them. That is a fundamental thing that is wrong with American democracy today. That is what my amendment goes to with regard to treatment under ObamaCare. That is what Senator COBURN's amendment goes to with regard to term limits for Members of Congress.

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

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

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

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Mr. LEE. Madam President, September 11 should always be a day when we both remember those who were tragically lost on this day in 2001 and simultaneously reaffirm our solemn resolve to our country to keep America free, to keep America strong.

I rise today for a third time in opposition to S.J. Res. 19, the majority's Orwellian attempt to amend the Bill of Rights to permit the government to decide who is allowed to speak about political matters.

Make no mistake, this is an attack on the First Amendment's single most important protection. Under our Constitution, the government never gets to be the arbiter of permissible political debate—never, not ever. That is something we decided and we finally resolved back in 1791. Of all the things the government might do, it should never, it may never, it can never be the arbiter of what constitutes permissible political speech, of who gets to criticize the government, and how. That can never happen—not in our land, not in this free land, not ever.

Yet, under this proposed constitutional amendment, the one that is being debated on the floor of the Senate right now, S.J. Res. 19, Congress and the States would be given the power not just to become this kind of arbiter, not just to regulate this kind of speech, but to potentially prohibit churches, civic associations, labor unions, and even the ACLU from speaking about political matters. That is a shocking proposal, repugnant to our traditions, dangerous to our liberty, and utterly ineffective in combating corruption.

But what is even more shocking, quite frankly, is the manner in which an amendment to our Constitution has been debated on the floor of the Senate this week.

We have to remember our Founding Fathers painstakingly debated and discussed and crafted the text of the Con-

stitution in Philadelphia for nearly 4 months. What we know today is the Bill of Rights was not even in James Madison's first draft. The first Congress extensively debated it. It eliminated objectionable parts, changed the language to better reflect Congress's consensus, and ultimately passed it and sent it out to the States for ratification. What we have seen this week, by contrast, is nothing like that. The majority leader has refused to permit any amendments to be introduced or considered or voted upon by this body—any amendments to S.J. Res. 19. Its language is not up for discussion, nor, in truth, is it really up for debate. In fact, ironically, many of the same people who have signed their names to this legislation, who have cosponsored it, who have supported it, have refused even to come to the floor to speak about it. In fact, some of those same people have been openly critical of the fact that the Senate is devoting time to debating this constitutional amendment, which would be the first time we have ever made a change to the First Amendment, or to the Bill of Rights, since 1791.

The American people should be offended that the majority thinks this is how changes to the U.S. Constitution should be discussed by the people's elected representatives in Washington. But watching the Senate this week has been a useful lesson. The majority says Congress can be trusted somehow to impose "reasonable" limits and "reasonable" restrictions on political debate, on core political activity. Look no further than this debate occurring on the floor of this legislative body to see what the majority thinks reasonable debate looks like. What it looks like here is a take-it-or-leave-it vote with no opportunity to provide amendments, no opportunity for discussion about the intricate details of this proposal.

There was very little discussion. One of the reasons I find this distressing in this particular circumstance is we are talking about what it is that enables the American people to remain in charge of their own form of government, of their own system of laws that affects their livelihood and will affect their day-to-day operations.

When we tinker with the processes that allow the American people to remain in control of their own government, we are playing with fire. Under this proposed amendment, if it were somehow to pass by a two-thirds supermajority out of this body, if it were somehow to pass by a two-thirds supermajority out of the House of Representatives, if it were somehow to be ratified by three-fourths of the States, and if it were to become say the 28th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, it would dramatically change the balance of power, not between America's two leading political parties, not between one State versus another State but between Washington, DC, and the American people.

Under this amendment, if it were to become part of the U.S. Constitution, Congress could have the power to set up a system of rules that would restrict many Americans and their ability to influence the political debate process. Under this proposed amendment, there is of course a carve-out that says it is there to protect freedom of the press. So presumably someone who owns a newspaper could still devote a lot of money, thousands of dollars, tens of thousands of dollars, maybe millions or even tens of millions of dollars, to promoting the candidate of her choice; that is, if she is fortunate to own a newspaper company.

But if the owner of a newspaper company could do that, why not someone who chooses not to own a newspaper company or more likely cannot afford a newspaper company but wants to enter into a contract with a newspaper company to run the political advertisement. Why should someone's ability to promote the candidate of her choice be restricted and limited on the basis of whether she owns a newspaper company? It should not and nor should the American people be prohibited from entering into voluntary associations.

Most Americans are not wealthy enough to own a newspaper company or a radio broadcasting company or a television broadcasting company, but many Americans, let's say thousands or tens of thousands at a time, could pool their resources, each of them contributing what money they choose to devote to political debate and discussion in order to promote the candidates of their choice.

Why should they lack that opportunity, the same opportunity the owner of a newspaper company has, simply because they cannot afford to own a newspaper company or a broadcast company? The fact is they should not.

The fact is there are many unanswered questions about this proposed constitutional amendment, but all of those questions relate back to how we debate issues. If the manner in which this proposed constitutional amendment is presented is any indication about what this constitutional amendment would do to debate in American society, it signals caution. It signals to us that a chill wind blows if this is the direction in which we are looking.

You see, when the power of government expands, it does so at the expense of individual freedom. When the power of government expands within the area of political speech, that is perhaps where the danger is at its greatest. That is perhaps where it comes at the greatest cost to the individual liberties of Americans because that affects not just their liberties but also their ability to control their own liberties in the future.

Because if they lack the capacity to decide who is in Washington representing them, making decisions that will dictate the future of their government, then they lack the ability to

make these changes. That is where the threat to liberty is at its greatest. That is why we should be so concerned about S.J. Res. 19. It is important for us to remember we are creative Americans not because of who we are but because of what we do. We have set in motion a sequence of events. We have adopted a Constitution, a rule book that has itself fostered the development of the greatest civilization and the strongest economy the world has ever known.

This is not because we are great so much as it is because we have made good choices. We have made good choices that delineate the proper boundaries of government. We decided what belongs to the people and what belongs to the government. Where there are appropriate actions to be taken by the government, we also set out a series of rules that decided which government may do which things. This transgresses those boundaries. This would undertake a critical breach into that realm which distinctively, unavoidably belongs to the people and not to the government.

Speech is sacred. The freedom of the press is sacred. We must never allow them to be trifled with. We must never allow them to be tampered with. We must never allow them to be weakened. This would weaken them. This is what the majority would have political debate in America look like. Here we are moments before casting a critical vote on a constitutional amendment that could forever change the political dynamics of this country that have made us strong. Yet I find myself speaking to an empty Chamber. The American people deserve better. The American people can expect more out of their government. The American people can expect freedom. This is incompatible with freedom. I would encourage each of my colleagues to oppose S.J. Res. 19, just as they would oppose any other effort to intrude on the sacred rights of the American people to express their political views, whether they be Republicans or Democrats or belong to some other political party.

Whether they be liberals or conservatives or whether they would describe their political ideology in some other way, this is an issue that is simply an American issue. This is an issue that is simply about freedom. The American people today will choose freedom. I hope and I pray they always will.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I have heard from many Vermonters concerned about the threat posed to our democracy by recent Supreme Court decisions that have eviscerated our campaign finance laws. Just as opponents of campaign finance reform in the past described a parade of horrors that would occur if we strengthened campaign finance protections, today we again hear those exaggerations from the other side of the aisle. Some

Republicans have falsely asserted that this resolution would somehow repeal the First Amendment and would even result in the banning of books. That is pure hyperbole.

Restoring the role that Congress and the States have traditionally had to set reasonable limits on how much a corporation or a millionaire can spend to influence an election is simply not the equivalent of prohibiting an individual from speaking out on a candidate. The constitutional amendment before the Senate does not ban or proscribe anything. It restores the ability of future States or Congresses to set reasonable limits if they decide to act but of course those limits would be guided by the American peoples' desire for such laws.

Over the course of this debate, we have heard Senators talking as if the First Amendment is absolute. Most Americans can see right through this. They know that the First Amendment does not protect child pornography; or obscenity; or statements that incite imminent lawless action; or defamation or slander; or speech integral to criminal conduct; or fraudulent speech or perjury. And they know that the First Amendment is not violated when laws restrict even political speech by regulating the reasonable time, place, and manner of demonstrations or protests. The idea that any future law on campaign contributions and expenditures that has an incidental effect on speech somehow renders it the equivalent of censorship is just not a serious argument.

The Framers of our fundamental charter anticipated that it would need to be amended from time to time. The story of our how our Constitution has been amended over the years is a reflection on our democracy. It is a story of inclusion and expansion of our representative democracy. The 14th and 15th Amendments, for example, guaranteed equal protection of the law for all Americans, and ensured that all Americans have the right to vote regardless of their race. The 17th Amendment gave Americans the right to directly elect their representatives in Congress in the wake of concerns that corporations were corrupting state legislatures to choose Senators beholden to them. The 19th Amendment's expansion of the right to vote to women and the 26th Amendment's extension of the vote to young people made ours an even more representative democracy.

Those who oppose the amendment before us have made some outlandish claims. One of them was that we cannot consider this amendment because in their view it would be the first time that changes were made to the Bill of Rights. What is interesting is that opponents to previous constitutional amendments also claimed that they should not be adopted because they impacted the Bill of Rights. In the June hearing that I chaired before the Judiciary Committee, Professor Jamie Raskin testified that "the people have

been forced to amend the Constitution multiple times to reverse reactionary decisions of the Supreme Court that freeze into place the constitutional property rights and political privileges of the powerful against the powerless." The 13th Amendment abolished slavery, stripping the absolute individual "property rights" that white slave masters had enjoyed under the Fifth Amendment as found by the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott decision in 1857. Similarly, Section 4 of the 14th Amendment completely blocked and made illegal any future compensation of slave masters for the confiscation of their vested "property rights" in their slaves. Not only did the 14th Amendment strip slave masters of their "property," it also made it impossible for them to seek restitution under the Fifth Amendment. Opponents to the 13th and 14th Amendments felt that their rights, granted by the Bill of Rights, were being undermined but history showed that those Amendments were necessary to move this great Nation toward a more perfect union. The amendment before the Senate would restore the First Amendment. It would not repeal it. It would, however, overturn several Supreme Court decisions that have distorted the First Amendment. If we fail to do so, many of us are concerned that corruption will flourish and our democracy will be distorted away from the needs of hard working Americans.

Millions of Americans have called on Congress to restore the First Amendment so that our democracy will be protected against corruption and so that everyone's voices can be heard in our democratic process. I have served in the Senate for almost 40 years and as chairman of the Judiciary Committee for nearly 10. It is a rare moment for this Senator to acknowledge that the threat to our democracy is so significant that it warrants an amendment to our Constitution. I applaud the Vermonters who have taken action on this issue. I urge my fellow Senators to join me in voting for cloture and passage of this important constitutional amendment.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, there is almost no measure Congress should consider more carefully than a proposal to amend the Constitution of the United States. Such amendments are reserved only for issues that relate to the foundations of our great American experiment.

The value of each American vote is one such issue. Our system of government depends on this basic principle, that every American, whether they are rich or poor, weak or strong, whether they were born in Michigan or Mississippi, has an equal voice in the selection of their elected representatives. Time and again, Congress has amended our Constitution to protect this principle.

But recently, a succession of Supreme Court rulings has unleashed a tide of unlimited and secret special-interest money into our elections. This

unregulated money drowns the voices of the public. It threatens to transform our government of the people, by the people, and for the people into one of campaign donors, by campaign donors, and for campaign donors. That is not democracy, and it is not America.

That is why I support this amendment to the Constitution concerning contributions and expenditures intended to affect elections. This amendment would allow Congress to do what we have always done, and what our Founders intended us to do: take action to protect the integrity of our Nation's government and electoral processes.

Posterity vindicates the moments in our Nation's history when Congress simply did what was right. We honor those who voted to ensure that the right to vote cannot be denied based on race, color, previous condition of servitude or gender. We honor those who voted to ensure that a poll tax could never again prohibit an American from voting for their own representatives. I urge my colleagues to act in this tradition, to simply do what is right, and to join me in supporting this proposed amendment to the Constitution.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Madam President, we have had an important debate this week. A debate about bringing sanity back to our elections. I want to thank all of my colleagues who have joined this fight. And I want to thank the millions of Americans, regardless of party, who stand behind us.

Over 150 years ago, Abraham Lincoln saw the danger of too much money in politics. Lincoln warned about "corruption in high places . . . until the Republic is destroyed."

Changing the Constitution is a big step. As James Madison said, it should be amended only on "great and extraordinary occasions." I agree; but I also believe we have reached one of those rare occasions. The Supreme Court put up a "for sale" sign on our elections. On the foundation of our democracy. It is wrong. It is dangerous. It cannot stand.

Amending the Constitution can take a long time. The 19th amendment was first introduced in 1878. Opponents called it impractical, and immoral, for daring to give women the right to vote. It took more than 40 years to pass. But its proponents did not give up, and they eventually prevailed.

Today's vote is a step forward in that long process. One more step toward restoring our democracy. We will keep pushing until this amendment is reality.

But that will take the support of my Republican colleagues. I was disappointed that none of them voted in support of our amendment today, as it has a bipartisan history. Some of them have cosponsored and voted for similar amendments in the past, before the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* and *McCutcheon* decisions destroyed many of the bipartisan campaign finance laws that took years to pass.

Some of them said this was just an election-year stunt. But that ignores reality. This movement started decades ago—by a Republican. Many of our predecessors from both parties understood the danger. They knew the corrosive effect that money from sources across the political spectrum has on our electoral system. They spent years championing the cause.

In 1983—the 98th Congress—Senator Ted Stevens, a Republican icon from Alaska, introduced a constitutional amendment to overturn *Buckley v. Valeo*, the 1976 Supreme Court decision that established the flawed premise that money and constitutionally protected speech were the same thing.

Senator Stevens already saw the deteriorating effect unlimited campaign expenditures were having on Congress. In a speech on the Senate floor on the day he introduced the amendment, Senator Stevens said:

I, for one, would like to see the time come when there would be a limitation on the expenditures and the upward pressure on candidates, so that those who are seeking reelection, those who are seeking to challenge incumbents, or those who are seeking to fill a vacancy would not have this pressure that is brought about by the necessity to raise ever-increasing amounts to campaign for Federal office.

Senator Stevens recognized over 30 years ago that we were in an arms race—that the drive for money would only get worse and Congress's ability to function would suffer.

This was only the beginning of the movement to amend the Constitution. In every Congress from the 99th to the 108th, Senator Fritz Hollings introduced bipartisan constitutional amendments similar to S.J. Res. 19. Senators SCHUMER and COCHRAN continued the effort in the 109th Congress. Even Minority Leader MCCONNELL once had his own constitutional amendment to limit the influence of money on our elections.

That was all before the *Citizens United* and *McCutcheon* decisions, before things went from bad to worse. The out-of-control spending since those decisions has further poisoned our elections.

But no matter how bad things get, an amendment can only succeed if Republicans join us in this effort, as they have in the past. I know the political climate of an election year makes it even more difficult, but today's vote is not the end. I will reintroduce this amendment in the next Congress, and I hope my Republican colleagues will join me. Poll after poll shows that our constituents—across the political spectrum—want this amendment. It's time we listened to them.

We had a great debate this week. It raised awareness of the issue across the country. But we also heard a lot of hysteria on this floor from some of my colleagues across the aisle. Michael Keegan, president of *People For the American Way*, 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."

So, we have been treated to a parade of imaginary horrors. Saturday Night Live creator Lorne Michaels is going to jail for writing political satire. So is the little old lady next door for putting up a \$5 political yard sign. Books and movies will be banned. The NAACP and Sierra Club will be muzzled. Pretty scary stuff. And complete nonsense.

Congress has a long history, since 1867, of campaign finance reform. Any reading of this history is very clear. The reforms were sensible and reasonable. If they were not, they would have little chance of passing both houses of Congress. Or being signed by the President. And even under our constitutional amendment, extreme legislation can still be struck down by the Court. The other side knows this.

For over 150 years, Congress had a say in how money affects our elections. And it needed to. In the wake of scandals, it acted to curb excess and corruption. Reform was bipartisan. It was responsible. And it did not shut down the *New York Times* or the Heritage Foundation. Comedians and actors did not go to jail. It has not threatened free speech.

Those who think that money is speech need to look at where that flawed premise has led our country. Historically low approval ratings for Congress, polarization of the electorate, and a failure to compromise on the most pressing issues facing the Nation. Senator Hollings recognized the deterioration of our legislative branch due to the increasing influence of money on our elections. In a *Huffington Post* piece titled "Money is a Cancer in Politics," he wrote:

Money has not only destroyed bi-partisanship but corrupted the Senate. Not the senators, but the system. In 1966 when I came to the Senate, Mike Mansfield, the Leader, had a roll call every Monday morning at 9:00 o'clock in order to be assured of a quorum to do business. And he kept us in until 5:00 o'clock Friday so that we got a week's work in. . . Today, there's no real work on Mondays and Fridays, but we fly out to California early Friday morning for a luncheon fundraiser, a Friday evening fundraiser, making individual money appointments on Saturday and a fundraising breakfast on Monday morning, flying back for perhaps a roll call Monday evening.

I agree with his assessment, and also remember when fundraising was not the priority it is today. My father was elected to Congress in 1954, when I was in first grade. Back then, the legislative branch was a *Citizens' Congress*. Members were in Washington for 6 months, and then they went home for 6 months and worked at their profession. But during those 6 months in session, Congress focused on legislating.

Unfortunately, our current campaign finance system has locked Members of Congress into an endless campaign cycle. Elected officials spend far too much time raising money for campaigns, and not enough time carefully

considering legislation or listening to constituents. The drive to raise money is constant, and allowing vast new amounts of special interest money into the system will only increase the pressure. This causes a deterioration of Congress's ability to function, including its ability to adequately represent and respond to its constituents.

As the money raised and spent on campaigns by special interests continues to climb, Members of Congress will have to devote more time trying to keep up in the fundraising race. It is no wonder that, as the pursuit of campaign money has come to dominate politics, the American people have become increasingly dissatisfied with Congress' performance.

That is the whole point. That is why we are here. Because our elections cannot be for sale to the highest bidder. The Supreme Court has opened the floodgates. The American people are demanding that we close them.

Because they know, and we know, that we have a broken system. Today's New York Times editorial sums it up well. It states that, "As long as money is officially categorized as protected speech, there will be no brake on the ability of the rich and special interests to drown out other voices."

The First Amendment has already been hijacked by billionaires and special interests. Our amendment rescues it.

Here's the bottom line. Billionaires want to stay at the head of the table and our amendment will not let them. Let's be clear, they oppose any restriction. Any reform. Today's vote may have been along party lines, but I will leave it to the American people to judge why.

We will continue this fight. The momentum continues to grow, and we will eventually win. The American people hate the influence of money on our elections. They want elections to be about the quality of ideas, not the size of bank accounts. They want us to fight for the middle class, not the moneyed class. They want us to spend our time raising hopes, instead of raising cash.

As I said in my remarks earlier this week at the beginning of this debate, there is a well-known quote from the Watergate era. "Follow the money." Because we all know the truth: The road to corruption, to undue influence, is paved with money. We need to get off that road. For the integrity of our electoral system. For the people who send us here. For the future of our country.

As we wrap up this week's debate, and this historic vote, I want to thank several people. Senator BENNET joined me in this effort over 4 years ago. Our amendment in the 111th Congress had four cosponsors. Today it has 49. I also want to express my appreciation for the efforts of Chairman LEAHY and Senator DURBIN, and thank their staff, particularly Josh Hsu and Albert Sanders. The amendment received a hearing in the Judiciary Committee. It went

through markups in Senator DURBIN's subcommittee and in the full committee. It was debated, and revised, and improved.

I want to thank the diverse coalition of groups who have worked tirelessly to build support for our amendment. Groups like People For the American Way, Public Citizen, Common Cause, Free Speech For People, the Sierra Club, the NAACP, and all the organizations working under the banner of United For The People.

I ask unanimous consent that today's New York Times editorial, "An Amendment to Cut Political Cash," be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the New York Times, Sept. 11, 2014]

AN AMENDMENT TO CUT POLITICAL CASH

(By the Editorial Board)

There are 48 Democratic senators sponsoring a constitutional amendment to restore congressional control to campaign spending that is expected to come up for a vote later this week. They are not under the illusion that it will become the 28th Amendment soon, if ever. But their willingness to undertake a long and difficult effort shows the importance they attach to restoring fairness to American politics by reducing the influence of big money.

Hundreds of millions of dollars in outside spending—most of it from big business and labor interests—continue to flow into political races after being unleashed by the Supreme Court and lower court decisions. Each year a record is set: already, outside spending on this year's midterm elections (\$189 million so far) is more than three times what it was at this point in 2010.

The Supreme Court has said that's fine. In several misguided rulings, it has declared that spending money on politics is a form of free speech, and is thus deserving of constitutional protection. Beginning with the Buckley decision in 1976, the court ended the limitations on independent political spending in the name of speech, and with the Citizens United decision in 2010, it opened the spending floodgates to corporations and unions.

These decisions are the law of the land and cannot be overturned by simple legislation. Congress can encourage better behavior with public financing mechanisms, not that Republicans will agree even to that. As long as money is officially categorized as protected speech, there will be no brake on the ability of the rich and special interests to drown out other voices.

Barring a change in the makeup of the Supreme Court, it would take an amendment to reduce the flow of cash. The one under debate in the Senate declares that Congress and the states have the ability to "regulate and set reasonable limits on the raising and spending of money by candidates and others to influence elections." Addressing the Citizens United decision, it says that governments can "distinguish between natural persons and corporations" in setting those regulations, thus allowing restrictions on corporate or union spending that would not necessarily apply to individuals. To protect the free flow of information in the news media, the amendment adds the assurance that it will not abridge the freedom of the press.

Republicans, fearful of deflating their cushion of cash, are trying to portray the amendment as an assault on the Bill of Rights. But writing unlimited checks on be-

half of politicians was never part of the American birthright. This measure defines protected "speech" as it had been understood in the First Amendment for 185 years until the Buckley decision: actual words uttered or written by natural persons, not money spent, and certainly not from corporate treasuries.

The amendment would not be a cure-all. "The press" is an amorphous term in the digital age, and political groups could try to claim free-press status to get around regulation. And amending the Constitution should not be taken lightly. It is a last resort to fix a grave civic problem. But the backers of this amendment recognize that the nature of American democracy is at stake.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. I yield the floor 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.

Mr. PAUL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume consideration of S.J. Res. 19.

Pending:

Reid amendment No. 3791 (to the committee-reported substitute to the joint resolution), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 3792 (to amendment No. 3791), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 3793 (to the language proposed to be stricken by the committee-reported substitute), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 3794 (to amendment No. 3793), of a perfecting nature.

Reid motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on the Judiciary, with instructions.

Reid amendment No. 3795, of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 3796 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 3795), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 3797 (to amendment No. 3796), of a perfecting nature.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER.

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on 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.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Tom Udall, Bernard Sanders, Jeff Merkley, Mark Begich, Joe Manchin III, Amy Klobuchar, Tammy Baldwin, Mazie Hirono, Sherrod Brown, Elizabeth Warren, Robert Menendez, Robert P. Casey,