

Sixteen Presidents—eight of each party—have used this act to protect America's treasures.

I am proud of what President Obama has been able to accomplish through the work he has done under the Antiquities Act. He has moved where Congress has failed to act.

Caesar Chavez and the Chicano labor movement were honored by creating the Caesar Chavez National Monument in California.

He protected Fort Monroe in Virginia in recognition of its storied history in defense of our Nation and the struggle for freedom for African Americans. It is a beautiful facility.

We have in Honolulu the Honouliuli National Monument to remember the terrible internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Last month, President Obama protected by proclamation Pullman National Monument, which celebrates the history of the African-American labor movement in America.

As a westerner, I appreciate what he has done to protect America's beautiful landscapes, such as the Rio Grande Del Norte and the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monuments in New Mexico, the Browns Canyon National Monument in Colorado, and western landscapes in California, Washington, and Hawaii.

This is something which is so important to be done, so I am disappointed that I hear that on the budget bill there is going to be an effort made to cut the Antiquities Act. I hope not. I absolutely will do everything I can to protect this act. It has been in law since 1906 and has been used by 16 Presidents.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET, FISCAL YEAR 2016

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. Con. Res. 11, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 11) setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2016 and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2017 through 2025.

Pending:

Cotton amendment No. 481, to establish a deficit-neutral fund relating to supporting Israel.

Enzi (for Kirk) amendment No. 545, to establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to reimposing waived sanctions and imposing new sanctions against Iran for violations of the Joint Plan of Action or a comprehensive nuclear agreement.

Rounds/Inhofe amendment No. 412, to establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund to prevent the Environmental Protection Agency and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service from engaging in closed-door settle-

ment agreements that ignore impacted States and counties.

Rubio modified amendment No. 423, to increase new budget authority fiscal years 2016 and 2017 and modify outlays for fiscal years 2016 through 2022 for National Defense (budget function 050).

Daines amendment No. 388, to establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to the designation of national monuments.

Daines amendment No. 389, to establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to holding Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives accountable for failing to pass a balanced budget.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 10:30 a.m. will be equally divided and controlled by the two managers or their designees.

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, first of all, I wish to thank Chairman ENZI for his courtesy in allowing me to take a few minutes to discuss a bipartisan amendment I will be offering on this bill. It deals with what I think is going to be an enormous challenge this summer for the West, and that is dealing with this wildfire challenge and the prospect that we could literally have enormous fires—what could be virtually infernos—throughout the West this summer.

I make that judgment because recently when I was home, I got a briefing. For example, in Medford, OR, they told me it was the driest it had been for 25 years. In Medford, when you get an update on the fires—and, colleagues, it is worth noting that nobody used to have a fire briefing in March. That is just unheard of. We have fire briefings well into the summer. But fires are getting to be a year-round occurrence. I was there in March, and the fire experts said it is going to be very dry. When you look southward to California, all you see is dry, dry, dry.

The fact is that as it gets drier and as it gets hotter on the forest floor, should lightning strike, which is very common in rural America, all of a sudden you can have an inferno on your hands and one that really knows no boundaries and can affect private property owners, State lands, and Federal lands. We had an important hearing in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee the other day on the sportsmen's bill. It looked as if there were a lot of good ideas in the bipartisan bill, but it will be pretty hard to go hunting and fishing in the forests this summer if the forests are burning up.

So what a bipartisan group of us from the West want to do—and I particularly commend our colleague Senator CRAPO of Idaho. He and I have teamed up on this effort. We have a large bipartisan coalition of Senators who have joined us. We want to fix the broken system of fighting wildfire in America.

What happens today, colleagues, is that the accounts for prevention get short shrift. In effect, the work that needs to be done with the smaller trees and thinning out the underbrush

doesn't get the funding that is needed, so what happens is, as a result of the lack of prevention, you have these bigger fires and you have to put them out. The accounts for dealing with fire suppression are also short of money, so what happens at that point is the agencies borrow from the prevention fund to put the fire out, and the problem just gets worse and worse.

So what Senator CRAPO and I, with, as I have indicated, a large bipartisan coalition of Senators, are seeking to do is to end that kind of fire borrowing. What we are proposing is that the biggest fires—perhaps the 1 percent of the fires that really turn into infernos—you would fight those from the disaster fund because they are, in fact, disasters.

We have received an analysis from the budget officials indicating that this would really be a wash from a budgeting standpoint because, in effect, while you do spend a bit of money from the disaster fund putting out these infernos, you also generate some real savings from the prevention fund by not having as many fires in the first place.

What our bipartisan amendment will do is give the Departments of Agriculture and Interior the opportunity to access the disaster fund for that 1 percent of the fires that can really break a community apart. It seems to me that Americans across the country who live in communities where there are these fires deserve to know their homes and lives are not going to be threatened needlessly. That is what we will be able to prevent with this bipartisan amendment.

Freeing up the Forest Service funds that our proposal will do will ensure that the natural resources agencies have the resources they need to improve forest health and fund the very preventive work that is needed to reduce the size and severity of future fires.

We are going to be joined in this amendment. As I have indicated, Senator CRAPO and I base it on our bipartisan bill. Senators STABENOW and BALDWIN will be cosponsors, and I believe others will as well.

It is an important amendment and it is an urgent amendment because we need to have this in place quickly so as to give the natural resources agencies and our communities the tools they need this summer.

It is a real wake-up call when you get a fire briefing in March. That is an indication that we have a very, very difficult fire season coming up. This bipartisan amendment ensures that in a cost-effective way we give our natural resources agencies the tools they need to fight these infernos and protect our communities.

Once again, I thank the distinguished chairman of the committee, Senator ENZI, for giving me this time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Oregon for his comments.

One of the things that has concerned me since I came to the Senate is the fact that, in my first year alone, I believe we spent about \$3 billion in disaster relief. Subsequently, it increased to \$5 billion for disasters per year, and now it is about \$7 billion in disasters a year. As an accountant, one of the things I have always said is, if you know something is going to happen, you ought to put it in the budget. So now you will find that there is \$7 billion in disaster relief funding for each of the 10 years in this budget. Using these funds for fires and major disasters sounds like a good idea to me.

I am a little bit rankled when I hear somebody say this budget is a farce. It is as good an effort as a person can put together in 6 weeks when there hasn't been one for 8 years. That effort involves a lot of research, going back to find out where the problems were, why it wasn't done, and what needed to be done. I am pleased with the budget. But, of course, the reason we have this process—in which we had the committee mark-up last week and considered a number of amendments and now will consider many more amendments here on the floor—is so that everybody can participate in seeing if we can complete the budget. It won't be perfect when we finish, but it will be better than it is right now, and it will be better when we start tomorrow morning.

Before we continue consideration of our balanced budget resolution today, I think it is worthwhile to reflect on what we accomplished yesterday for America's hard-working families. It was a good day yesterday as we approved amendments to prevent workplace retaliation against employees who ask or talk about salaries; to oppose cuts to Medicaid; to coordinate care for medically complex children with multiple serious, rare, or chronic illnesses; and to help our veterans gain timely access to health care. As Senator AYOTTE said yesterday, her amendment would “ensure veterans don't have to wait in line, that they can exercise private care options when they want to.” I am proud to say that is something we all support.

The debate this week is a unique opportunity for hard-working taxpayers to see an open and transparent legislative process, with Members from both sides of the aisle offering, debating, and voting on amendments to this resolution. This is something we haven't had in the past 8 years, and I think Members are energized to be able to do what they were sent here to do—the people's business.

Among the topics we will consider today are: enhancing America's energy security, protecting personal property rights from such agencies as the EPA, defending taxpayers against efforts to impose a carbon tax, helping veterans get better access to VA medical facilities, simplifying student loan repayment options, and saving Medicare.

I again thank Members for offering amendments that will help make our government more efficient, effective, and accountable to America's hard-working taxpayers. It is what the American people want and deserve.

I look forward to a strong and vigorous debate about our policies today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

AMENDMENT NO. 347

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and that I be allowed to call up my amendment No. 347 and that the amendment be made pending.

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

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Wyoming [Mr. BARRASSO], for himself, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. WICKER, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. COATS, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. VITTER, Mr. ISAKSON, and Mr. MORAN, proposes an amendment numbered 347.

Mr. BARRASSO. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To establish a spending-neutral reserve fund to keep the Federal Water Pollution Control Act focused on protection of water quality, to establish bright lines for Federal jurisdiction, and to create clear and unambiguous exemptions for features that the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency or the Secretary of the Army, acting through the Chief of Engineers, claim they are not seeking to regulate)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . SPENDING-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO KEEPING THE FEDERAL WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ACT FOCUSED ON THE PROTECTION OF WATER QUALITY.

The Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may revise the allocations of a committee or committees, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, amendments between the Houses, motions, or conference reports relating to ensuring that Federal jurisdiction under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.) is focused on water quality, which may include limiting jurisdiction based on the movement of birds, mammals, or insects through the air or over the land, the movement of water through the ground, or the movement of rainwater or snowmelt over the land, or limiting jurisdiction over puddles, isolated ponds, roadside ditches, irrigation ditches, stormwater systems, wastewater systems, or water delivery, reuse, or reclamation systems, by the amounts provided in such legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not raise new revenue and would not increase the deficit over either the period of the total of fiscal years 2016 through 2020 or the period of the total of fiscal years 2016 through 2025.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, this amendment that was just called up and made pending deals with the regula-

tions the Obama administration has proposed that would expand the Clean Water Act. The rule is an attempt to change the definition of what the law calls waters of the United States.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers first proposed the rule last year. They expect to have it finalized in the next few months. Well, under this rule, the definition of “waters of the United States” would include ditches, would include dry areas where water flows only for a short period of time after it rains.

Federal regulations have never before listed ditches and other manmade features as “waters of the United States.” This would be an alarming step. It would have a huge impact on farmers, ranchers, families, and small businesses all across America. People whose livelihood requires that they put a shovel in the ground would suddenly find it much more difficult to make a living. The rule would amount to a tax on family farmers and ranchers to use their own land after it rains. These are people who just want to grow crops, raise cattle, take care of their families, maybe even just enjoy their own backyards. I hear this every weekend at home in Wyoming. I heard about it today from students from Lusk, WY, in Niobrara County. Now, Washington bureaucrats would have a say in how all of these people use their property.

I oppose this rule. I would like to see it scrapped entirely. That is why last year I introduced the Protecting Water and Property Rights Act of 2014 to block the rule, to roll back this dangerous Washington overreach.

My bill had 38 cosponsors in the Senate, Members who heard from their constituents back home about how worried they were about this harmful new rule. We heard from business owners, who told us the uncertainty the rule creates only delays economic investment and delays job creation. Well, the Environmental Protection Agency says our concerns are overblown. The administration says there is a lot of misunderstanding about what this regulation covers.

Gina McCarthy, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, gave a speech last week. She said, “We're not interested in the vast majority of ditches—roadside ditches, irrigation ditches—those were never covered.” She also went on to say that the Agency could have been, as she said, “more crystal clear out of the gate about what we were and were not proposing.”

Well, my amendment would help make sure this rule is crystal clear. It simply lists things that the Environmental Protection Agency Administrator and others in the Obama administration have already said would not be regulated under this proposed rule. That is it.

My amendment would put limits on how the Environmental Protection Agency or the Army Corps of Engineers

determines the extent of Washington control. The limits would include not allowing the agencies to control water based on the movement of birds, mammals, or insects.

The amendment would prevent determinations based upon the movement of water through the ground or the movement of rainwater or snowmelt over the land.

Finally, my amendment would specifically say that Federal jurisdiction under the Water Pollution Control Act does not extend to things such as puddles, isolated ponds, roadside ditches, and wastewater systems. The Obama administration has said it does not intend for its rules to cover any of these features. Well, this amendment spells it out. There will be no more room for uncertainty and no more room for misunderstandings. It will then be crystal clear.

Of course, some people may not want the rule to be crystal clear. They may want to have some uncertainty in the rule. They may want to have unaccountable, unelected bureaucrats in Washington to be able to change their minds and then go back on their word—as we have seen them do in the past—about what the regulation covers and what it does not. If there is a Senator here who favors that kind of uncertainty, then they can vote against my amendment.

As I said, I have been opposed to this rule from the very beginning. This amendment does not block the rule, and it does nothing to prohibit the Environmental Protection Agency or the Army Corps of Engineers from regulating the true waters of the United States. It simply takes the administration at their word. If they say the rule is not meant to cover something, this just spells it out.

I urge Senators to vote in favor of this amendment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, before I begin my remarks, will the Chair notify me when I have used 5 minutes of time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will be so notified.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to the budget resolution offered by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. This budget charts the wrong path for our Nation. It does not spur economic growth or help the middle class because it does not focus on creating high-quality jobs, boosting wages, or reducing inequality. It fails to address the cuts to government investments, which threatens our Nation's economic and national security. Instead, this budget stacks the deck against middle-class families by slashing government investments. It stacks the deck in favor of special interests by paving the way for huge tax giveaways to powerful special interests and the wealthiest Americans.

In order to claim the budget will balance in 10 years, it relies on accounting

gimmicks and \$5.8 trillion in draconian cuts. It kicks millions off the health insurance rolls and dismantles health care reform. But, ironically, it takes credit for the savings that are part and parcel of the Affordable Care Act, all the while setting the stage for massive tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires.

It would also put powerful special interests ahead of seniors by forcing Medicare recipients to pay more for prescription drugs and preventive care. It does not provide adequate safeguards for Social Security and Medicare. By saying no to closing egregious tax loopholes, it only increases the pressure to cut programs for seniors and others.

You know, frankly, we have been talking for years here in Washington about the deficit. But, this budget proposed by my colleagues has a credibility deficit. So I think most of the observers and commentators are looking and saying: Well, that is impossible. No one is going to believe that you can repeal the Affordable Care Act but keep the savings. No one is going to believe you can do all of those things and still continue to keep a straight face.

So I think the credibility of the budget is highly questionable.

We should have engaged in a balanced approach to growing our economy and towards fiscal responsibility. A balanced approach requires not only making wise reductions in spending, but it also requires raising revenue. That is the way most government entities operate. Mayors and Governors have to do it, and they do it, but here, we are avoiding very difficult, tough choices.

It is obvious there are things that have to be done. They cannot be wished away. Look at our crumbling infrastructure. As I drive around Rhode Island and the Northeast after a series of storms, I see the worst highway situation I think I recall in perhaps my lifetime, but at least in a long time. Pot-holes and disruptions are all over our roads. Americans expect it will be fixed, but you cannot fix it simply by wishing, you have to have the resources and the investment to make those corrections.

As we go forward, it is important to go ahead and deal with all of these issues in a balanced way—not through creative accounting techniques but by making difficult choices. Programs that are not working should be cut back. Revenue should be provided for investment in this country. That is what I think we should and we must do.

I have been particularly active with my colleague Senator MCCAIN on the Armed Services Committee because the Defense Department is facing serious financial challenges. All of our service sectors have warned that if sequestration remains in place, if the Budget Control Act remains in place, together they will not provide the resources necessary to adequately fund the readi-

ness, the modernization of our forces and the welfare of our forces.

Admiral Gortney, for example, who is the commander of NORTHCOM, has made this point along with everyone else, but he also went further to make the point that I think is critical when we are talking about defense and non-defense spending. You cannot draw this bright line between the Department of Defense and everybody else in terms of our national security. NORTHCOM, which is responsible for our security in the United States, depends upon border control agents at our border. They depend upon the Department of Homeland Security. If that agency is not adequately funded, if they are suffering through sequestration and the BCA levels, then we will not have the kind of national security we need. If it translates to further cuts in TSA agents at our airports, that will undermine our security.

So this notion that we can draw a nice neat line between the Department of Defense and give them some more money through different techniques but ignore the other side of the equation does not work.

One of the most significant examples comes from General John Kelly of Southern Command. They have the capability of, through satellite imagery, through other intelligence means, identifying these fast boats coming out of South America that have drugs and might have human cargo, possibly terrorists. Knowing where they are and where they are headed is fine, but unless you have Coast Guard cutters to intercept them, you will not interdict this traffic. As a result, what we will have is a hole in our national security. The Coast Guard cutters come from the Department of Homeland Security.

So I know there has been an effort to use the Overseas Contingency Operation Fund. Senator GRAHAM, in particular, has been very, very aggressive with that. But I will try to explain later, if not now: There are limitations. This fund is directed at our operations against Al Qaeda and the Taliban under the authorization for the use of military force. To try to stretch this to build facilities in Alaska for missile defense—that is quite a stretch. That is not what OCO was designed for.

I think it has become a valiant effort to put more money in, but the reality is, we have to face up, as Senator MCCAIN and I suggested in our letter to the Budget Committee, and raise the baseline number for the Department of Defense to a total—at least to a total that avoids sequestration or beyond. That is a realistic way to do it, and revenue is a way to pay for it. And I don't think the cuts should come out of nondefense to fund defense. This is an issue—again, are you going to short-change Homeland Security? Are you going to short-change other agencies that are critical to the defense of the United States? Are you going to short-change the people of the United States? I do not think we should.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The pending business is amendment No. 347.

AMENDMENT NO. 622

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside in order for me to call up amendment No. 622.

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

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from North Carolina [Mr. BURR], for himself, Mr. KING, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mr. WARNER, Mrs. SHAHEEN, and Ms. AYOTTE, proposes an amendment numbered 622.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to manageable Federal student loan repayment options)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO A SIMPLIFIED INCOME-DRIVEN STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT OPTION.

The Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may revise the allocations of a committee or committees, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, amendments between the Houses, motions, or conference reports relating to addressing student loan debt, which may include reducing overlapping student loan repayment programs and creating a simplified income-driven student loan repayment option by the amounts provided in such legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over either the period of the total of fiscal years 2016 through 2020 or the period of the total of fiscal years 2016 through 2025.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I rise today to offer a deficit-neutral reserve fund amendment to the budget that will allow the chairman of the Budget Committee to revise allocations to provide for a simplified income-driven repayment program for Federal student loans.

This budget amendment is offered with the hope that it would allow for legislation similar to the Repay Act, which I introduced earlier in this Congress with Senator KING, Senator ALEXANDER, Senator WARNER, Senator SHAHEEN, Senator AYOTTE, Senator RUBIO, Senator CAPITO, Senator COLLINS, and Senator CARPER.

I wish to spend a moment telling my colleagues what the Repay Act would do.

It is very simple. It would streamline the numerous loan repayment programs into two easily understood options for those who take out student loans.

No. 1, it would create a fixed repayment program similar to the current law's 10-year standard repayment.

No. 2, it would create a new simplified income-driven repayment program that consolidates numerous income-based programs into one program.

As we know today, students who go to college have to take out a number of different loans. It is confusing in the system to know exactly what that repayment system looks like—especially for somebody who is trying to determine their job opportunities and the income they need to meet their debt. This allows consolidation and simplification so that if students understand exactly what their exposure is almost from the very beginning, they would be left with a simple set of choices upon graduation. Do I choose a fixed payment plan that would pay off my loans in a straight 10 years? Or do I take the simplified income-driven repayment plan, pay a little longer, and have the remaining loan balance forgiven after 20 or 25 years, depending upon whether it is undergraduate or graduate loans?

Now, this is important for a few reasons, which I will illustrate from the quotes that have been made by many associations and financial aid administrators who endorsed the Repay Act.

They say, No. 1: "Consolidating the various federal income-based programs into a single plan will help borrowers understand the benefits and protections inherent in our federal student loan system . . ."

No. 2:

Despite many protections in [existing] repayment plans, a frustrating number of student loan borrowers continue to default. This is due in part to the fact that the options require borrowers to take proactive and cumbersome steps to enroll.

And, No. 3: "This proposal to collapse the different plans into one single income-based repayment plan should help ease the enrollment process for borrowers."

Not only does it sort out the repayment obligations that a student has, it makes the enrollment easier. And this comes from the individuals who are responsible for the implementation of these programs.

Those quotes are from associations representing financial aid administrators across the country. They are people who are on the frontlines of helping students as they prepare for payment after college. We should listen to them, and I say that strongly to my colleagues. We should listen to them.

The other benefits of this legislation is that students will know, prior to entering college, based on the amount that they borrow, what options will be available to them once they graduate from college. I know that seems like common sense to a lot of folks, but if you haven't been through the student loan process today, then you don't realize they don't have that clarity today—as they enter college—that this will allow them to have.

This will promote better consumer behavior. It will lessen the chance stu-

dents default based upon the confusion of the viable options that they have available to them.

Now, I would think, from policy-makers, our intent would always be, No. 1: Does the plan fit the need of the individuals to whom it is targeted? Clearly the student loan program does, but, No. 2: Have we done this in a way that is simple, understandable, and workable?

If we can't answer that question, and we don't check that box, the likelihood is that the net result is that we have defaults, individuals who don't live up to repaying their obligation. When a student graduates, they face up to 12 repayment options available to them, all with some overlapping purpose or benefit and with great complexity in how you actually sign up for the options.

Again, with the Repay Act, there are two options: 10 years straight repayment or a repayment that is structured based on what your income is.

Senator KING and I think the Repay Act makes for good policy, but we think it makes for bad policy to have 12 cumbersome options that overlap in some cases.

Based on some preliminary scores from CBO and estimates from President Obama—since he has proposed much of what we do in the Repay Act—we believe this legislation will save in the area of \$4 billion over the next 10 years and \$1 billion to \$2 billion over the next 5 years. That is up to \$6 billion in savings in the student loan program that we could pump back into additional loan value for students in the future.

Now, unlike other options we have, which we will be voting on today, that cost money—and pay for it by raising taxes—we save money by making our program more efficient and better suited for students' needs.

I say this to my colleagues who might be asking: How do I vote? I have to tell you: You have to wait to have a comparison bill. There will be one.

I want you to ask yourselves: Which one saves \$4 billion, and which one costs more money? Which one uses the allocations that are currently there, and which one raises taxes to put in place a new plan?

This amendment and the Repay Act is bipartisan—overwhelmingly so. If the bipartisan list of cosponsors to the Repay Act isn't enough, many of the recommendations that are formed in this legislation came from the President's very own budget.

This legislation also has the support of the Education Finance Council, the American Council on Education, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, as well as the University of North Carolina System, which is important to me, since I represent North Carolina.

In short, this amendment represents legislation that, No. 1, is bipartisan; No. 2, saves money; No. 3, is based on the ideas and proposals of the President; and, No. 4, has the support of the

financial aid industry, which is responsible for the success of student loan programs.

Success means easy enrollment. Success means repayment of the outstanding debt.

I urge my colleagues, when given the opportunity, to vote for Amendment No. 622, a bipartisan-sponsored initiative.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I ask the Chair to notify me when 6 minutes are consumed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will be so notified.

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, last week the Senate Budget Committee gave a green light to the Republican budget. A caution light, a yellow light, was more in order. It calls for \$4.7 trillion in non-defense spending cuts over the next 10 years and no increases in revenue. Where would those cuts come from? They would be piled on the backs of the middle class, the elderly, and children.

They would cut the earned-income tax credit, slash Medicare and Medicaid, child care, Head Start, education, public safety, and law enforcement.

And—just for good measure—the Republican budget rolls back reforms on Wall Street—and on and on. All this and more is to pay for lower taxes for millionaires and billionaires.

When I first came to the Senate, our economy was in a free fall. We were losing 20,000 jobs a day, every day. Thousands of jobs were gone. Our financial system was crashing. Deficits were at historic highs.

That was 6 years ago. It has been a long road back. We asked the wealthy to pay their fair share. We passed long-needed reforms to Wall Street. We have seen 12 million more private sector jobs, the deficit cut in half, and Wall Street at historic highs. Profits are up; unemployment and deficits are down.

That is the story, but it isn't over. We are not done yet. Not everyone has found solid ground.

My State still faces great challenges. Many New Mexicans are still struggling, still pulling out of the worst recession in 75 years. How do we go forward? How do we build on the progress we have made?

Those are the questions the voters elected us to solve. The short answer is we have to work together. We have to get past the shutdowns and the showdowns. Politics is the art of standing your ground but also finding common ground.

That is why the Republican budget is so troubling. It doesn't start a conversation. It doesn't reach across the aisle.

This budget is bad for working families, bad for the middle class, bad for our economy. It makes a U-turn right back to failed policies of the past. This budget says no to the middle class, no to the most vulnerable, and no to the

critical investments we know we need—but yes to lower taxes for hedge funds. It is Robin Hood in reverse, and it will hurt so many people who have suffered so much for so long.

This is the wrong way to go at the worst possible time, because—make no mistake about it—this budget is one big yes for those at the top and one big no for everybody else.

In my State, one in three children is in poverty. For Native American children, it is even higher. It is 44 percent. One in five children goes to bed hungry. Their parents can't find adequate child care. They can't get quality medical care when they need it. They lack access to safe housing and clean water.

This just isn't the case in New Mexico. We see it across the Nation. Children and families are falling behind. This has to change. The future—not only for our children but for our economy—depends on changing it. We need to be doing more, but the Republican budget does less.

It would cut programs for low-income children, seniors, and families by up to \$660 billion over 10 years, including SNAP and child nutrition programs.

Healthy kids are an investment in our future economy. We need renewed commitment—not draconian cuts—to the programs that help children reach their full potential. That means infant and toddler care, preschool, and home-visiting programs. We know that they work and they can help in a big way.

A recent White House report tells the story. These programs make a difference, get results and save money—more than \$8 for every \$1 invested.

That is why I introduced the Saving Our Next Generation Act, or SONG Act. We should fully pay for what works. That is why I am a cosponsor of the PRE-K Act to expand high-quality, early learning programs for children from birth to age 5.

Children should be our priority. They should not take a back seat to billionaires and neither should the elderly, who depend on Medicare, not a voucher program.

The Republican budget cuts \$2.5 trillion from health care for low- and moderate-income people.

Repealing the Affordable Care Act, block-granting Medicaid—seniors would pay more for prescription drugs and more for preventive services. Crucial support for nursing care and home health care would be slashed.

We have a lot to do to get America's economy back on track. The Republican budget—at every turn—fails to do it. A budget isn't just numbers. It is about choices, and it is about priorities.

That means investing in infrastructure. We have to upgrade our roads and manage our water resources. Federal dollars are almost half of New Mexico's total transportation budget and 70 percent of funding for our highways and bridges.

It means making sure we have an educated workforce—not cutting Pell grants by 30 percent.

It means full funding for the PILT program—to help communities pay for law enforcement, schools, and other services folks depend on.

It means making sure our national labs and our military bases have the resources they need.

All of this makes a difference for the people of my State. It makes a difference for hardworking families. It makes a difference for the future of our country.

These should be our priorities, including doing more for small businesses. They are the engine of our economy. They create most new jobs. They need a fair tax policy—because they pay their fair share—and don't have an army of lawyers working to find tax loopholes.

We cannot ask Main Street to keep sacrificing while we fail to close a single tax loophole on Wall Street.

We need a tax system that supports the middle class—not corporations sending jobs overseas. Our economy is recovering, but the benefit needs to go to all Americans, not just those at the top.

These are the choices we should be making. These are the choices the Republican budget fails to make.

We need to invest in the programs that help all Americans get ahead—and strengthen our economy—so that every hardworking American has the opportunity to build a better future.

I hope we can work together and find common ground with a budget that makes sense, with a fair tax policy, and with smart investments. We need to look to the future—and move forward.

Now is not the time to return to the failed policies of the past.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has consumed 6 minutes.

Mr. UDALL. I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 2 minutes.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 652

(Purpose: To make college more affordable for middle-class families by allowing borrowers with outstanding Federal and private student loans to refinance at the equivalent interest rates that were offered to Federal student loan borrowers during the 2013-2014 school year and to fully offset the cost of such a program by requiring millionaires to pay at least a 30 percent effective Federal tax rate)

Mr. REED. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator WARREN, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up her amendment No. 652.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Rhode Island [Mr. REED], for Ms. WARREN, for herself, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. BENNET, Mr. REED, Mrs. BOXER, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. BROWN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. UDALL, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. MANCHIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. MARKEY, and Mr. PETERS, proposes an amendment numbered 652.

Mr. REED. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for up to 1 minute.

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

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume consideration of S. Con. Res. 11 following the joint meeting; that the time until 12:15 p.m. today be equally divided between the managers or their designees; and that at 12:15 p.m., the Senate vote in relation to the following amendments in the order listed, with no second-degree amendments in order prior to the votes: Burr No. 622, Warren No. 652.

I further ask unanimous consent that there be 2 minutes equally divided between the managers or their designees prior to each vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ISAKSON. For the information of all Senators, there will be up to two rollcall votes at 12:15 p.m. today.

JOINT MEETING OF THE TWO HOUSES—ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 10:33 a.m., took a recess subject to the call of the Chair, and the Senate, preceded by the Secretary of the Senate, Julie E. Adams; the Deputy Sergeant at Arms, James Morhard; and the Vice President

of the United States, JOSEPH R. BIDEN, Jr., proceeded to the Hall of the House of Representatives to hear an address delivered by His Excellency Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

(The address delivered by the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the joint meeting of the two Houses of Congress is printed in the Proceedings of the House of Representatives in today's RECORD.)

At 12:12 p.m., the Senate, having returned to its Chamber, reassembled and was called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. FLAKE).

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET, FISCAL YEAR 2016—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the votes scheduled for 12:15 p.m. now take place at 12:30 p.m., with the Democrats controlling 15 minutes and the majority controlling the remaining time, with all provisions of the previous order remaining in effect.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 652

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, the amendment we are going to be discussing now—and I will say a few words about it in a moment—deals with one of the most important issues facing our country; that is, the lack of affordability of college and the reality that when millions of our young people graduate school, they are left in crushing debt year after year after year, and they are unable to refinance that debt which has a huge impact on their lives.

I give time now to Senator WARREN, who has played a great role in focusing on this issue and has brought forth what I think is an excellent amendment.

I yield to the Senator from Massachusetts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I rise to urge my colleagues to support amendment No. 652, to refinance existing student loans and bring down the high interest rates that are dragging down millions of Americans.

When rates are low, people refinance their mortgages. When rates are low, businesses refinance their debt. Well, rates are low, and we want to give the 40 million Americans who are dealing with student loans the same chance to refinance their loans.

Last year, Republicans blocked our efforts to lower student loan interest rates. They said there were other, better ways to deal with student loan debt, but they did nothing. So tens of millions of borrowers got nothing, and millions of borrowers are still stuck paying interest rates at 6 percent, 8 percent, 10 percent, and even higher.

While Republicans were busy blocking student loan refinancing, our country's student debt problem got worse—much worse. In the last year, outstanding student debt has increased by \$100 billion dollars. Nearly 1 million more borrowers have fallen behind on their student loans. The interest rate on new student loans only got higher.

This amendment offers us a chance to actually do something for the millions of Americans who are dealing with student loan debt. The idea is simple: Refinance outstanding student loans down to 3.9 percent for undergraduates, a little higher for graduate students. The amendment would save borrowers hundreds and in some cases thousands of dollars a year, all without adding a dime to our deficit. It is fully paid for by closing a tax loophole that allows millionaires and billionaires to pay a lower tax rate than middle-class families.

We have a choice—protect a tax loophole for billionaires or give tens of millions of people a chance to refinance their student loans. A choice—protect a tax loophole for billionaires or give millions of middle-class people a chance to build some real economic security.

Congress has worked far too long for the billionaires. Now it is time for Congress to work for hard-working people.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, let's be frank. We live in a global economy. We need the best educated workforce in the world to compete. Yet we are making it harder and harder for middle-class families to send their kids to college. At the same time, we are saying to those young people who go to college: You are going to be living with an oppressive debt for decades—for decades.

Several months ago, I talked to a young woman in Burlington, VT. Her crime was that she went to medical school in order to become a primary care physician. Those are exactly the people we need. She left medical school with \$300,000 in debt. Does anybody think that makes any sense at all?

Right now, if you want to go out and buy a new car, you can get interest rates in some cases of 0 percent, 1 percent, 2 percent. If you want to refinance your home, you can pay 3 percent, 4 percent, 5 percent. Yet, when parents want to send their kids to college or young people themselves take out loans, they are forced to pay 6 percent, 8 percent, or even a higher percent for the crime of wanting to get a higher education.

Senator WARREN's amendment is eminently sensible. It significantly lowers interest rates, cutting them almost in half to 3.9 percent. This would be a huge blessing for millions of young people who are having a hard time buying homes, a hard time even starting families because they are dealing with this oppressive debt.

The last point I would make—and I hope everybody remembers this—when