

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

Wall Street, because of their greed, recklessness, and illegal behavior, needed to be bailed out, the Fed provided them with zero and one-half of 1 percent interest rates by the trillions of dollars. If we could bail out Wall Street—if the Fed could bail out Wall Street with extremely low interest rates, it is time for us to treat the young people in this country and their parents with the same respect. We need to substantially lower interest rates on student debt, and the Warren amendment would do that.

I yield 3 minutes to the Senator from New Hampshire.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I appreciate and support the comments from my colleague, my neighbor from Vermont, Senator SANDERS. I am pleased to be here to support Senator WARREN's bill, which I am cosponsoring.

This amendment would allow our young people to refinance their student loans. Student loan debt has now surpassed credit card debt in this country. This is an issue about the economy of this country, but even more important it is an issue about the future of our young people.

In New Hampshire, we have the second highest student loan debt in the country. I have talked to young people and their families, who say they are delaying getting married, they are delaying having children, and they are delaying buying houses because of their student loan debt. Yet, families can refinance their houses and they can refinance their cars. They should be able to refinance their student loans.

This is critical to getting our economy moving again in the way it should. It is critical to ensuring that our young people have a future. I hope all of our colleagues will take a look at this legislation and will agree that it makes sense. We need to do this for our families, for our students, and for our country.

I yield back to the Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. The Senator from Rhode Island, 3 minutes.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I will be even briefer than that.

Mr. SANDERS. The Senator from Rhode Island gets 2 minutes, then.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be added as a cosponsor to Senator WARREN's amendment.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Rhode Island is the very proud location of some of the best universities in the country. We have very high university density in our small State. We have everything from Brown University in Providence, to our wonderful State universities led by the University of Rhode Island, to leading Catholic colleges such as Providence College and Salve Regina in

Newport, RI. To support kids in getting their college educations and to bring down the cost is a priority for us in Rhode Island. I am proud to cosponsor this amendment.

I yield back any further time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. I thank the Presiding Officer for recognizing me.

Mr. President, I, too, wish to rise in support of this amendment. In a nation that is finding itself increasingly with global competitors, where other nations—some of the most active economic competitors we have are doing everything they can to keep the cost of college low. In Germany, 4 percent to 5 percent of median income is the cost of college. In Canada, 5 percent to 6 percent of median income is the cost of college. In England, 6 percent to 7 percent of median income is the cost of college. Other competitive democracies know to widen the avenues to greater college education. But here in the United States, the cost of college is over 50 percent of the median income.

We are raising barriers to our children getting in the game, being on the field, and playing. I say that when you field a team—when Stanford would compete in football, we didn't leave four or five of our players on the side lines; we got everybody on the field. That is what we need.

This amendment is common sense. We should not be profiting as a government off the backs of our students. We should allow them to refinance their student debt. That is why I support it, and I am grateful for my colleagues' support as well.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, how much time do we have left?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democrats have 5 minutes remaining.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, over the last several months, I have had three town meetings in Vermont with young people on this issue. It is an issue of huge concern to them and their parents. As Senator BOOKER just mentioned, we are competing with countries all over the world that say to their young people: If you have the ability and you have the desire, you can go to college regardless of your income.

In Germany, tuition for college is now zero. In many Scandinavian countries, it is now zero. What they are saying to the young people is, we need you to get the best education to help us create the strongest economy, to create the jobs we need.

How insane is it for us to literally discourage bright young people from attending college or to tell others that if they graduate college or graduate school, they are going to be \$70,000, \$80,000, \$100,000 in debt? What sense does this make for the well-being of the middle class of this country or for our economic competitiveness?

In the next month, I will be personally introducing legislation that will cut and do away with tuition in public

colleges and universities, but today what we are focusing on is legislation that is so sensible, so obvious, it is hard for me to imagine that anybody can vote against it. I have in my office at least two attorneys who are struggling with huge student debts. This is true all over this country. They graduated from college 15 years ago. They are still paying off that debt, and it impacts what they can do. We have evidence out there that families are not having children because of student debt, not buying homes because of student debt. Why is it that people have to pay double or triple interest rates because they got an education as opposed to what they would pay when they purchase a car or a home? Does anybody think that makes sense?

Today we have an opportunity to stand up for the young people of this country and say we want them to get an education and we want them to have the freedom to live their lives after they leave school. That is what this amendment is about.

I yield time to the Senator from Virginia, Mr. KAINE.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I also rise to speak on behalf of this budget amendment. I will be brief.

There is a wonderful organization that analyzes education in this country called the Lumina Foundation. Their main area of research is the percentage of adults in the country and competitor countries who have higher education degrees. Because of the GI bill, the United States rocketed ahead of other nations and became the clear leading country in the world in the percentage of adults with higher education degrees. There wasn't a close second. But now we are 10th to 15th in the world and slipping.

I would argue that the economic future for this country is not one that we would like if the United States continues to slip further and further behind other nations in the percentage of our folks with higher education degrees. That is why I support this amendment.

I yield back my time.

Mr. SANDERS. I yield 1 minute to the Senator from Michigan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I am very pleased to be here on the floor of the Senate with Senator WARREN, Senator SANDERS, and all of my colleagues on the Democratic side who feel very strongly that if young people are going to have a fair shot to get ahead, to enter the middle class, to be a part of a thriving economy, they have to come out of college without mountains of debt so they can go and buy a house and a car and have a family and a career and not be saddled with outrageous debt. That is what this amendment is about.

If there were ever an amendment that said we want middle-class opportunity for everybody, it is this one. I hope we will have a unanimous vote.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, let me conclude by saying this: The high cost of college and student debt is one of the great issues facing our country. We are trying to lower student debt significantly. Our Republican colleagues' response to the crisis is to cut \$90 billion in mandatory funding for Pell grants. The choice is pretty clear. We are looking at the future of this country and the need for our young people to get the best education possible and to not graduate college deeply in debt. That is what this amendment is about. I hope we will have strong bipartisan support for it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. I don't think there is anybody on either side of the aisle who isn't concerned about student debt, the cost of interest and college and the number of people graduating with debt. Addressing college costs and the burden of high student debt loans must be a priority, but it can't be done on a budget bill. We can't have policy on a budget resolution. I know this doesn't include all of her policy, so it is an incomplete bill.

The Office of Management and Budget last month disclosed that participation in the existing income-based repayment plan has been much higher than was anticipated, and the administration is currently in the process of extending those existing repayment options to all the eligible borrowers with outstanding student loans. Therefore, the OMB now projects that the existing student loan portfolio will cost taxpayers an additional \$22 billion. That is \$22 billion more being spent to alleviate the repayment burden of borrowers with outstanding debt. We can find that number in the President's budget.

The CBO did score the bill that Senator WARREN introduced last Congress on which this amendment is based. The CBO projected that the government will make billions in profit—listen to this—from buying tens of billions worth of private student loans from banks and refinancing them at lower rates. They are going to buy up loans and then refinance those loans at lower rates, and somehow the way that scores is positive for the Federal Government? Wow. That is why we are talking about needing some changes in the way we do scoring around here. Think about that. If the government can make money from buying up private loans while charging the borrower a lower rate, why stop there? We can make trillions for the country.

CBO, as well as leading academic economists and think tanks, all believe credit reform accounting is seriously flawed. They favor fair value accounting under which loans are valued at what they are worth to the private sector. Last year CBO showed that under fair value accounting, the Federal student loan portfolio does not make a big profit. It actually has a significant cost. One of the reasons for some of the

high interest rates is that when the Affordable Care Act was passed, it set those rates higher so there would be revenue for the Affordable Care Act.

I hope we will defeat this amendment and support the bipartisan King-Burr proposal.

I yield the floor.

AMENDMENT NO. 622

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote in relation to amendment No. 622, offered by the Senator from North Carolina, Mr. BURR.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I rise to urge my colleagues to support the Burr-King amendment No. 622, which creates a deficit-neutral reserve fund to reduce overlapping student loan repayment programs.

The student repayment system is a mess right now. There are nine different alternatives and they are very confusing. Even the names are confusing. There is the income-based repayment, the income-contingent repayment, the income-sensitive repayment, and the pay-as-you-earn repayment. In other words, it is very complicated and it is one of the things that makes it confusing and hard for students.

Senator BURR and I have introduced this amendment in order to simplify this decision. Basically we have taken suggestions from individuals—students, institutions, as well as the President—to simplify the loan repayment provision to reduce it to basically two options, a fixed repayment over 10 years or an income-related repayment over a longer period of time.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this amendment. I believe it is an overdue simplification of this process, and I believe it will enable the students of America to deal with this issue in a more constructive way.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, we think the Burr-King amendment is a sensible, noncontroversial amendment, and I don't believe we have any objection to it on this side of the aisle.

I suggest a voice vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there any further debate?

Without any further debate, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 622) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 652

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on amendment No. 652, offered by the Senator from Massachusetts, Ms. WARREN.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, not seeing the Senator from Massachusetts, I will make this point: If there is an eminently sensible amendment to come before us, this is it. It addresses

the crisis that exists all over this country where young people are graduating college deeply in debt and have that onerous debt around their necks for decades.

This amendment simply gives these young people the opportunity to refinance their debts so they can substantially lower their student debt, and in some cases cut their student debt in half. It is hard for me to imagine how anybody could vote against an amendment as sensible as this amendment but so important to millions of families in this country who want to be able to send their kids to college and for the young people who want to graduate college without this oppressive debt.

I strongly ask for a "yes" vote on this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, the proper way to do this is to consider the full bill and run it through committee and then the floor and not try to make policy in a budget resolution.

I ask for a "no" vote.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I yield back any remaining time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question is on agreeing to the Warren amendment.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ).

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

The result was announced—yeas 46, nays 53, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 86 Leg.]

YEAS—46

Baldwin	Heinrich	Peters
Bennet	Heitkamp	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Reid
Booker	Kaine	Sanders
Boxer	King	Schatz
Brown	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cantwell	Leahy	Shaheen
Cardin	Manchin	Stabenow
Carper	Markey	Tester
Casey	McCaskill	Udall
Coons	Menendez	Warner
Donnelly	Merkley	Warren
Durbin	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wyden
Franken	Murray	
Gillibrand	Nelson	

NAYS—53

Alexander	Corker	Grassley
Ayotte	Cornyn	Hatch
Barrasso	Cotton	Heller
Blunt	Crapo	Hoeben
Boozman	Daines	Inhofe
Burr	Enzi	Isakson
Capito	Ernst	Johnson
Cassidy	Fischer	Kirk
Coats	Flake	Lankford
Cochran	Gardner	Lee
Collins	Graham	McCain

McConnell	Roberts	Sullivan
Moran	Rounds	Thune
Murkowski	Rubio	Tillis
Paul	Sasse	Toomey
Perdue	Scott	Vitter
Portman	Sessions	Wicker
Risch	Shelby	

NOT VOTING—1

Cruz

The amendment (No. 652) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, the Federal budget is a pressing concern for everybody in this body, including myself, especially given the political climate we have in Congress. We have been two Houses divided for some time.

Back in 2011, the Republican House and the Democratic Senate agreed that Federal spending was out of control. They just couldn't agree on what to do about it. So Members from both Chambers came together to give Congress two options: either pass a responsible budget to help reduce the deficit or face drastic cuts to every discretionary Federal department.

That threat of sequester was supposed to represent the end of the road, forcing Congress to put differences aside and to work together, but sometimes even a dead end is not enough to motivate some folks to do the right thing. Congress failed to come up with a bipartisan, long-term spending plan and sequestration went into effect 2 years ago.

Sequestration has had devastating effects nationally and in my home State of Nevada. Take, for instance, sequestration's impact on our national forests. We have 17 million acres of national forest managed by the U.S. Forest Service. Under its current structure, the Forest Service uses the same pool of funds to manage our national forests that it does to fight wildfires. In bad fire years, suppression can use over 40 percent of the U.S. Forest Service's budget. So it is no surprise that their budget is still in disarray 2 years after sequestration cuts \$200 million during the hot, dry summer that saw millions of acres of trees burn across the West.

Sequestration proved to be irresponsible and its impacts long-lasting, and our forests weren't the own casualties. The Indian Country was slammed from education to health care, to infrastructure. Indian Health Service saw its budget cut by a similar amount. Health care in Indian Country is chronically underfunded anyway. The additional 5-percent cut to the IHS budget resulted in 800,000 fewer outpatient visits for Native Americans. Indian schools—many of which are in such bad shape that nobody in this body would send their kids there—saw their budgets cut by \$67 million, which resulted in bigger class size, cutbacks to academic programs, cutbacks to building maintenance, and reduction in technology upgrades. Sequestration was almost as

devastating to the public education system in this country, and it had its impact on seniors and low-income children and families. It will be again if Congress doesn't act.

Between now and September 30, Congress must pass a responsible budget that reduces our deficit, and we have time to agree on that or we will face greater cuts than we saw last time. The President's budget proposal makes significant investments in infrastructure and education and our outdoors. These initiatives will help grow our economy, particularly in rural States such as Montana, but there is one big problem. The President's budget fails to reduce the deficit in a smart and meaningful way, but the other options on the table are worse.

The House last week unveiled its budget proposal. It is the height of irresponsibility. The House wants to privatize Medicare by turning it into a voucher program. It wants to turn Medicaid into block grants and cut those. They want to cut taxes for millionaires and big corporations while they phase out portions of the earned-income tax credit, squeezing the wallets of millions of working-class Americans. The House's plan also cuts the Pell Grant Program.

It repeals the Affordable Care Act—that is no surprise. The House has voted over 50 times to repeal the ACA, ignoring the fact that we have some 16 million more Americans that have affordable access to health care than before the law was passed, but in a show of boundless hypocrisy, the House balances its budget by counting the \$700 billion in Medicare savings and the \$1 trillion in new revenue that the Affordable Care Act provides.

Now some folks might say, well, that is the House of Representatives. Look at how they handled the funding for the Department of Homeland Security this year. They nearly shut down the agency tasked with protecting our borders and preventing terrorist attacks on America. The House gave up on responsible governing years ago. But the fact is the budget before us today in the Senate isn't much different. It repeals the Affordable Care Act, but again pretends to keep the \$700 billion in savings to Medicare and the \$1 trillion of revenue created by the Affordable Care Act—after it has been repealed. Now, I am a farmer, not an accountant, but I want to state that this is the kind of new math that doesn't add up to me.

The Senate budget—similar to the House—also guts the Pell Grant Program by one-third. Why is that important? Well, in Montana, students are graduating from college with more than \$27,000 in debt in student loans. The last thing they need are less Pell grants and more student debt, which is exactly what will happen if this Senate budget passes.

It also puts States on the hook for over \$1 trillion in Medicaid funding. What does that mean? It means we are

not going to take care of it anymore. We are going to push it off on States and act like it doesn't exist. Just like the House, it raises taxes on the lowest wrung of the economic ladder by repealing the extension of the earned-income tax credit and child tax credit. These credits keep over 13 million Americans—working families with relatively low incomes—out of poverty.

While this rhetoric about passing a balanced budget sounds good—and I do support a balanced budget—the reality is this budget doesn't cut it. It does not balance. Why? Because this budget relies on gimmicks such as using the Overseas Contingency Fund, which is supposed to fund the war on Afghanistan and action against ISIS but instead has become a slush fund for the Department of Defense. This budget assumes hundreds of billions of dollars in “unallocated cuts.” That is great messaging. We are going to slash the budget by hundreds of billions of dollars, but we are not going to tell you where we cut it out. We can talk about cuts, but when it gets to specifics—the real tough decisions—we are not going to talk about those. We are not even going to tell you where they are. It is not only secretive, but it is bad policy, and these kinds of smoke and mirrors are the worst Washington has to offer.

While the President's budget spends far too much, at least it is honest, open, and transparent. The House and Senate budgets are just a display of bad mathematics. They lack any sort of realistic plan to keep our economy growing by investing in America. Instead of balancing the budget on the backs of middle-class families and seniors and students and our Nation's most vulnerable, we need to fully invest in the measures that will help this economy go, such as roads, bridges, our outdoor economy, education for our kids and our grandkids because that is the only way they are going to be able to compete in this global economy. In 2015, every nation is interconnected. Business transactions occur between multinational corporations, scientific discovery is shared between universities on different continents, clean air and clean water and carbon emission standards are achieved by international agreements, but global security seems to be a battle that we—the United States—are fighting alone—and at what cost?

Last week, my Appropriations subcommittee on military construction held a hearing on the Defense Department's construction budget. The United States spends more on defense than the next nine nations combined. Let me say it one more time. The United States spends more on defense than the next nine nations combined, including the United Kingdom, Germany, India, and—yes—China. Two of America's greatest international threats, ISIS and a nuclear Iran, pose a grave threat to us but also to our allies in the Middle East and Europe. Yet we are the ones paying the overwhelming

majority of these costs. This budget hides those costs from the American people. With 47 Senators pushing us to go to war with Iran, I think the American people deserve to know how we are spending their dollars overseas.

Do not misunderstand me. Congress's foremost concern should be with protecting our Nation and in keeping our communities safe, but that should also be the foremost concern of our allies around the world. Time and time again, though, it is the U.S. taxpayer and American lives who are on the line, and that price is far too high. It is not just dollars and cents. It is the lives of our kids. It is the wounds they will face when they return from war, if they return from war at all. These are pricetags we cannot afford.

While we send our troops and our treasures overseas, our allies are free to invest significantly in more public education, health care, infrastructure, research and development, and lower taxes. Why? Because we are paying the bill. Their economies grow in relation to our deficit. As Congress looks to responsibly cut spending, we must look at the billions we waste overseas, and we need to level with the American people about the true cost of war. While caring for our veterans is a cost we absolutely should bear, we can no longer afford to fight and fund every international conflict. We have to stop paying for war on our children's credit.

We need to think about the future and invest in public education, health care, and infrastructure, in sound forest management, and in lower taxes. A global economy and a global defense will allow us to invest in middle-class families, educating our children, protecting our seniors, and making sure Americans can afford food and shelter. These are investments we must make, but the budget before us stops investing in America.

We can do better, and we must do better.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

AMENDMENT NO. 601

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, first, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up Bennet-Stabenow amendment No. 601.

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

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Ms. STABENOW], for Mr. BENNET, for himself and Ms. STABENOW, proposes an amendment numbered 601.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To create a point of order against legislation that would privatize Medicare, cut guaranteed benefits, increase out-of-pocket spending, or turn Medicare into a premium support plan)

At the end of subtitle A of title IV, add the following:

SEC. ____ POINT OF ORDER AGAINST LEGISLATION THAT WOULD PRIVATIZE MEDICARE, CUT GUARANTEED BENEFITS, INCREASE OUT-OF-POCKET SPENDING, OR TURN MEDICARE INTO A PREMIUM SUPPORT PLAN.

(a) POINT OF ORDER.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, amendment between the Houses, or conference report that would—

(1) privatize or change the Medicare program under title XVIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.) into a system that provides a payment either to pay for or offset private plan premiums or the traditional fee-for-service Medicare program;

(2) result in a reduction of guaranteed benefits for individuals entitled to, or enrolled for, benefits under the Medicare program; or

(3) increase out-of-pocket spending for prescription drugs or preventive services under the Medicare program.

(b) WAIVER AND APPEAL.—Subsection (a) may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under subsection (a).

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, Medicare turns 50 years old this year. This is not the time to turn our back on Medicare and the universal nature of Medicare. We all understand and are confident that after paying into the system year after year or turning age 65 or meeting the other qualifications that we have means that health care will be available to everyone, regardless of where you live, regardless of who you are.

Medicare is a great American success story. Before Medicare became law, only half of Americans who were 65 years of age or older had any type of health insurance. They could not find health insurance. Those who found health insurance were paying through the roof to be able to get that insurance. Often times they were paying—they lacked coverage for surgery or health expenses that occurred outside the hospital. You could have one single surgery or illness and be totally wiped out.

So our country came together and said: We are going to make sure that for seniors in this country, health care will be available to everyone. We have done that. It is extremely successful. I am very, very concerned about what this budget does to Medicare, as well as the budget in the House of Representatives. First of all, let me say that there is no question that Medicare, as with every other public program, was designed to improve and evolve and be strengthened and add new things—certainly for the security of future generations.

That is why the prescription drug bill was passed. That is why the Affordable Care Act—we took even better steps forward to make sure there were no gaps in coverage under prescription drugs. Seniors today are spending thousands of dollars less out of pocket to get critically needed medicines than they did before the Affordable Care

Act. They now have no out-of-pocket costs for annual wellness visits or for other prevention.

Now, in this bill that is undermined in two different ways. First of all, there is the Affordable Care Act, which 16.4 million people are now using to get health care for themselves and their families, and most of them, by the way, are people who could not afford health care in the past, just as seniors could not 50 years ago. All of them will lose their health care under this budget, the House and the Senate budget. The changes that we made to improve prescription drug coverage and lower the costs to seniors will be gone. That was part of the ACA. There are the changes to protect people, to be able to know that when they have insurance, they are going to be covered when they get sick and not dropped. If they are sick, if they have a serious disease, they can still get insurance even if they have a preexisting condition. All of the things in the Affordable Care Act are gone under this budget.

Now, interestingly, and as the distinguished Senator from Montana said, all of the revenue raised under the Affordable Care Act stays in this bill. So they keep the money, but they take away your medical care. To add insult to injury, because actually repealing the Affordable Care Act increases the deficit, the Affordable Care Act is exempted from the point of order that is required in the budget when an action actually increases the deficit.

So then you add to that what is being done in Medicare. The House cuts \$150 billion from Medicare for senior citizens, by moving away from what has been the foundation of Medicare—which is a guaranteed benefit. You pay in, and it is a guaranteed benefit. They turn it into something they call premium support.

The Senate proposes even more than that—\$434 billion in cuts to Medicare over the next 10 years. They are not specified, but they are using the same kind of language that relates to the security of the program and issues that in the past have been called vouchers—or some other change that all ends up in the same place, which is cutting Medicare.

Our children, our grandchildren know that grandpas and grandmas, aunts and uncles, and moms and dads right now have health care because of this wonderful American success story called Medicare. It is seriously undermined in this budget. I would urge my colleagues to come together and send a clear message that we stand together in a bipartisan way to continue to support Medicare and say: Hands off the Medicare program and the promise made to our seniors now and to those in the future.

The Bennet-Stabenow amendment would create a point of order against legislation and would require a supermajority vote on anything that would privatize Medicare, would cut guaranteed benefits, increase out-of-pocket

spending or use premium support schemes to undermine the fundamental nature of what Medicare is.

Now, I also find it quite extraordinary that in the House budget, which is more specific, when the Affordable Care Act health exchanges are eliminated, two pages later in their budget, they create health exchanges for Medicare. Some would say: ObamaCare and Medicare.

This is a very strange debate we are having on health care. So we want to make it very clear: Hands off Medicare. Hands off Medicare. Whether you are trying to privatize it in some way, turn it over to private insurance companies, vouchers, cut guaranteed benefits, increase out-of-pocket costs, use what has been called premium support schemes to undermine Medicare's universal nature of what it is, stop it. Hands off Medicare.

That is what we need to be doing in this budget. I hope colleagues will come together and vote for the Bennet-Stabenow amendment to guarantee that happens.

AMENDMENT NO. 755

Mr. President, I have a second amendment that is a side-by-side amendment for the Barrasso amendment that will be called up later. I have been asked also to move forward on that amendment as well.

I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up Stabenow amendment No. 755.

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

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Ms. STABENOW] proposes an amendment numbered 755.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to keeping 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. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF CLEAN WATER USING SCIENTIFIC STANDARDS WHILE MAINTAINING THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF AGRICULTURE.

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 protecting watersheds, including the Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, the Mississippi River system, the Colorado River system, or other sources of drinking water of the United States, which may include clarifying the scope of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.) to provide certainty for landowners or rural communities, or preserving existing exemp-

tions for agriculture, ranching, or forestry, or to rely on the scientific evidence of impacts on water quality of different types of water bodies 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.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, obviously, I care very passionately about Medicare and about health care, and I believe strongly that this is a fundamental right of every American. We do not decide when we are going to get sick. We do not decide when our children are going to get sick or what is going to happen to us as it relates to our health.

But another important part of health relates to the ability to have clean, drinkable water. The Clean Water Act has been a vital tool for promoting the health and livelihood—the economy—of Americans for the past 40 years. In fact, according to the EPA, the Clean Water Act has kept tens of billions of pounds of sewage and chemicals and trash out of our waterways. It has helped double the number of American waters that meet standards for fishing and swimming. I can tell you that in Michigan, we love the Great Lakes. They are in our DNA. The ability to fish, the ability to swim—in fact, we have a \$7 billion fishing industry, in which my family has been a proud participant, and a \$16 billion recreational boating industry. The jobs of more than 800,000 residents are supported by the economic asset of our Great Lakes, and we want to make sure the Clean Water Act is strong.

Now, we also are very proud of agriculture in Michigan. We have more diversity of crops than any other State in the country other than California. We are working on that. So we are able to do that, in part, because of the abundance of water, frankly. Unlike friends in other States, the issues around water—clean abundance of water for agriculture, for ranchers, for forests, for farmers—have not been issues for us. We certainly want to keep it that way.

Now, last year the EPA proposed a rule to define the waters of the United States, basically to clarify two different Supreme Court rulings—one in 2001. After that ruling in 2001, the former administration, the Bush administration, began working on a rule to clarify this question of the waters and regulating the waters of the United States.

Then there was an even more complicated, confusing decision. I never thought you could actually have five different decisions out of a nine-member Supreme Court. But that is what happened. We ended up with even more confusion in 2006. So both administrations—the Bush administration and the Obama administration—understood, as does everyone, that we have to fix this. We have to clarify this, for farmers and ranchers and for citizens and communities. I started in county government.

I understand for local governments how important that is as well.

So the rule that is before us now—the proposed rule—has been debated for over 200 days, including 400 public meetings and over one million comments. I am not sure that is a record, but it is pretty close—87 percent of which have been positive to moving forward. Now, the proposal was not meant to target agriculture, but it has led to a lot of legitimate questions in my mind about the standing of agriculture's historic exemption under the clean water regulations.

So my amendment would help to clarify agriculture's role, while maintaining important clean water protections. This is very important. We can do both. We need to do both. We need to make clear the historic role in agriculture as it relates to separate actions from the Clean Water Act, and we also need to have a Clean Water Act. So this would establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund for legislation that would ensure that the Clean Water Act is focused on protecting water quality, upholds existing exemptions in the Clean Water Act for agriculture and ranching that have existed for decades.

Our farmers and ranchers deserve to have the certainty of getting this done and having it done right and knowing that what has been going on for decades for them will be the law of the land. It also ensures we rely on scientific evidence as we examine the impact that water quality has on the different types of water bodies, and it provides certainty—as I said before—to landowners in rural communities regarding the scope of the Clean Water Act.

We had an important hearing on that yesterday in the Agriculture Committee. Clearly, we need to provide that certainty for our farmers and our ranchers. Now, unfortunately, my colleague from Wyoming has an amendment that appears to attempt to address this, but it is overly broad and, frankly, unclear. It does not even mention agriculture. It does not mention the historic exemptions of agriculture, ranching, and forestry. It does not mention rural communities that may be affected.

So I do not believe that is the direction this Senate should go. We need to be clear. We do not need more confusion; we need less confusion. So my amendment clarifies the scope of any changes made to the Clean Water Act so that exemptions important to agriculture are maintained. The Barrasso amendment, unfortunately, would also roll back efforts to protect the health of the Great Lakes. All of us who represent the Great Lakes should be concerned about that—and the Chesapeake Bay, the Mississippi River system, the Colorado River system and so many other systems around the country and all our sources of drinking water for the United States.

I would encourage colleagues, when this comes up, to vote no on the Barrasso amendment, to vote yes on the

Stabenow amendment, and to make it clear that we support the Clean Water Act, we support decisions being made based on science, and we also want to make sure that the historic relationship with agriculture and the Clean Water Act is maintained.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

AMENDMENT NO. 350

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendments and call up my amendment No. 350.

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

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Missouri [Mr. BLUNT] for himself and Mr. THUNE, proposes an amendment numbered 350.

Mr. BLUNT. 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 create a point of order against legislation that would create a Federal tax or fee on carbon emissions)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . POINT OF ORDER AGAINST LEGISLATION THAT WOULD CREATE A TAX OR FEE ON CARBON EMISSIONS.

(a) POINT OF ORDER.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, or conference report that—

(1) would result in revenues that would be greater than the level of revenues set forth for the first fiscal year or the total of that fiscal year and the ensuing fiscal years under the concurrent resolution on the budget then in effect for which allocations are provided under section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974; and

(2) for any year covered by such resolution, includes a Federal tax or fee imposed on carbon emissions from any product or entity that is a direct or indirect source of the emissions.

(b) WAIVER AND APPEAL.—

(1) WAIVER.—Subsection (a) may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.

(2) APPEAL.—An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under subsection (a).

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I rise today in support of this amendment. This amendment is designed to create a point of order against a carbon tax.

This point of order would protect American families and workers from attacks on carbon, and attacks on their utility bills, attacks on things that are absolutely essential for families—and for opportunities for families as we look at utilities and energy.

A carbon tax would increase the cost on energy. It would kill jobs as it increased the cost on energy, and make life for families more difficult than it needs to be.

At a time when we are struggling to see our economy move forward, fami-

lies and job creators in Missouri and across the country need to be able to continue to count on affordable and abundant energy resources.

We have tremendous opportunities and more American energy. We need to use that in a way that benefits families and benefits the future.

According to a 2013 Congressional Budget Office report, a tax of about \$21 per metric ton on carbon would raise the price of electricity by an average of about 16 percent in the country. In the State of Missouri, my State, it would increase, according to that 2013 CBO report, the utility bill by 27 percent.

We are more coal dependent than many of our States, but apparently if the average in the United States is 16 percent, all you have to do is add that to your utility bill to see what kind of problem that creates for a bill that, in many cases, families are struggling to pay already.

Twenty-seven percent in the fifth most coal-dependent State, Missouri, where 82 percent of our electricity comes from coal, adds a huge and new burden that wouldn't be there otherwise as people try to respond to this decision that the government could make to decide to make it impossible to have the kinds of utilities that are now available to families.

The National Association of Manufacturers, in that same year, 2013, found that a carbon tax would lead to a loss of worker income and, in fact, would lead to the loss of jobs—the equivalent of about 1.3 million to 1.5 million jobs in the first year and as many as 21 million jobs by 2053.

Now, more than ever, we need to send a clear message to the Obama administration that we don't support a carbon tax as the administration moves forward with regulations that, in fact, would have exactly the same impact a carbon tax would have.

The Congress has said no repeatedly, privately, publicly, over and over again, to a carbon tax, but it doesn't seem to slow down the constant desire to look at a regulation that could produce the same thing. These regulations are regressive, they have the most negative impact on families that are struggling to pay their utility bill now, they have a negative impact on the elderly, they have a negative impact on people on fixed incomes, and they have a negative impact on public institutions such as schools and hospitals.

There is nobody but the ratepayer, the person who gets the utility bill—you and I, when we get our utility bill, everybody whom we know who gets a utility bill—there is nobody to pay that utility bill but them. These costs are passed along by the laws of every State. There is no mythical utility company that is going to absorb these new costs if we allow them to happen.

The recently proposed clean power plan would, under section 111 of the Clean Air Act, act as a tax on energy by making affordable and reliable

means of electricity, such as coal-fired and natural gas-fired plants, more expensive.

Also, it would take plants that clearly had lots of life left in them and somebody has to pay for them. If those plants aren't usable, they don't go away. Somebody still has to pay the bill, and the somebody is everybody who gets a utility bill.

These costs go directly to ratepayers, they go directly to consumers, and they have a real negative impact on the kinds of things we should be looking for—ways to have a positive impact. These costs ripple through our economy. They inflict damage on consumers at all levels.

We saw what happened when gas prices went down just a little bit. The decline in gas prices, with the opportunity we see now with more American energy, suddenly families felt as though they had the first increase that many families have had in the last 6 or 7 years, where incomes have been flat but outgo has been on the increase. When you saw gas prices go down, suddenly people were able to do things they couldn't do before: one more meal out a week, newer shoes quicker than you thought you might get newer shoes for your kids or yourself.

Those things begin to happen. But if you increase the utility bill by 17 percent or 27 percent or more than that—if all of your utilities come from coal right now, your utility bill is going to go up higher than that if we go in this direction.

A carbon tax would have the same impact. The similarities are clear. They are so clear, in fact, that under the so-called Clean Power Act, regional authorities and States were supposed to come up with their own plan as to how to implement it.

One regional transmission organization, the PJM Interconnection, simply created an explicit price for carbon in the models it was using. Whether the administration calls it a carbon tax or not, everybody who looks at how they are going to provide utilities knows that is exactly what it is.

If we want to grow our economy, we need to increase rather than decrease. We need to encourage rather than discourage access to low-cost, abundant, available fuels, and find the cleanest possible way to use those fuels.

We have seen great progress in this direction. We need to be doing things that encourage that progress to occur rather than things that will absolutely and with certainty increase utility bills for families and decrease job opportunities for young people.

I encourage my colleagues to support this amendment that will make a difference. I am certainly grateful that my friend Senator THUNE, the chairman of the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, is cosponsoring this amendment with me.

I urge my colleagues to support its adoption.

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. SANDERS. 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. SANDERS. Mr. President, I wish to try to, as we are about halfway through the budget debate, summarize where we are and the very clear differences that exist between my Republican colleagues and those of us on this side. I think if the American people pay attention, the differences are very clear.

What some of us are trying to do is to take a hard look at the very serious problems facing our Nation and do our best to come up with sensible solutions to those problems. I think that is what the budget process should be about. What are the problems facing this country? What are the best solutions that we go forward with?

But, already, we have strong disagreements as to how we even look at the problems facing the country. From my perspective, and I think from the perspective, quite honestly, of the vast majority of the American people, the major economic problem we face is a disappearing middle class.

The good news is that compared to where we were 6½ years ago, we have made significant progress. I think most Americans remember that after the Wall Street crash—caused by the greed, recklessness, and illegal behavior on Wall Street—that at that point, as President Bush was leaving office, we were hemorrhaging 800,000 jobs a month. That is hard to imagine, 800,000 jobs a month.

My Republican colleagues and I would agree and say the job creation now is not as strong as it should be. Fair enough. I wish to see more than 200,000 jobs a month being created. But no one will deny that 200,000 jobs a month being created is a heck of a lot better than losing 800,000 jobs a month, which is where we were when President Bush left office.

My Republican friends say the deficit is too high. I think they have a point. It is about \$483 billion, a very high deficit. But I hope no one denies that a \$483 billion deficit is a heck of a lot less than the \$1.3 trillion deficit that existed when President Bush left office.

When President Bush left office, the financial system not only in America but all over the world was teetering on collapse. We learned later, actually, that economists literally believed the system would collapse. If you put your credit card into the ATM machine, nothing comes out. That is where we were 6½ years ago.

Today, for better or worse, the stock market is soaring and the financial system today seems reasonably solid. No one denies it is a lot better than it was 6½ years ago.

So we have made some progress despite, I must say, consistent Repub-

lican obstructionism, but we have made some progress. But I would be the first to agree, with my Republican friends or anybody else, that we are not anywhere near where we should be.

Unemployment has gone down. The official unemployment rate is about 5½ right now. But let me tell you, the official unemployment rate is not the real unemployment rate. When you include those people who have been given up looking for work and those who are looking for part time, real unemployment in this country today is about 11 percent. Youth unemployment—which we never talk about, but it is a very serious problem—is about 17 percent. African-American youth unemployment, which we never talk about, is much higher than that.

So what we are trying to do, as we look out and we recognize a problem that says—the American people tell us in every poll I have seen that their most serious issue is jobs and wages. How do we create jobs? How do those jobs pay us a decent wage?

Does anyone disagree with that? I don't think so. That is the issue. So what have we tried to do in this process? What we on this side have tried to do is say: OK, how do we create jobs? What is the fastest way we can create the millions of jobs our country and our economy need?

What economists tell us is the fastest way to create jobs is through investment in our infrastructure.

Does anybody, any Republican, Democrat, progressive, conservative, disagree that our infrastructure is in a state of terrible disrepair—that is, our roads, our bridges, our water systems, our wastewater plants, our airports, our rail systems, our levees, our dams. I don't think there is any disagreement.

What the experts tell us—and I speak as a former mayor and concur with the experts—is that when you delay work on infrastructure, it only gets worse. If you do not rebuild a crumbling road, it gets worse. If you do not rebuild a decaying water system, it becomes worse and more expensive to repair.

So what have we said here on this side? What we have said is, let's not kick this can down the road, which we have done for many years. Let's acknowledge the problem, and let's make serious investments in infrastructure—rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges and rail systems and water plants and wastewater plants, et cetera. That is what we have said. And we brought forth an amendment, which I offered, which would create some 9 million jobs in rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure—9 million jobs over a period of 6 years. I think the way we paid for that \$478 billion investment makes sense to most Americans, who understand we have major corporation after major corporation that pays zero in Federal income taxes because they take advantage of absurd loopholes—loopholes that allow them to invest their money and put their

money in the Cayman Islands, in Bermuda, in Luxembourg, and in other tax havens and pay nothing in Federal income taxes. So we have said: Let's repeal those loopholes. Let's raise the revenue we need. Let's invest it in the infrastructure. In the process, let's create millions of decent-paying jobs. I would say that is a sensible response to the job crisis.

In terms of income and wages, I think everybody or almost everybody understands that the Federal minimum wage today of \$7.25 an hour is literally a starvation wage. It has to be raised. What we are trying to do on our side is to raise the minimum wage, and I will have an amendment to do that.

We are trying to deal with the serious inequities regarding pay differentiation in America between male and female workers. Women workers are making 78 cents an hour compared to the wages paid to men. That makes no sense. We brought forth an amendment—Senator MIKULSKI brought forth an amendment to bring pay equity. That is an important issue.

We are also going to fight for reform of overtime rules so that people who are making \$25,000 a year—so-called supervisors at McDonald's or Burger King—are not earning time and a half despite the fact they are working 50 to 60 hours a week.

So those are a few of the issues we are trying to focus on—creating jobs and raising wages. I have to say, unhappily, that my Republican colleagues have not been supportive of those efforts. What they have been absolutely persistent about is doing anything to cut Medicare, cut Medicaid, cut education, and cut nutrition. They will do anything other than ask the wealthiest people in this country, who are doing phenomenally well, the largest corporations, which are enjoying record-breaking profits—they will do anything to prevent those groups from paying more in taxes even if it means massive cuts to programs working families desperately depend upon.

AMENDMENT NO. 777

Mr. President, with that, at this point, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and call up amendment No. 777.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Vermont [Mr. SANDERS], for himself and Mr. WHITEHOUSE, proposes an amendment numbered 777.

Mr. SANDERS. 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 to recognize that climate change is real and caused by human activity and that Congress needs to take action to cut carbon pollution)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO CUTTING CARBON POLLUTION TO PREVENT HUMAN-INDUCED CLIMATE CHANGE.

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 protecting Americans from the impacts of human-induced climate change, which may include action on policies that reduce emissions by the amounts that the scientific community says are needed to avert catastrophic climate change, by the amounts provided in such legislation for those purposes 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

AMENDMENT NO. 356

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up the amendment I am offering, which is amendment No. 356.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kansas [Mr. MORAN], for himself, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. KING, proposes an amendment numbered 356.

Mr. MORAN. 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 providing health care to veterans who reside more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest medical facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs that provides the care sought by the veteran)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 3 ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO PROVIDING HEALTH CARE TO VETERANS WHO HAVE GEOGRAPHIC INACCESSIBILITY TO CARE.

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 providing health care to veterans who reside more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest medical facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs that provides the care sought by the veteran, 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. MORAN. Mr. President, I would remind the Presiding Officer of the hearing we had yesterday dealing with veterans affairs and the opportunity we had to discuss the implementation of something we now refer to as the choice act.

One of the successes and, in my view, one of the few successes we had last term—in fact, with Senator SANDERS being on the floor as well—was the passage of the choice act. That legislation was Congress responding to scandal within the Department of Veterans Affairs—the fraudulent wait lists, the lack of services available to veterans who were waiting, and a number of veterans falling through the cracks. Congress responded and passed legislation now referred to as the choice act.

What that choice act said in simple terms is that if you are a veteran and you are unable to receive the services you need from the Department of Veterans Affairs within 30 days or if you are a veteran who lives more than 40 miles from a VA facility, the choice act allows you—in fact, requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide you with services at home if you so choose. It is your choice.

That bill was passed by Congress in August of 2014, signed by the President in September, implemented since then beginning in November, and it is now March of 2015. What we have discovered during that period of implementation is there are a number of pitfalls by which veterans are not receiving the care we indicated they would receive following the passage of that legislation. A lot of that problem is related to the 40-mile provision. Again, if you live more than 40 miles from a VA facility, the law says the Department of Veterans Affairs will provide you with service, if you so choose, with a local provider.

A couple of things have happened. The interpretation by the Department of Veterans Affairs of a couple of provisions has precluded a significant number, in my view, of veterans from being able to utilize this choice program.

Yesterday, the Department of Veterans Affairs, to their own credit, decided that they had been interpreting the law incorrectly. That provision related to as the crow flies, meaning that the 40 miles was to be computed as the crow flies, and that was the way the VA determined they were required to interpret that provision. Yesterday, the Department of Veterans Affairs decided they had the authority to really make that 40 miles highway miles. So if you happen to live on one side of a lake or one side of a mountain, it is no longer as the crow flies. That is a piece of good news.

But here is the issue I have raised numerous times, and here is the issue that still remains a problem for many veterans. I smile when I say this because there are not many lakes in Kansas and there are no mountains in Kansas, so “as the crow flies” is not a significant issue to most Kansans as it is in many other places in the country. But yesterday’s decision by the Department does increase the number of veterans who may qualify for the choice act.

Among other things, what is still missing is the idea of a facility within

40 miles. The problem is this: The Department of Veterans Affairs has interpreted and continues to interpret that to mean even though there is a VA facility within the 40 miles that does not provide the service the veteran needs, it is still a facility within 40 miles, and thus the veteran will be required to transport themselves to a hospital 2, 3, 4 hours away.

I have said this before on the Senate floor. As a House Member before coming to the Senate, I represented a congressional district made up of tens of thousands of square miles, larger than the State of Illinois. There is no VA hospital within that congressional district. We worked hard to create outpatient clinics where routine services could be provided closer to home for those veterans. Now we are saying: If you can’t access the care that is more than 40 miles from your home, the VA is going to give you the option of seeing your hometown doctor, being admitted to your hometown hospital. But here is one of the problems: If there is an outpatient clinic within that 40 miles, even though it doesn’t provide the service you as a veteran need, the VA says you don’t qualify for the choice act.

I am of the view that they have the ability to interpret that law differently. They say it takes a legislative change. I am not sure there is a lot of value in continuing to have the debate about who is right about that. What I do know is there are many veterans in Kansas and across the country who are not receiving the services promised by the choice act because there is an outpatient clinic within the 40 miles, but it doesn’t provide the service they need.

To give folks an understanding of what I am talking about, most outpatient clinics don’t provide colonoscopies. So we have a veteran who needs a colonoscopy. The VA is to provide that service. Yet, in the case of where I come from, my hometown, the VA hospital is 3 hours away and the outpatient clinic is half an hour away, and because there is an outpatient clinic half an hour away, that veteran can’t utilize the choice act. But the outpatient clinic doesn’t provide colonoscopies, so that veteran is told by the VA that he or she has to drive the 3 hours to the hospital in Wichita to get the colonoscopy. Well, there is a community hospital within that area, within that veteran’s hometown that provides colonoscopy.

That situation is what the choice act was designed to accomplish—service provided at home. So this amendment creates a deficit-neutral reserve fund that requires the VA to utilize its current authorities to offer community care to veterans who are currently unable to receive the health care services they need from a VA medical facility within 40 miles of where they live because the facility they have won’t or can’t provide the services they need.

This is something we ought to be able to resolve. This amendment is widely supported.

There is legislation—S. 207—which I have introduced and which has many cosponsors, Republicans and Democrats, and we will continue to push this legislation. In fact, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs has indicated they will not only have the hearing we had yesterday on this topic, but also the chairman and the ranking member and their staffs will work over the recess to get this legislation front and center in our committee and, presumably, on the Senate floor.

This amendment is cosponsored by Senator COLLINS and Senator KING of Maine, Senator TESTER, Senator BLUNT, Senator TOOMEY, Senator HOEVEN, and Senator VITTER—Republicans and Democrats from States across the country—realize this is something which needs to be resolved.

While I believe the Department of Veterans Affairs should resolve this, they haven't. While the Department of Veterans Affairs believes Congress should resolve this, we haven't. What I do know is veterans who are entitled to care are not receiving it, and, in a sense, false promises were made until we get this issue corrected and the VA then implements the choice act as intended.

This is an important issue. I would say to my colleagues, particularly those who served in the Senate with me in the last 4 years, in my view, we haven't accomplished much in those 4 years, but one of the areas in which we did come together and did pass significant legislation was the choice act. Now we need to make certain that accomplishment results in those who are entitled to those benefits receiving them.

Who, I would ask, in this country would we expect to have the best quality health care? Who would we expect? I think it would be those who served our country—our military men and women, those who retired and became veterans. And I would say that the employees and Members of Congress have the opportunity of choosing a hospital or a doctor, and our veterans ought to have the same opportunity.

Mr. President, I appreciate the opportunity to explain this amendment. I ask for support when it is considered during the budget consideration. I would ask my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring the underlying legislation that will follow.

I thank my colleagues on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, particularly the chairman, the Senator from Georgia, Mr. ISAKSON, and the ranking member, the Senator from Connecticut, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, for their commitment to seeing that this is accomplished.

I appreciate the opportunity to explain one more time why this is something of significance and how the quality of life of our veterans is affected not because we don't want to care for

them but because we lack common sense to implement a law when we know how it should work, we know what it should say, and yet we are impeded from accomplishing what matters so much. This is not a Republican issue; this is not a Democratic issue; this is an American issue that mostly calls for common sense.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we are engaged in an annual ritual on the floor of the Senate—the budget resolution.

The budget resolution comes to the floor, and Senator ENZI of Wyoming and Senator SANDERS of Vermont lead the effort to debate the budget resolution. This is not a law because it is never sent to the President. It is something passed by the House and the Senate that kind of says: The President told us we couldn't spend anything more than X; we will tell you how we would spend it. It always is different from what the President suggested. So we get into a debate about how we are going to spend our Federal budget.

That is what a budget resolution is all about, and we have to make choices—just as families make choices when it comes to things they buy for their families and for their homes.

So I will talk about an amendment I am going to offer which gives us a choice.

First, today on Capitol Hill we have visitors walking the corridors wearing purple sashes. If we look closely, written on those sashes it says Alzheimer's Association. It is not unusual for us to get visits from people who are interested in medical issues—cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's. The list goes on. They come here basically with very fundamental requests: Can you find more research dollars to help us find a cure? Can you provide support to the families who are facing this disease? I have faced that so many times as a Congressman and as a Senator.

I use this as an illustration, because Alzheimer's is a disease and an issue which is becoming more dominant in America. I am about to state a statistic which I didn't believe when I heard it, and I went back and checked and double checked, and it is true. I have spoken on the floor here about 3 minutes. In that 3-minute period of time, three Americans have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. One American is diagnosed with Alzheimer's every 68 seconds in America. It is a disease which is starting to gallop across our Nation and affect more and more families. It is expensive, costly—costly, of course, to the victim who loses touch with the people they love and the life they want to lead; costly, too, to the caregivers—the children, the spouses, and others—who turn their lives around and start to care for the person with Alzheimer's.

Last year in America we spent \$200 billion on Medicare and Medicaid for

Alzheimer's victims, and, sadly, the projection is that in just a few years, we are going to see this figure surpass \$1 trillion. It will literally eat up the Medicare and Medicaid programs as we know them. That is one disease, but it is one that is so serious that we have to take it seriously.

I can speak in personal terms—and I bet everyone can—about cancer, what it has meant to my family, what it means to families all across America.

Here is what it gets down to: Will we make a decision as a nation to make the right investment in biomedical research? We have the best biomedical research agency in the world—the National Institutes of Health. Nobody questions that. The Centers for Disease Control is right by its side in the work that it does. The Department of Defense, Veterans Administration, even the Department of Energy, all do work in relation to medical research and medical technology.

So the question that is posed to us—to this generation of Senators sitting on the floor—is this: Are we going to do further research in areas that can cure disease, alleviate human suffering, and, yes, reduce the cost to the government?

I have found this is the most bipartisan issue in the world. I have been all over Illinois, and we have a lot of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. When I stop to talk about biomedical research, everybody is on board. The mother with the diabetic son, the father with a wife suffering from some form of cancer—they are all on board, they are listening. And they should.

What I will offer as an amendment here is generally just a marker. It doesn't mean that medical research will be enhanced or grow in size, but it basically puts us on record as to whether the United States Senate believes that we should invest additional money into biomedical research.

Why should we put more money into it? I went out to the National Institutes of Health. There is a doctor out there named Dr. Francis Collins. I think he is one of the best. Francis Collins, back in 1988—if I am not mistaken—was given the task of mapping the human genome. I am a liberal arts lawyer, so I am lost. The human genome has something to do with our DNA and tells the people who research it a lot about us and diseases we are likely or not likely to have. So they mapped the human genome, which took years to do, and with that information they are making giant strides now in finding cures for diseases and breakthroughs and identifying some of these issues.

We all read about Angelina Jolie and what she is going through with her fear of cancer. It is based on a family history, medical advice, and, yes, something that has been found in her DNA through the human genome project that leads her to be more sensitive and worried about her own health. She is a

famous actress, and that is why we pay close attention. But it applies to families across the board.

Here is the point I am getting to. We are falling behind in biomedical research. In the last 10 years we have lost 23 percent of our spending power to fund medical research. That means that, 10 years ago, one out of every three promising research projects was funded. Today, it is one out of six. I don't need to tell the Senator from Maryland, Mr. CARDIN, because NIH is in his State, and he knows what they do and he knows the researchers and Dr. Collins.

I went to Dr. Collins, and I said to him: What can we in the Congress do to help you find cures for diseases?

Senator, he said, it is very basic: Give us 5-percent real growth in our appropriation for 10 straight years—5 percent over inflation. Give me that, Senator, and I promise you—I promise you, we will pay for it over and over in saving money on medical treatment, in alleviating the suffering of disease that we face in this country.

That is what I am trying to do. The American Cures Act is legislation I put in to do that.

Well, what will it cost, Senator? It is easy to come up with some idea on the floor that is going to cost a lot of money and not pay for it. What will it cost us?

Over a 10-year period of time, a 5-percent real growth increase in NIH, CDC, and the other departments I mentioned, over a 10-year period of time as additional spending comes to \$150 billion.

In that 10-year period of time, we will appropriate more than \$15 trillion in Federal spending. Work the decimal points. I am talking about a tiny sliver of a small percentage that goes into medical research. And I am also saying that I am willing to stand here as a Senator and promise you that medical research will pay for itself over and over and over again.

I am of an age that I can remember the fear of polio—some folks with gray hair may remember that too—when, as a kid, kids were coming down with polio, crippled by it, many of them living in iron lungs, and parents were scared to death. We didn't know where it was coming from. My mother had a theory that it had something to do with water standing in the street:

Don't you go play in that puddle. You may get polio.

Who knew? No one knew. But we were afraid because we knew fellow classmates who were getting polio.

And then, 60 years ago, along comes Jonas Salk. Every school child in America knew that name. We didn't look forward to that shot; that is for sure. But the notion that we would be liberated from the fear of polio, that was such an amazing discovery that it was national and international news. Medical research can do that. Jonas Salk did that. We have done it over and over again.

So now, will our generation give up on biomedical research? Will we decide that balancing the budget, eliminating the deficit is more important than a small contribution toward the National Institutes of Health? I hope not. The amendment I will offer will ask the Senate to go on record to support this effort.

Senator MORAN from Kansas was here earlier. He has a similar amendment. I am going to vote for Senator MORAN's amendment. I hope he votes for mine.

Let's be bipartisan about this. Let's find something we can agree on. Let's make it biomedical research. Let's make it a commitment to the NIH.

I know that people we represent in every State of the Union will say: You did the right thing, Senator. Put politics aside. Give the money to those researchers to find cures for those diseases. It is not only going to save us money; it is going to save lives.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT). The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the budget proposal that has been offered by Senate Republicans, which will help Nebraska families—and all American families—have a brighter future.

For far too long, families have been paying more and forced to expect less from an increasingly inefficient and out-of-touch Federal Government. While we have made progress, our economy is not where it should be, and, unfortunately, the government's spending habits remain unsustainable.

Our \$18 trillion debt isn't just a threat to our economic security. It is a threat to our national security. It is time to offer bold solutions and tackle these problems.

Republicans were sent to Congress to stop this irresponsible mentality—to stop wasteful spending, to balance our budget, and to allow our economy to grow and flourish. Families all across this Nation have been forced to tighten their belts. Now it is Washington's turn.

I am here today to highlight some of these initiatives and to show what Senate Republicans are doing to safeguard the hard-earned tax dollars entrusted to us by the American people.

Back home, many Nebraskans are wondering how this budget will affect their families and their daily lives. With that in mind, the budget we have presented will adhere to three basic rules—cut spending, balance the budget, and do it all without raising taxes.

This budget cuts \$5.1 trillion in spending over 10 years. The budget preserves the spending caps put in place by the Budget Control Act.

Like many of my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee, I believe national defense must be the Federal Government's No. 1 top priority.

I have the honor of serving as chairman of the Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee. I fully understand the very real threats that our Nation

faces each and every day. But in order for us to ensure our military men and women have the resources and training they need to fulfill the missions that we give them, we must make hard decisions and we must set priorities.

Some red lines just won't disappear. The red ink of our debt is here to stay unless we make some real changes.

Our budget preserves the needed pressure to compel Congress to make those hard decisions in order to properly fund the security of our Nation. This budget also provides much-needed resources for infrastructure improvements all across our Nation. It does this through a deficit-neutral reserve fund to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure with a new highway bill in May.

The budget resolution provides this mechanism so that a bill can move forward, allowing authorizers to find either new revenue or offsets in order to extend the life of the highway trust fund.

Ultimately, the committees of jurisdiction have to write the policies and the deficit-neutral reserve fund gives them the flexibility to do so.

As chairman of the commerce Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety, and Security, I know there is much work to do on our roads, our bridges, our ports, and our harbors. I also believe that infrastructure is another core duty and responsibility of the Federal Government. For us to meet that responsibility, we have to learn to live within our means.

Second, this budget doesn't raise a dime in taxes—not one dime. The answer to our debt crisis isn't taxing hardworking Americans more. Rather, the answer rests in a government that is wiser—a more prudent steward of those tax dollars that every American entrusts us to spend wisely.

This is a very timely topic because millions of Americans are preparing to file their taxes right now. An estimate from the National Taxpayer Advocate in 2013 indicates that Americans collectively spend 6.1 billion hours and \$168 billion on efforts to navigate through our very confusing Tax Code and to file their taxes.

Hard-working Americans—including many who work two or three jobs to support their families—should not be expected to dedicate these countless hours to comply with all these burdensome requirements, nor should they spend their money and have to hire expensive accountants to do so. When the income tax was first ratified in 1913, the entire Tax Code was 400 pages. Today's Tax Code and the regulated rules now total more than 73,000 pages. While these regulations cause stress and frustration for families, they also create financial hardships that hold back businesses, and they hold back job creators.

Tax day is an annual reminder that our complex laws desperately need to be reformed. I remain committed to promoting a simpler, fairer tax system

that provides certainty and one that encourages economic growth. Moreover, the vast majority of economists agree the single best way to create jobs and the single best way to generate economic growth is through comprehensive tax reform.

This budget sets us on a path toward that needed reform. It is my hope that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle will work with us so we can accomplish this. Let's take a moment now and look at the President's budget proposal. His plan would raise taxes by \$1.8 trillion to pay for new spending projects.

I think the President's budget is tone deaf. It is tired. It is the same old tax-and-spend policies that got us into this mess in the first place. There is nothing in it that actually cuts spending or addresses this mounting debt.

Under the President's budget, interest rates alone will triple from the \$229 billion we currently spend to more than \$769 billion a year. Let me repeat that. We currently spend more than \$229 billion per year on our interest alone. That is going to triple to over three-quarters of a trillion dollars by 2025. That is money we could use to reinvest in our military, we could use to pay down our national debt or that we could use to improve the Nation's infrastructure. I think the President's proposal is a recipe for a national disaster.

Our budget offers a realistic way forward. Importantly, this budget helps to keep Congress on track regarding the appropriations process. For the first time in a long time, Congress is meeting the budgetary deadlines as prescribed by law. Passing appropriations bills on time allows us to provide the American people with more certainty in planning for their futures.

I have been a Member of the Senate for 2 years. In that time, I have seen firsthand the regulatory burden that is hindering our small businesses and preventing growth. I have seen the regulatory burden that hurts families and makes it hard for them to get ahead. Our budget provides a framework to lighten that burden, to lighten that burden of government and reduce the cost of responding to Washington bureaucrats. Because of the spending reductions in this budget, the CBO has estimated the size of the economy will grow by 1.5 percent per person in 2025. That is going to provide an additional \$1,200 in income to families each year. That is the type of growth Nebraskans care about. With additional money in their pocket, middle-class families can save more and they can reinvest in their children and their future potential. They can buy a home. They can save for their kids' education. They can put something away for their retirement or maybe take a family vacation.

In order to make this budget work, we have to address things that don't work. This week marks the fifth anniversary of ObamaCare. That is a law

that does not work. ObamaCare has been harming our economy and millions of families ever since it was signed into law. I have been contacted by over 19,000 Nebraskans who have expressed to me their concerns and their frustrations with this law.

Passage of this budget provides Congress the chance to send a bill to the President's desk to repeal and replace ObamaCare once and for all.

I would also like to touch on some of the amendments I will be offering and explain how they will help Nebraska's families and Americans all across this Nation. My amendments cover a broad range of topics from national defense to pay equity, education, and regulatory relief. My amendments help families. They help families have more economic security, and they ensure our own national security.

One amendment, which passed yesterday with bipartisan support, will bolster the basic principle of equal pay for equal work. It reinforces and it updates existing law to protect employees from retaliation for seeking information or discussing their salaries. My nonretaliation language closely tracks one of President Obama's April 2014 Executive orders on that very same issue. This is a commonsense approach to a very important issue that impacts women all across our Nation.

I have also worked across the aisle with Senator ANGUS KING from Maine on an incentive-based paid family and medical leave proposal. Our idea is not more one-size-fits-all redtape. It is a tax incentive for employers, particularly employers of hourly and low-wage workers. It offers a limited amount of paid leave so workers can meet the complex family needs they have.

A common complaint I hear from Nebraskans is regulatory overreach, particularly with the EPA. That is why I have offered an amendment that would prohibit the consideration of greenhouse gas emissions under the National Environmental Policy Act. The Obama administration has proposed guidance on how Federal agencies should consider greenhouse gas emissions and climate change impacts while conducting NEPA reviews. This was not the intent of NEPA, and regulations like these could cause significant project delays.

In my home State of Nebraska, NEPA reviews already take far too long, especially when it comes to our highway projects. Time and resources are being wasted on bureaucratic paperwork that adds no meaningful environmental benefit. My amendment would stop these burdens and end the unnecessary process that would delay operations without improving environmental outcomes.

The American people want a government that abides by commonsense principles. It is our responsibility to ensure their money is being responsibly used by this government, by us. Every day that we move forward and that we move our country forward, if we can not add the burdens onto the

American people, that is a good day. This budget is a step in that direction. It provides the right tools to rescue a prosperous America for future generations. We have a responsibility to offer a better future, to offer a better future than the one we were handed. Let's step up to the plate and make that happen.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, a budget is the statement of the principles and priorities of our country. I have heard a lot of my colleagues talk about specific amendments, some of which I support and some of which I oppose. But I think it is important first to talk about the underlying budget and what it stands for as far as the principles and priorities of America. On all counts, a review of the budget that is before us fails middle-income families in America. It doesn't invest in job growth or opportunity or U.S. competitiveness. It doesn't allow for a growing middle class, particularly to narrow the wealth disparities in America. It doesn't end sequestration.

Let me talk for a moment about sequestration. We have had a lot of debate about this on the floor. Sequestration should never take place. It is across-the-board, mindless cuts, no priorities. When we have been subject to sequestration, we have heard from all of our agencies, how they can't plan, how they can't enter into long-term agreements in order to carry out the missions they are responsible to carry out. It does not allow them the flexibility to deal with the current needs. It is wasteful. It costs taxpayers money, and they are not getting the benefits of those dollars. When we take a look at the budget that is before us, it not only would maintain those levels, it actually accelerates some of the levels that would be established through these across-the-board cuts.

Let me just give you the observations from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, which is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization which wrote that the Senate budget "cut[s] funding below the already-damaging sequestration levels in the years after 2016 for non-defense discretionary programs—the part of the budget that funds education, job training, early intervention programs for children, basic scientific and medical research, and transportation, all of which are important to increasing opportunity, raising productivity, and boosting long-term economic growth."

This budget is also not right for our Federal workforce. It does not give them the resources they need to carry out their very important missions to the American people.

I want to underscore the fact that our Federal workers are the best in the world. They carry out their mission more efficiently and effectively than anyone in the world. My colleague Senator DURBIN was talking about the National Institutes of Health. He talked

about the important research being done there, and they need greater tools in order to get the job done. I was meeting with constituents today on Parkinson's who say, look, there are exciting things happening, but we need to fund the research. If we don't fund the research, we are not going to get the answers. We have the capacity. Today at NIH, one out of every six eligible grants goes forward, five out of six do not. A few years ago, it was one out of three. We are moving in the wrong direction. This budget continues moving us in the wrong direction on research. I can mention, I will be talking to the Alzheimer's groups, as Senator DURBIN did. They need to understand. Last week, the cancer advocates were here to find a cure for cancer. They encouraged us to increase this year's budget at NIH by \$2 billion in order to get back to where we were. That will not get us back to where we were, but if we continue with a \$2 billion increase for a few years, we could get back to where we were a few years ago. The budget does not allow us to do it.

This past week, I was visiting AstraZeneca at their biologics lab located in Frederick, MD. They are doing exciting things. I mention that because the research at NIH that will not go forward, as Senator DURBIN pointed out when he was on the floor, not only affects NIH, it affects all the life science companies located in our communities. These are great jobs. This is job growth that is being held down.

At AstraZeneca, they are working on the answers to deal with the diseases based upon our own individual DNA. That is what biologics lets us do. That is being slowed down because of a budget that will not allow NIH to reach its full potential. The budget we have will not give NIH the tools it needs.

I could go to the FDA, which protects our food supply. We have the safest food supply in the world, but they need the resources to carry out their mission.

I could go to the EPA. We all like clean water and clean air. The Chesapeake Bay is critically important to my State, our region, and this country. They depend upon the Environmental Protection Agency having the tools to protect our clean water and clean air. This budget does not allow for that type of resource so that we can reasonably expect the mission to be accomplished.

As I pointed out earlier, it is also costing us economic growth because the partnership with the private sector is not there.

I will point out another part of the environmental risk of this budget, and that is the EPA's popular Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Funds. All of us are fighting for those loan funds because our local governments need them to improve their drinking water capacity, wastewater treatment facility issues. And we have had a majority of Senators say: Let's increase those funds.

In Maryland, those funds improve critical water infrastructure, which in turn helps us protect the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay. A healthy bay is critical to healthy Marylanders and a healthy Maryland economy. Without the support from the State revolving fund, many small communities—and these funds go to small communities—that are working hard to reduce their wastewater discharge in the bay will be without the critical financial resources they need to help protect the bay.

Our large jurisdiction, the city of Baltimore, has used the State Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund that has funded the EPA's Clean Water State Revolving Fund to upgrade the Back River wastewater treatment work. Without adequate resources, they cannot move forward on that.

My point is, take a look at this budget. I understand their numbers, but it doesn't tell us how we spend the money. We can't get the funds we need under the caps that are imposed on the nondefense discretionary spending, including the programs I just mentioned.

This budget ignores tax expenditures. I think Americans would be surprised to learn that we spend more money in the Tax Code than we do in the appropriations bills that are passed every year by Congress. Yet, there is no attempt in this budget to rein in those tax expenditures. There are many loopholes that benefit the wealthiest and give incentives to companies to take their jobs overseas. There is no effort to rein in those types of wasteful tax expenditures. In fact, it has made it worse because it makes room for additional tax breaks for America's wealthiest. That is not what we should be doing. This is at the cost of our most vulnerable. Because we have made more room for those tax breaks, our most vulnerable are at risk.

I will give one example in this budget document, which is Function 600. This category includes items such as SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, school lunch, and child nutrition programs. In the tax bill, this category includes the earned-income tax credit, the low-income part of the child tax credit. The budget allows the expansion of these tax credits to expire in 2017, thereby resulting in tax hikes for tens of millions of working families and their children. The budget would make major cuts in Pell grants, making it harder for low-income and middle-income families to send their children to college.

We had a debate on the floor about the cost of a college education. It is much more difficult with this budget resolution, adding to the staggering debt American families are currently incurring.

The budget fails to provide the resources so we can rebuild America, the infrastructure investments. We talked on both sides of the aisle about the need to increase transportation spending in this country so the United States can be more competitive, create more jobs, and maintain our existing systems.

In Maryland, we have two major transit systems we want to move forward. Anyone who has experienced the traffic in this region knows how congested the traffic is in our part of the country. We have some help on the way with the Purple Line, but the budget that is submitted makes it difficult for these projects to move forward.

I met with the people in regard to the modernization of our ports. The Port of Baltimore is critical to the economy of our State. It is important for U.S. competitiveness. It creates a lot of jobs. The dredging needs of the Port of Baltimore and other ports around our country will be difficult to meet under the budget caps in this budget agreement.

Lastly, I have some initial observations about the overall budget agreement. It is partisan. There was really no effort made to come up with a bipartisan budget. We should have done that. The American people want us to have a bipartisan budget. It will not be the budget I want, it will not be the budget the Democratic Party wants, it will not be the budget the President wants, but it will be a budget that will allow us to move forward, Democrats and Republicans working with the White House, to give the predictability this country needs and provide the investments so important for the growth of our middle class and for job growth.

I heard my colleague talk about the ability of this budget to allow for the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. We just celebrated the fifth anniversary of the Affordable Care Act this past month. The budget allows for the repeal, but it is interesting in that it doesn't repeal the revenues. It takes the revenues we put in place but repeals the benefits. There is a little bit of irony in that. And it will clearly add to the deficit. I will give the reason why, but they use a magic wand, so we don't have to worry about that. Why would the repeal of the Affordable Care Act add to the deficit? Because the Affordable Care Act has helped us reduce the growth rate of health care spending in this country. You don't have to take my word for it; the Congressional Budget Office said that Federal health care spending between 2011 and 2020 will be \$600 billion less than they previously estimated. The Affordable Care Act is bringing down health care costs. It is bringing down the Federal deficit. The Federal deficit through 2025 was adjusted down by \$400 billion since the January projection.

It is saving health care consumers, those of us who buy our insurance and use our health care system—it is now projected that because of the savings between 2010 and 2014, the years of the Affordable Care Act, the average family is saving \$1,800 a year. These are results from the Affordable Care Act that this budget will allow us to repeal.

Look at the number of uninsured. It has been reduced by 16.4 million. We reduced the uninsured rate by 35 percent.

We increased the number of individuals enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP.

The increased rate is at 17.5 percent. In Maryland, that is 300,000 more in those programs.

We improved insurance coverage. We now have much better coverage, such as coverage for preventive care and screening tests.

There are no caps. There are no annual caps or lifetime caps.

Parents can keep their children on their policy until age 26.

Those enrolled in the program get value for their premiums. If not, the insurance company has to rebate the excess charges. Since 2011, \$9 billion has been rebated to health care consumers.

We ended preexisting conditions. If anyone doesn't think that makes a difference, I have a story about two Marylanders, Jack and Akisha. They came to my office last year for help in navigating the Maryland health marketplace. In August of 2014, they were able to apply for insurance through a special enrollment period, but while waiting to hear back about the status of their application, Jack suffered an injury. If that had happened in 1995 or 2005, that might have prevented Jack and Akisha from obtaining the coverage they so badly needed. But thanks to the Affordable Care Act, they got coverage and it covered everything. There was no exclusion.

Coverage is now affordable. Seventy-one percent of the people who got insurance through the Maryland exchange got premium tax credits so they could afford their coverage.

In Maryland, we reduced our uninsured rate from 12.3 percent in 2013 to 7.8 percent in 2015. We all benefit from that. It is not just people who have insurance who benefit. Our premiums cover the cost of people who don't have insurance. We don't have to pay for those people because they now have insurance. There are fewer people using emergency rooms. We are making health care more affordable.

Since we closed the doughnut hole, 8.2 million seniors have saved \$11.5 billion. In Maryland, the average savings for a Medicare beneficiary is \$1,400.

There are no copayments under the Medicare system. The solvency of the Medicare system is stronger today.

I think the most exciting thing about the Affordable Care Act is how we are changing the delivery system in this country. Take a look at it. Deaths as a result of hospital-acquired conditions have been reduced by 17 percent since 2010. These are circumstances such as ulcers, infections, traumas, and falls—that has been reduced dramatically as a result of the Affordable Care Act. Medicare hospital readmissions are down. From 2012 until 2013, there were 150,000 fewer readmissions.

The Affordable Care Act is working. All of these facts make one point abundantly clear: The Affordable Care Act has transformed our country for the better. It has brought quality, affordable care to millions of Americans. It has expanded coverage for young peo-

ple, minorities, and working families. In a span of only 5 years, it has saved seniors billions of dollars on their prescriptions, strengthened our safety net, and recovered a recordbreaking \$19.2 billion in taxpayer funds from those committing health care fraud. The Affordable Care Act will continue to save our country billions of dollars into the future, and the budget we are acting upon would repeal that progress.

There are other aspects of the health care program that are affected by the budget, including the attempt to turn Medicaid into a voucher program—Medicaid, which is for our most vulnerable, our seniors, and their long-term care needs. I hope we would not want to deal with that, but the budget allows that.

The budget just doesn't add up. It creates deficits far beyond what we can do other than to use a magic wand to deal with it. This is not a budget we should be acting upon. A lot of amendments will be offered. I will be offering some amendments. I know some of my colleagues have offered amendments.

First, I will point out that there are a lot of amendments that I hope we will not take up and pass. I urge my colleagues to take a good look at them. I will mention one, although I could mention many that give me a headache.

Senator BARRASSO, my good friend, has introduced a bill concerning the waters of the United States. To me, it sends a signal that Congress is uninterested in providing the regulatory community clarity on the scope of the Clean Water Act. The proponents of this amendment used the vote to justify passing legislation, either through appropriation riders or stand-alone measures, to undermine the process the EPA is undertaking to provide clarification on the scope of the Clean Water Act. I question the stated purpose of the amendment to protect water quality.

We have a better choice. I thank Senator STABENOW for offering what I expect to be a side-by-side amendment. The Stabenow amendment clarifies the agriculture exemptions under the Clean Water Act while maintaining important clean water protections. These two goals are not mutually exclusive.

There are many amendments that have been offered. Senator DURBIN mentioned one that I hope everyone will support on NIH funding and medical research. I am working on amendments dealing with small business. I am the ranking Democrat on the small business committee. We need to help provide more credit to our companies.

The Affordable Care Act advanced oral health. I will be offering some additional amendments on oral health and racial profiling. I hope the Senate will go on record on voter enfranchisement. I hope we will go on record to make it easier for us to reach the consensus we need to pass these important bills.

When the amendment process is over, I must urge my colleagues to reject the

underlying budget. What we need is a bipartisan budget, one that invests in America's future with a growing middle class, keeps jobs in America, and reforms our Tax Code. Working together, we can build a stronger, more prosperous America for all Americans.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

AMENDMENT NO. 796

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up my amendment No. 796.

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 Utah [Mr. HATCH] proposes an amendment numbered 796.

Mr. HATCH. 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 saving Medicare)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. —. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO SAVING MEDICARE.

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 extending the life of the Federal Hospital Insurance Trust Fund, which may include the creation of a point of order against legislation that accelerates the insolvency of such Trust Fund, 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. HATCH. Mr. President, I will take a few minutes to talk about the current debate of the fiscal year 2016 budget. Isn't it wonderful we have a budget that we have brought to the floor—something we haven't had for I think it has been the last 5 years under Democratic leadership. Naturally, there are differences between both sides, but it is great that we are using this budget process and, hopefully, we will pass this budget and go on from there. The House is going to pass theirs, so I appreciate what they are trying to do over there as well.

First and foremost, I wish to thank the chairman of the Budget Committee for all his hard work in putting this product together. He has done great work in producing a budget that I believe most Senators can support, as well as finding a way to navigate some pretty treacherous minefields along the way.

Let's look at just some of what Senator ENZI's budget will accomplish.

The most striking thing about this budget is it balances in the 10-year window, eventually reaching a \$3 billion surplus. This shouldn't be all that surprising, but given our Nation's recent budgetary history, to some, it is. President Obama likes to brag about all of the deficit reduction that has taken place under his administration, yet the President has yet to send a balanced budget to Congress. More often than not, his claims of deficit reduction are measured against an inflation baseline that routinely ignores the fact that almost all of the reduction can be attributed to increased revenues extracted from hard-working American taxpayers with precious little coming in the way of any spending cuts. The Senate Republican budget prepared by the chairman of the Budget Committee would achieve \$4.4 trillion more in deficit reduction than President Obama's most recent budget proposal. This is a statement about fiscal policy, with the recognition that now is the time to get our Nation's fiscal house in order.

The budget accomplishes its objectives in a number of ways, most notably by providing a path toward reining in our unsustainable entitlement programs. Let's keep in mind that when we are talking about our entitlements—Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security in particular, just to mention a few—we are talking about tens of trillions of dollars in unfunded liabilities over the long term. Ever-growing programs have us on a path toward a fiscal crisis that threatens to swallow up our government and take our economy down with it.

The Senate Republican budget would allow us to begin to tackle each of these programs' shortfalls, offsetting much of the deficits, and giving policymakers in Congress and the administration more room to work toward lasting solutions to these problems. With each of these three major programs, the budget would help stave off fiscal calamity and give us a real opportunity for long-term reforms.

Entitlement reform is one of the great causes of our time. If we are serious about bringing down our deficits and debt and ensuring the solvency of our safety net programs, we cannot continue to kick the proverbial can down the road.

I have been disappointed with each of President Obama's budgets, none of which would make a dent in our entitlement programs. This budget before us this week would enable us to begin the process of finding long-term fixes to these programs to ensure Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security still exist in the future for our children and our grandchildren.

In addition to putting our government on a more fiscally sustainable path, this budget would support strong economic growth and job creation. Most notably, it contains a reserve fund designed specifically for this purpose, which includes, among other things, lowering the cost of invest-

ment, reducing the costs to businesses and individuals from the Internal Revenue Code, creating a competitive financial sector, and improving congressional budgetary scorekeeping.

Of course, the budget gives us a path forward on repealing the so-called Affordable Care Act, which continues to be an albatross on our economy and on the well-being of hard-working taxpayers. I don't see how anybody can make out a case that it is not going to take us right into real difficulties, financially. It isn't going to work, either.

The budget specifically includes a repeal of Obama's tax on medical devices. There is one for us. They needed \$30 billion more, so they stuck in a gross sales tax on sales for all medical device companies. That is an idea I am totally opposed to, and the repeal of ObamaCare's tax on medical devices is something I have been pushing for since the law was first enacted. Sooner or later we are going to win on that because it has to be taken care of. This budget does that. An overwhelming majority of Senators—79, to be exact—voted to repeal this tax the last time we debated a budget in this Chamber. So I should not be the only one who is pleased to see this particular provision included in the budget.

The budget also includes provisions specifically to repeal the individual and employer mandates—causes that I have also championed here in the Senate. As I said, Senator ENZI and his fellow members of the committee deserve a lot of credit for the work he and they have done thus far on the budget. I am very pleased to offer my support.

I am aware that given the partisan climate we are working in, this budget has some detractors on the other side of the aisle. As I have listened to their arguments against the budget over the past few days, one thing has become pretty clear: My Democratic friends haven't come up with any new arguments in a long time. Rather than constructive proposals to help address our Nation's fiscal difficulties, our friends on the other side of the aisle are content to simply continue pretending that raising taxes is a fix-all elixir for all of our budgetary problems.

Indeed, they have continued with the tired, debunked talking points, arguing that every problem will be solved if Republicans will simply allow for modest tax hikes on the so-called rich. How many times have we heard that? Yet even though our debt as a share of our economy is at levels not seen since the years surrounding World War II, it is most often the case that when my friends call for more taxes, often under the guise of closing unspecified "loop-holes," they want to immediately spend it, ignoring the pile of debt the current administration has accumulated.

We have been through that over and over and it is time for the American people to wake up and realize what they are doing to us. This budget helps us to understand that better.

I would wager that few reasonable people, if put on the spot, would seriously argue that the American people are undertaxed. Yet if we hear the arguments coming from the other side, that appears to be their position. Yet we are taxed at the highest percentage of the total budget than we have ever been. So we have heard our colleagues lament the lack of tax hikes in Chairman ENZI's budget, and we have already had some votes on amendments to raise taxes. What we have not heard, however, is a plan that would line up all of my colleagues' spending priorities, which are vast and numerous, with enough tax hikes to cover the cost. Until my friends on the other side of the aisle either produce such a plan or acknowledge that there are not enough palatable tax hikes out there to pay for all the spending they support, no one should take their arguments against the budget seriously.

Let's take a look at this chart. By my staff's reckoning, if we look at all the tax hikes my friends on the other side of the aisle put to a vote in the last Congress, including the so-called Buffett rule, taxes on corporate jets, oil and gas, and others, they are on the record for supporting about \$69 billion in specific tax hikes that have not yet been enacted into law. Yet the first Democratic amendment to this budget purported to raise taxes by \$478 billion. That is \$408 billion more than what my friends on the other side have specified in the recent past.

Now what does that mean? The Sanders amendment, which we voted on yesterday and almost all Democrats supported, essentially proposed to raise taxes by over \$400 billion with unspecified tax policy. Perhaps my Democratic friends would care to tell the American people how they propose to raise that \$400 billion in additional revenue, where the tax hikes will come from, and who is going to get hit by them. I will not be holding my breath waiting for an answer.

So the Senate Democrats' revenue raisers well is almost completely dry, as we see on this chart: revenue necessary for spending increases, \$478 billion; the Buffett rule, \$45.151 billion; the oil and gas, \$16 billion; tax compliance they say is \$4.28 billion. If we look at the whole thing, the total offsets are \$69.5 billion. That is a new bill. That is the total offsets they are talking about. It is unbelievable to me.

As I said, there are definitely people who want to criticize this budget, but when it comes to taxes and revenues, the critics don't have a leg to stand on.

I wish to speak for a few moments about an amendment to the budget I plan to offer this week. My amendment addresses the need for comprehensive tax reform. The budget already includes a deficit-neutral reserve fund for tax reform and administration. My amendment would add more detail to this fund to more fully describe what our tax reform efforts should look like. Specifically, it would make clear that

tax reform should be comprehensive and address individual, business, and international provisions of the Tax Code. It would also state that our reform efforts should be aimed at creating a Tax Code that is more efficient, progrowth, fair, and simple. It would put in place other principles for reform as well; namely, permanence, competitiveness, and promoting savings and investment. It would set forth goals to reduce income tax rates while remaining revenue neutral.

As most of my colleagues know, I have been advocating for tax reform for some time now. This amendment would set this effort off on the right path.

I will have other priorities to discuss when it comes to this budget. I look forward to working with my colleagues to get them adopted.

The Senate is doing good work with this budget. It is thankfully working to fulfill its responsibilities. Once again, I wish to thank our distinguished chairman of the Budget Committee for his efforts on the budget. I urge all of my colleagues in the Senate to join me in supporting this product.

MEDICARE SGR FORMULA

Mr. President, I wish to take a few minutes to speak about the ongoing efforts in the House of Representatives to address the Medicare sustainable growth rate, or SGR, formula.

As we all know, the House is poised to pass legislation that would permanently repeal and replace the SGR with an improved payment system that rewards quality, efficiency, and innovation. This bipartisan exercise represents what Congress is truly capable of when Members decide to set aside their differences and work together.

Since SGR first went into effect, Congress has continually acted to prevent its reimbursement cuts from taking place. This has meant numerous and repetitive SGR patches, usually cobbled together at the last minute behind closed doors, much to the tremendous concern of our physicians throughout this country. For years, this cycle has bothered Members of Congress in both parties. That is why over 2 years ago, former Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus and I set out to fix this problem once and for all on the Senate side.

People said it was a lost cause and that our efforts were doomed from the beginning. But in late 2013, we introduced our legislation and got it reported out of the Finance Committee on a voice vote. That bill, which was also drafted with the input and support of the leaders on the relevant committees in the House of Representatives, formed the basis for the legislation the House will be voting on this week. They deserve a lot of credit for this. It has taken a lot of work to get to this point, and we are not there yet, but we are getting close. We just need to finish the job.

The House bill is important for a number of reasons. Yes, it includes the plan to repeal and replace the broken

SGR system. I think everybody around here would like to do that, but there is more to it. The bill also includes a 2-year extension of CHIP, the Child Health Insurance Program that Senator Kennedy and I put through a number of years ago and a temporary extension of key Medicare extenders that need immediate congressional action. This will give the relevant committees time to reform these programs in a responsible manner. It also includes provisions to strengthen Medicare's ability to fight fraud and bolster existing program integrity efforts. Most importantly, the bill includes a downpayment on entitlement reform without any tax hikes.

For years, Members of Congress have been pushing for legislative fixes that will help rein in our unsustainable entitlement programs to ensure they will be around for future generations. I personally have been working very hard in this effort.

In 2013, I put forward five separate reform proposals to Medicare and Medicaid that were designed to be bipartisan in hopes that I could jump-start the legislation on entitlement reform. I shared those proposals with anyone who would listen and even some, including President Obama, who would not.

Today, I am happy to say that two of those ideas—the limitation on the so-called Medigap first-dollar coverage and more robust means testing for Medicare Parts B and D—are included in the House's SGR bill. For years, the idea of bipartisan Medicare reform seemed like a pipedream, particularly since President Obama and allies in Congress demanded that any changes to the program be coupled with significant tax hikes. But here we are, just a few votes away from enacting meaningful Medicare reforms into law.

I commend Speaker BOEHNER and Minority Leader PELOSI for their efforts to reach a bipartisan deal on this legislation. They both deserve a lot of credit, as do those who are voting with them in the House. In addition to the leaders of the relevant committees, their work and their willingness to set aside partisanship for the greater good has been vital to this effort. This has not been easy by any stretch of the imagination.

It was also encouraging to hear today that President Obama says he intends to sign the bill. Think about that. Specifically, he said about the SGR legislation: "I've got my pen ready to sign a good bipartisan bill." I commend him for that. It is my understanding that an official statement of administration policy will be forthcoming. This is super. This is something we ought to all applaud and be ready to do.

I am not here to say the House bill is perfect; of course, it is not. I am aware that some of my colleagues in the Senate are hesitant to support this package and have made public statements indicating as much. Ultimately, I think anyone who is looking for a rea-

son to vote no on the House bill could probably dig through it and find something to oppose. This is true of any bill of this magnitude, especially in a divided government. Although I do have to say that some of the straw man arguments raised in the past week or so against this legislation have been interesting, to say the least.

I know there are Senators who have a vision of what for them would be an ideal solution for SGR, CHIP or any other parts of this legislation. Indeed, I have my own thoughts as to how I would like to improve this bill, but I have been around long enough to know that anyone who waits around for a perfect bill better be prepared to wait for a very long time. We waited long enough for a solution on SGR. It is time to get this done. This is a good bill and it is coming at the right time.

The time to act is now. I can't imagine another bipartisan opportunity like this coming around again any time soon, and I have been informed by Members of the House, that this is the last time they are going to increase SGR and take care of it. So we have to take this and get it through. Anyone who thinks we can continue to put this off to wait around for the perfect bill to come together is fooling themselves. Make no mistake, if we don't do this now, we are looking at many more years of last-minute costly SGR patches, and I have been told the House is through. They have done their job, and it may be a long time before you can get another patch, which means we have to do the job here or every physician in this country is going to hate everybody in this Senate. Well, they shouldn't hate everybody; there are some of us who are pushing hard to get this done.

Let's get this done.

I hope all my colleagues will support the House's SGR package, especially if it is as big a vote as I have been indicating here today. I think it will be a big vote. I think they deserve a lot of credit. It solves some problems we couldn't otherwise solve, and it also makes good changes to some of our entitlement programs that are long overdue.

I want to commend Speaker BOEHNER and Minority Leader PELOSI. I want to commend them for the work they are doing.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

Mr. MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. President.

Over the course of the next few days, we are likely going to debate a series of amendments relative to the ongoing nuclear negotiations with Iran. It is my hope that over the course of this debate, on a handful of amendments that may be offered, that the way in which we conduct this debate and the way in which these votes come out is going to unify us rather than divide us.

A lot has been made over the partisan division that has been created

over the past few weeks with respect to our support for negotiations, despite the fact that we have all said—Republicans and Democrats—that our priority, our hope, is that we can divorce Iran from a nuclear weapons future through negotiation rather than through military action, despite the fact that historically we have all tried to keep close to the idea that politics stops at the water's edge, that we understand the limitations of our ability to substitute ourselves for the administration when negotiating foreign policy with foreign powers. So my hope is that this debate unites us because there is a lot to be united about.

The fact is we all understand the catastrophe that would be wrought if Iran was able to obtain a nuclear weapon. This is a country that has pledged over and over again to wipe Israel, America's sacred ally, off the map. This is a regime that has killed Americans, has sponsored, funded, and organized terrorism all over the world. It is also not just about Iran because we know what would happen in the region. Their Sunni rivals would have no choice but to become nuclear powers themselves.

The stakes are high and we are all united around the common belief that it should be the policy of the United States and the policy of the Senate to make sure Iran never obtains a nuclear weapon, but I just want to make a couple of additional points clear that should underscore the debate we are going to have about that simple, unifying principle.

The first is that these negotiations that are occurring are about the future of Iran's nuclear program. They aren't negotiations about Iran's support for terrorism or Iran's role in fighting ISIS or Iran's other weapons programs. I know this is hard to hear because the resolution of these other pressing issues is instrumental to preserving the security of America and our allies. But let's all be clear that this set of negotiations is about the future of Iran's nuclear program, and for Congress at this point to step in and essentially move the goalposts and say we will only support the outcome of these negotiations if they satisfy another set of concerns that we have—grave concerns about Iran's policy in the region and the world—is disingenuous because we all supported a sanctions regime intended to get them to come to the table and talk about their nuclear program. Frankly, it becomes easier to solve many of these other vital issues if we remove the question of Iran's potential nuclear weapons program from the laundry list of items with which we have great concerns about.

Second, let's talk about the role Congress can play and how, again, that can be unifying if we choose to do it in the right way. If the negotiations fall apart, then we are likely all going to stand together in imposing a new set of sanctions on Iran. I don't think there is disagreement at all within this body

about the fact that within days of those negotiations failing, we will be back here imposing new crippling costs on the Iranian economy. If this agreement succeeds and there is ink put to paper, then this Congress reserves the right—has the right, has the ability—to statutorily stop the implementation of that agreement from going forward, once we are able to review it and look at its parameters, conditions, and elements.

We don't need to vote on sanctions legislation today. We don't need to vote on legislation establishing our ability to review the agreement because we already reserve those powers. We already have the ability to pass sanctions in the event of failure or to vote on approval or disapproval in the event of success. But we aren't in the room negotiating this deal, so if we want to respect our proper place in the constitutional order, then I think it makes sense for us to look at those who are negotiating who have said that a bright, bold, blinking signal of division within the American political system would be detrimental to negotiations.

I want to see the product of these negotiations so I can use my power as a U.S. Senator to vote them up or down, but if we take steps now, if we vote on budget amendments that signal our support to take steps to undermine those negotiations by either precipitously passing sanctions legislation or setting up a process of approval or disapproval before the negotiations take place, then I am limiting and I am decreasing the likelihood that I will see that deal. We have a role to play, but that role comes at the end of these negotiations rather than in the middle.

Lastly, if we are serious that the policy of the United States is to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, then we have to be serious about what the consequences of the failure of negotiations truly are. It is disingenuous to suggest that there are credible and likely options other than military action should these negotiations fail, especially if the U.S. Congress takes steps that allow the world community to blame us for the failure of those negotiations. Why is that? Well, because the easy thing to do would be to simply reinstate global sanctions if the negotiations fall apart, try to squeeze Iran even more tightly. But that is unlikely to happen if it is the United States that gets blamed for the failure of the negotiations. Why? Because our partners in those sanctions will not join us. They will walk away and either lift the sanctions or look to cut their own deals with Iran.

It is easy to say we will just put the sanctions back in place, but it is impossible, at best very difficult, to do if we are doing that unilaterally. Let's be honest about what military action really means. It means setting back Iran's nuclear program by 3 to 5 years, but it also means setting off a catastrophic series of events in the region

that will do great harm to our allies, great harm to U.S. security interests, dragging us into a conflict that in the end will not serve U.S. national security interests, especially given the fact that it will only temporarily halt Iranian nuclear ambitions.

Now I still say we should keep on the table the potential of military action, but we should just be honest about the fact that if we take steps to undermine these negotiations today, if we, the U.S. Congress are blamed for these negotiations falling apart, then it becomes virtually impossible to put these sanctions back together; thus, giving us only one option, a military option, one that has grave and consequential aftershocks for the United States and for our allies.

I simply come down to the floor knowing we are going to set forth in motion a series of amendments, many of them surrounding the question of Iran's nuclear program, tomorrow. I am hopeful the result of those will be to signal this Congress's unity, a unity that we have expressed many times over that we will not allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon and that a negotiated settlement is the preferable way to do that, reserving for ourselves all of the inherent powers of this body to pass sanctions if they fail, to approve or disapprove the deal if the negotiations succeed. The best way to disabuse Iran of the notion that they can ever obtain a nuclear weapon is in the next 48 hours for this Congress to stand united—united in our position to guarantee a nonnuclear weapons future for Iran.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

AMENDMENT NO. 352

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and call up Roberts amendment No. 352.

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

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kansas [Mr. ROBERTS], for himself and Mr. FLAKE, proposes an amendment numbered 352.

Mr. ROBERTS. 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 Federal employee performance awards)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO FEDERAL EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AWARDS.

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 reform of Federal employee performance award and bonus programs 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. ROBERTS. Mr. President, to get right to the subject, this amendment would restrict Federal Government employees from receiving bonuses when they are delinquent in paying their Federal taxes.

During this time of budgetary constraint, Federal agencies are looking for cost savings in order to avoid staff furloughs and cuts to important Federal programs. Given these constraints, the government should not spend scarce taxpayer dollars by giving bonuses to Federal employees unwilling—let me underscore “unwilling”—to pay their tax bills.

We just learned this week that, according to the Internal Revenue Service, as of September 2014, 304,000 Federal employees owe \$3.5 billion in Federal taxes. That is an increase of over \$200 million in delinquent taxes owed by Federal employees from last year. While most Federal employees play by the rules—the great majority—it is incredible that the delinquent tax debt of Federal employees has reached this level.

Let's look at one agency, everybody's favorite agency, the Internal Revenue Service. Last year the Treasury Department's Inspector General for Tax Administration issued a report on the Internal Revenue Service bonuses awarded to personnel who have violated the tax laws or who have been subject to serious infractions of employee policy.

According to the Inspector General, close to \$3 million was awarded to staff with violations on their records, with about half of that amount going to people who have violated the Tax Code. Other personnel at the IRS received cash bonuses or other awards despite being cited for drug use, making violent threats, fraudulently claiming unemployment benefits, and misusing government credit cards.

In fact, the report indicates that close to 70 percent of the IRS personnel received some sort of personal reward. That is incredible. That is remarkable when you think about the sorts of problems your average taxpayer has in getting help from this agency. Under my amendment, seriously delinquent—let me underscore that again—seriously delinquent people who will not pay their back taxes, Federal employees, regardless of agency, would be ineligible to receive a bonus or cash award. However, if you make even the most minimal effort to pay your debt or you are suffering a hardship, the amendment would not block a bonus from being made. Awarding personnel bonuses to employees who have continued tax liabilities today is unconscionable and should be stopped. I look forward to support for this sensible restriction on awards given to employees who owe the Federal Government.

AMENDMENT NO. 462

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up Roberts amendment No. 462.

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

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kansas [Mr. ROBERTS] proposes an amendment numbered 462.

Mr. ROBERTS. 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 over-the-counter medications)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND TO RESTORE ACCESS TO MEDICATION.

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 over-the-counter medications, 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. ROBERTS. Mr. President, this amendment would repeal ObamaCare's medicine cabinet tax. The health care law now prohibits individuals from using funds in their medical savings accounts, such as an FSA or an HSA, to purchase over-the-counter medications without a prescription. Fifty million Americans participate in FSAs and other health savings accounts. These accounts allow individuals to set aside their own money each year on a pretax basis to pay for health care expenses such as copayments and prescriptions, or over-the-counter medications.

Rather than promoting cost effectiveness and accessibility, this provision instead directs participants to potentially more costly, less convenient, more time-consuming alternatives. Further, it injects unnecessary confusion and complexity into a system that was previously straightforward and easy for consumers to utilize. This provision of ObamaCare restricts Americans' choice and flexibility in how they manage their health care expenses and adds yet another burden on our physicians. It should be repealed. Folks should be allowed to spend the funds in these accounts as they see fit.

I hope for support for these two amendments when we begin the proceedings.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

AMENDMENT NO. 515

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up my amendment No. 515.

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

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Louisiana [Mr. VITTER], for himself, Mr. CRUZ, and Mr. INHOFE, proposes an amendment numbered 515.

Mr. VITTER. 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 spending-neutral reserve fund relating to requiring the Federal Government to allow states to opt out of Common Core without penalty)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . SPENDING-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO REQUIRING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO ALLOW STATES TO OPT OUT OF COMMON CORE WITHOUT PENALTY.

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 prohibiting the Federal Government from mandating, incentivizing, or coercing States to adopt the Common Core State Standards or any other specific academic standards, instructional content, curricula, assessments, or programs of instruction and allowing States to opt out of the Common Core State Standards without penalty, 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. VITTER. Mr. President, this amendment No. 515 is in response to a clear and a growing and a dangerous trend, specifically for the Department of Education to inappropriately intervene and use carrots and sticks, and weapons sometimes, to intervene in State education policy to promote certain agendas over the rights of the States.

This began in earnest in 2010 when the U.S. Department of Education began offering funding through Race to the Top grants to States participating in a State consortium working toward a “common set of K–12 standards.” Over time, it became increasingly clear that this was all about mandating common core and forcing it on States.

In 2011, the Department of Education took the next step. It offered waivers to No Child Left Behind in exchange for the adoption of “college- and career-ready standards in reading/language arts and mathematics and aligned assessments.” Again, this is clearly all about common core.

Now, during a time when States are facing increasing budget shortfalls and an inability to meet the progress requirements outlined in No Child Left Behind, funding and waivers were a very enticing option. They were a set of carrots and sticks that had an impact. This heavyhanded coercion of

States to adopt specific standards and assessments is unprecedented and it is something we should all be against. It goes against the tradition of State and local control of public education.

My amendment specifically would create a spending-neutral reserve fund to rightly prohibit the Federal Government from taking similar actions to mandate, incent, or coerce States to adopt the common core State standards or any specific set of standards, instructional content, curriculum, assessments, or programs of instruction.

My amendment would also allow States who have already adopted certain standards to opt out without fear of the Federal Government pulling back those incentives or grants or waivers. I firmly believe these decisions should be in State and local hands. This is really crossing the line into the Federal Government using coercive tactics in that regard. So I urge all of my colleagues to support this amendment.

AMENDMENT NO. 811

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up my amendment No. 811.

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

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Louisiana [Mr. VITTER] proposes an amendment numbered 811.

Mr. VITTER. 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 ending Washington's illegal exemption from Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO ENDING WASHINGTON'S ILLEGAL EXEMPTION FROM THE PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT.

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 developing methods that ensure that all Members of Congress, the President, the Vice President, and all political appointees of the Administration procure their health insurance on the individual exchange in the same way as Americans at the same income level, 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. VITTER. Mr. President, this separate amendment is about a different but equally important topic. It restores our pledge to America that Congress as well as the President and the Vice President and their political appointees live under the same rules

Washington passes on America, specifically with regard to ObamaCare.

This amendment is my "no exemptions for Washington from ObamaCare" amendment. It says that Members of Congress, the President, the Vice President, their political appointees go to the exchange for their health care just like every other American does who is going to the exchange. No special rules, no special exemptions, no special subsidies. We live by the law going to the exchange just like all Americans.

This amendment specifically does not apply to congressional staff. It is about Members of Congress, the President, the Vice President, their political appointees. I think it should be the first rule of American democracy that what Washington passes on America, it lives with itself. Same way, same rules, no special exemptions, no special subsidies, no special rules.

We specifically passed that with regard to ObamaCare and the exchanges when we passed a Senate floor amendment in this regard. Unfortunately, after the passage of ObamaCare, and when Washington folks understood what that language meant, there was a furious attempt to get out from under that language. That ended up resulting in a special Executive order and OPM rule promulgated by President Obama that completely frustrates the clear language and intent of that Senate floor amendment.

This budget amendment would say: No, we are going to live by what we said, and we are going to apply to ourselves ObamaCare and getting our health insurance on the exchanges, just as we would have that operate with regard to all other Americans.

I urge support for this amendment as well.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I can utilize a felt pen during my presentation.

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

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, today I rise to discuss the budget blueprint we are debating here in this Chamber and that we will be voting on here on the floor of the Senate shortly. In evaluating this budget, this budget produced by my Republican colleagues, I am asking the question: Is this a budget designed to work for working Americans? That is just a simple core question.

If your vision of America is that you want families to thrive, then you are going to design a budget for those working families to thrive. So that is a key question as we discuss this blueprint. It is certainly clear that a budget designed to work for working Americans means jobs. It means quality, affordable education. It means retirement security. It means financial fairness for consumers. It means fixing a Tax Code that is stuffed full of favors for the wealthy and well-connected and instead directing resources to establish a foundation for working families to do

well and provide us all the foundation for raising their children so they can get a good start in life.

I thought we should go through and evaluate how this budget performs on basic items related to the success of working families. We have here a little scorecard so we can keep track. The middle-class budget report card, Senate GOP budget. How does it do?

Well, let's start at looking at investment in infrastructure. Europe is spending 5 percent of its gross domestic product on infrastructure. China is spending 10 percent. In America, only 2 percent. We are vastly underbuilding our infrastructure, which means we are failing to create good-paying jobs now, which is a foundation for the success of working families, and we are imperiling the success of our future economy by failing to make this investment.

Indeed, we have a huge infrastructure deficit. There is no effort to address this deficit in this budget. Oh, the budget does have symbolic language that recognizes theoretically the need to invest in infrastructure but does not direct resources to that effect. So in committee and on the floor, we have offered amendments to say: Let's make a real investment in this effort, not just happy words.

Well, in committee, it was rejected on a party-line vote, 10 to 12. Then yesterday on the floor Senator SANDERS offered an amendment that would take and direct a substantial investment to taking—closing egregious tax loopholes—and directing those resources to building the infrastructure in America. It would create 9 million jobs across this country. And what happened? The Republicans resoundingly rejected it.

Why is that the case? Why do they not see the need to invest in infrastructure in America—voting, as we have, 45 Democrats saying yes, let's invest in infrastructure, let's create jobs, and 52 of my colleagues across the aisle saying, No way, no how, we are not going to do the important work to address the deficit in infrastructure?

So, unfortunately, this budget gets an F when it comes to infrastructure.

Surely, as we turn to education, we will find this budget does a somewhat better job. We all understand that early childhood education has an incredible return, so surely this budget invests in Head Start to give our children of challenged families the ability to start on a path to success. We know we have a world knowledge economy in which education is essential. So, surely, this budget provides for more eligible children to participate in the Head Start Program.

But if that was your assumption, you will be sorely disappointed, because this budget makes cuts to Head Start that would kick 110,000 children off the program over a 10-year period. It is direct damage to the success of 110,000 children, and that is before you combine it with sequestration cuts. At that point the estimate is it would cut 620,000 American children out of Head

Start over this coming decade. That is just wrong.

Let's turn to higher education. One of the biggest stresses for American families is the galloping inflation in tuition and the declining ability of Pell grants to cover a small portion of that tuition for our most financially challenged families. So, surely, this budget invests in Pell grants. I certainly would have expected it to. But, indeed, we find it cuts \$101 billion over 10 years out of Pell grants. In other words, this budget is designed to continue to close the doors of opportunity for our students from financially challenged families across this country.

I believe in opportunity. I believe in the American dream. But this budget, the Republican budget, believes in closing the doors on opportunity in this Nation. That is just wrong.

Well, Pell grants aren't the only component of higher education that helps make college affordable. Another piece is low-interest loans. Most families are going to have to borrow to help finance higher education. In fact, of those students who have college debt, the average debt today, coming out of college, is about \$26,000. That is the average. Many of our children have debts at \$50,000 or \$75,000 or \$100,000 coming out of a 4-year college. That kind of feels like the size of a home mortgage as a millstone around their neck. So surely this budget lowers interest rates on our students' loans so they can refinance their loans to take advantage of the current low interest rates. Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing to do, to create opportunity?

We had a vote on this floor for an amendment to do just that, to enable our students to refinance, to take advantage of the current lower interest rates—and my Republican colleagues defeated that amendment 53 to 46.

Not only that, but their budget has a provision that gets rid of the no-interest period when a student on a Stafford loan is in college and gets rid of the 6-month grace period—no-interest rate period—when a student graduates from college. This is estimated, for a student who is starting college in 2015, to increase the cost of their interest payments by about \$5,000 to \$7,000 as they repay their loan.

So, Head Start, savaged in this budget—just simply wrong. Pell grants, savaged in this budget—just simply wrong. Interest accruing increased—and that is just wrong.

It is clear there is no commitment to education in this budget, the foundation for opportunity. This budget, no question about it, that is an F on education.

Let's turn to another area. Hopefully we can get a better grade. Food security. Food security for American families. A lot of families are having a very tough time putting food on the table. But what do we find? We find this budget has a \$660 billion reduction over 10 years in programs that support low-income Americans, explicitly including

the SNAP program—the SNAP program, the name we now use for food stamps.

There is a quote attributed to Queen Marie Antoinette, who was the wife of Louis XVI. During the French Revolution, she was reported to have said, when told that the citizens were protesting the high price of bread because they were spending 50 percent of their income just on bread: "Let them eat cake."

That has become a symbol of a ruler completely out of touch with the challenges faced by ordinary citizens.

So what do we have in this budget? We have in this budget provisions that say to hungry children across America, to children of challenged families across America: Let them go hungry.

So here, too, only one grade is earned by this budget in food security, and that is an F for failing our children on food.

Let's turn from our children to our seniors on Medicare, for example. This budget recreates the Medicare doughnut hole. This is the doughnut hole seniors fall into when they get no coverage to help them buy drugs after an initial period in which they got some subsidies, and then they fall off a cliff into the doughnut hole.

Well, 53,000 seniors would pay more for their drugs in just my State next year. That is about 5 million seniors across the course of this country who are now going to be ensnared in this doughnut hole.

Moreover, this budget cuts \$430 billion out of Medicare. So whether it is getting rid of key provisions designed to help our seniors, such as eliminating the doughnut hole or simply solid investment in our health care program for seniors, this budget too gets a failing grade. That is an F for failing our seniors on Medicare.

How about consumer protection? We have made a lot of progress in consumer protection. We used to have consumer protection split between a whole series of agencies. Of course, the key agency in all of it was the Federal Reserve. The Federal Reserve has monetary personnel in the penthouse—that was really what they were paying most attention to—and folks kept coming to the Federal Reserve and saying: Hey, there are these new predatory home mortgages that are going to do enormous damage to families across the country, and the Federal Reserve had no response to this. They did not act. In fact, they had consumer protection locked in the basement of the Federal Reserve, and they threw away the key. They were simply totally uninterested.

So back in 2009 and 2010, we said: Let's consolidate these programs that have responsibility for consumer protection to one agency, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and let's make sure this agency has the funding, like every other financial regulator, so that it can't be essentially starved to death by those legislators who, on behalf of powerful special interests, don't

believe in consumer protection. The CFPB, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, has returned \$5 billion back to consumers who were cheated, and it has prevented billions more from being stripped away through other predatory practices.

So you would think that all 100 Members of this Senate would stand and say: We want a budget that strengthens the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau because it does so much that is right in America in ending cheating, ending predatory practices against working Americans.

But, no, what we have in this budget is an effort to eliminate the financial independence of the CFPB. If you can think about it as oxygen to a scuba diver—folks want to be able to step on that air hose or constrict that air hose, starve that agency to death. So this budget gets an F on consumer protection.

Well, certainly, since this budget does so much to cut food, cut Head Start, cut Pell grants, increase interest rates, fails to invest in infrastructure, and it does so much damage to our seniors on Medicare, certainly it is asking for some sacrifice from our richest Americans, some bit of sacrifice from the corporate fat cats who are getting egregious tax loophole benefits.

In particular, one loophole that I think drives every American citizen nuts is a loophole that subsidizes the shipment of our jobs overseas. Can't we all agree to shut down that loophole?

Well, you would think so. But we had a vote on shutting down this loophole in committee, and a party-line vote said: No, we are going to leave this loophole in place.

So in terms of protecting American jobs by shutting down a loophole that funds our adversaries overseas or our competitors overseas, this budget gets an F.

How about tax fairness for the middle class? I have heard a lot of happy words about fighting for the middle class. Is there something in this budget that proceeds to say the best off are going to pay their fair share so that middle-class Americans get a better break?

In 1995, the richest Americans paid about 30 percent of their adjusted gross income in taxes. But by 2012, that rate had dropped to 17 percent.

So does this budget rectify that? Does this budget say folks at the top end should pay their fair share? No, it doesn't, not one slim dime extracted on behalf of fairness from the best off in our society.

So what we have here, attack the middle class, no tax fairness, so there is an F grade on tax fairness.

Attack the middle class in every possible way. Attack the children, attack food security, fail on infrastructure, fail on consumer protection, and proceed to protect all the egregious provisions for the very best off in our society.

It is unfortunate to see such a dramatically terrible budget put before

this body. I think the American citizens can only be deeply disappointed to see a budget put forward intended to accelerate and increase inequality in our Nation, destroy our jobs, ship them overseas, underfund food security, failure on investment for our infrastructure, a failing grade all around.

We can do much better.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I am sure the Senator from Oregon is right. We can do much better. We sure as hell didn't do any better for the last 6 years.

SEQUESTRATION

Mr. President, I wish to talk for a few minutes—and I have a couple of my colleagues waiting, so I won't take as long as perhaps I would—about sequestration.

Sequestration was a poison pill that originally was designed to force Republicans and Democrats to sit down together and reach a bargain that would entail increasing some revenues and also budget cuts. And the looming axe that would fall out there was sequestration, which was believed at the time that because sequestration was so terrible it would force the two parties together to come to an agreement. Well, we know they never did, and we know now, ever since 2011, we have been living with sequestration.

While we have been living with sequestration, the world has turned into a place of enormous turmoil and threats to the security of our Nation, which has escalated dramatically in those intervening years. At some point, I would like to come to the floor, maybe later, showing the world in 2011 and the world in 2015.

Thanks to a feckless foreign policy, leading from behind and abandoning our allies, this administration has caused the world to be in more turmoil and not in just the opinion of this Senator. Every witness before our Committee on Armed Services has agreed on one thing. These witnesses have been Madeleine Albright, Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, Brent Scowcroft, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and I could go on and on. We have had the smartest minds in America before our committee and every one of them has said exactly the same thing, no matter whether they served under Republican or Democratic administrations, they said they have never seen the world in more turmoil.

So sequestration, if there ever was a reason for it, is long gone. The fact is not only are we not going to be able to defend this Nation, but we are going to put American lives at risk. That is not the opinion of this Senator from Arizona, it is the opinion of every one of our service leaders who have, again, been before our committee.

So now we are not repealing sequestration, but we have this—and it is a gimmick—overseas contingency operations, which was not designed for this but is now a way of increasing our

spending on defense. I would much rather have had us face the issues square head-on and increase our defense spending in the normal way in the budgetary process. That didn't happen. So now as we begin our votes on the budget, I am faced with two choices, and this body is faced with two choices: either the increases in overseas contingency operations or go back to sequestration. Those numbers are not acceptable.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to go ahead and pass this budget and give our military what they need. In fact, they need more than what is in the budget before us, but at least it is some ability to address the challenges to our Nation.

I just want to mention we are not only talking about the defense of our Nation, we are talking about the lives of the men and women who are serving in the military. In the view of our military commanders, their lives are being put at risk. I don't know how anyone in this body, no matter how they feel about defense, could vote in a way that would put the lives of the men and women serving in the military at greater risk. I don't know how anyone would do that.

All four service chiefs agreed, during questioning from Senator KING of Maine, that "American lives are being put at risk." The Secretary of Defense testified before the committee, "Sequestration threatens our military's readiness, the size of our warfighting forces, the capabilities of our air-naval fleets, and ultimately the lives of our men and women in uniform."

The National Defense Panel, put together with some of the brightest minds in America, said unless sequestration is reversed, "the United States could find itself in a position where it must either abandon an important national interest or enter a conflict for which it is not fully prepared."

I don't know anybody who is more respected than Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft by all, and he said:

Absolutely, I would [repeal sequestration]. It is a terrible way to determine force structure strategy, or anything like it. It's undermining our ability to do what we need to do to retain . . . alert for the contingencies of the world.

General James Mattis: "No foe in the field can [wreak] such havoc on our security that mindless sequestration is achieving."

General Jack Keane: "Sequestration is not only irresponsible, in the face of emerging challenges, it is downright reckless."

GEN Ray Odierno said the following: Sequestration is the single greatest barrier to the effectiveness of our Armed Forces—to its Training, Readiness, and Modernization. I assure you that ending sequestration is the most prudent measure we can take for ensuring that our military is able to meet the demands of global security now and in the future.

General Odierno went on to say:

The choices we must make to meet sequestration-level funding are forcing us to reduce

our Army to a size and with limited capabilities that I am not comfortable with. If we follow this path to its end, we will find a hollow Army.

If we do not have the resources to train and equip the force, our Soldiers, our young men and women, are the ones who will pay the price, potentially with their lives.

That is from the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army. The young men and women are the ones who will pay the price, potentially with their lives.

Gen. Mark Welsh, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, said: "The vulnerabilities sequestration introduces into our force will encourage our adversaries, worry our allies, limit the number of concurrent operations we can conduct, and increase risk to the men and women who fight America's next war."

Secretary of State George Shultz, one of the most revered men in America, had this to say: "Sequestration seems to me like legislative insanity."

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright: "I'm very concerned about sequestration and the deep cuts that have been taken . . . I think it jeopardizes America's military reach."

The Director of National Intelligence said:

. . . just based on my best professional judgment and having served in this business for a long time I'm very concerned about it. And if we revert to sequestration in 2016, the damage to the intelligence community will be quite profound.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

In an age when we are less certain about what will happen next, but quite certain it will happen more quickly, we will be further away and less ready than we need to be. Simply stated, sequestration will result in a dramatic change in how we protect our nation and how we promote our national interests.

Lt. Gen. John Kelly, the commander of U.S. Southern Command:

If sequestration returns in FY16, our ability to support national security objectives, including conducting many of our essential missions, will be significantly undermined.

. . . I would tell you in Latin America, in Southern Command, [sequestration] will be, just simply put, a catastrophe. It will essentially put me out of business.

The commander of our Southern Command, who is responsible for our Southern Hemisphere, goes on to say:

If sequestrations happen, I will be down to maybe one Coast Guard, maybe two Coast Guard cutters. That means of the 158 [metric] tons [of cocaine] I would expect to get this year, I probably if I'm lucky will get 20 tons.

Admiral William Gortney, Commander of the Northern Command: "Sequestration targets both current and future readiness and risks a hollow force undertrained and underprepared for today's emerging threats."

My friends, I will come to the floor one more time with a map—a map of the Middle East and a map of other parts of the world where the United States is under almost unprecedented threat.

We are faced with the prospect of threats to the United States of America and the men and women who are

servicing it in uniform. We are moving forward with OCO, which is very unsatisfactory but a way through this at least for 1 year. I would point out this is only for 1 year and that the ability of the Defense Department to plan is in great jeopardy. This makes it incredibly difficult, but we are where we are.

I understand, as do my friends on both sides of the aisle, that we need to increase defense spending and that there are a lot of needs in the country. All of them are serious and compelling, but I don't know anything more compelling right now than what our military leaders have told us, which is that we are putting the lives of the men and women serving in uniform at risk.

So I say to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, as dire as the deficit is, and it is a challenge to the future of our children as well, right now we are facing a far greater risk. I hope we can pass this budget with the OCO in it and then sit down and seriously work to repeal this Damocles sword called sequestration.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the quotes I read from earlier.

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

ALL SERVICE CHIEFS (1/28/15)

Each of the four service chiefs agreed during questioning from Senator King (I-ME) that "American lives are being put at risk" by sequestration.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ASH CARTER (3/4/15)

"Sequestration threatens our military's readiness, the size of our warfighting forces, the capabilities of our air-naval fleets, and ultimately the lives of our men and women in uniform."

NATIONAL DEFENSE PANEL (2014)

"The defense budget cuts mandated by the Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011, coupled with the additional cuts and constraints on defense management under the law's sequestration provision, constitute a serious strategic misstep on the part of the United States. Not only have they caused significant investment shortfalls in U.S. military readiness and both present and future capabilities, they have prompted our current and potential allies and adversaries to question our commitment and resolve. Unless reversed, these shortfalls will lead to a high risk force in the near future."

Unless sequestration is reversed, "the United States could find itself in a position where it must either abandon an important national interest or enter a conflict for which it is not fully prepared."

BRENT SCOWCROFT (1/21/15)

"Absolutely, I would [repeal sequestration]. It is a terrible way to determine force structure strategy, or anything like it. It is undermining our ability to do what we need to do to retain . . . alert for the contingencies of the world."

GENERAL JAMES MATTIS (1/27/15)

"No foe in the field can [wreak] such havoc on our security that mindless sequestration is achieving."

GENERAL JACK KEANE (1/27/15)

"Sequestration, is not only irresponsible, in the face of emerging challenges, it is downright reckless."

GENERAL RAY ODIERNO (1/28/15)

"Sequestration is the single greatest barrier to the effectiveness of our Armed

Forces—to its Training, Readiness, and Modernization. I assure you that ending sequestration is the most prudent measure we can take for ensuring that our military is able to meet the demands of global security now and in the future."

"Should sequestration or sequester funding levels return in FY16, the Army will have to further limit the readiness of forces around the world while slashing Army modernization, extending and postponing maintenance cycles, and standing by as the conditions of our facilities deteriorate."

"With an increase in threats around the world that have rendered some of our planning assumptions optimistic, we must acknowledge that the FY16 post-sequestration spending cap, which was set almost four years ago, has not kept pace or accounted for an increasingly complex and dangerous world . . . With the velocity of instability increasing around the world . . . now is not the time to be dramatically reducing capability and capacity."

"If we are forced to take further endstrength reductions beyond the planned levels in the President's budget due to sequestration, our flexibility deteriorates, as does our ability to react to strategic surprise. We are witnessing firsthand mistaken assumptions about the number, duration, location, and size of future conflicts and the need to conduct post-stability operations. These miscalculations translate directly into increased military risk."

"A return to sequestration-level funding would require the Army to size and equip the force based on what we can afford, not what we need, increasing the risk that when called to deploy, we will either not have enough Soldiers or will send Soldiers that are not properly trained and equipped."

"The choices we must make to meet sequestration-level funding are forcing us to reduce our Army to a size and with limited capabilities that I am not comfortable with. If we follow this path to its end, we will find a hollow Army."

"If we do not have the resources to train and equip the force, our Soldiers, our young men and women, are the ones who will pay the price, potentially with their lives."

ADMIRAL JONATHAN GREENERT (1/28/15)

"A return to sequestration in FY 2016 would necessitate a revisit and revision of the DSG. Required cuts will force us to further delay critical warfighting capabilities, reduce readiness of forces needed for contingency response, forego or stretch procurement of ships and submarines, and further downsize weapons capacity."

"We will be compelled to go to fewer places, and do fewer things. Most importantly, when facing major contingencies, our ability to fight and win will neither be quick nor decisive."

GENERAL MARK WELSH (1/28/15)

"A return to sequestered levels of funding in FY16 will reverse any progress we made in addressing our infrastructure and facility maintenance and exacerbate our problems with readiness and modernization. It will also make it impossible for us to meet the operational requirements of the Defense Strategic Guidance."

"Our overall readiness as a force is already significantly impacted by the size and age of our current aircraft fleet. It is now the smallest and oldest in the history of our service. It is also the least ready—less than half of our combat coded units are fully combat capable. As Secretary James and I testified a year ago, a return to sequestered levels of funding in FY16 will multiply the number of very tough choices we will be forced to make in our FY16 POM recommendations. All of them impact our ability to do the jobs

the Nation, and the joint force, expect of us."

"We will not have sufficient force structure to meet the fundamental requirement to simultaneously Defeat an adversary, Deny a second adversary, and Defend the Homeland."

"The vulnerabilities sequestration introduces into our force will encourage our adversaries, worry our allies, limit the number of concurrent operations we can conduct, and increase risk to the men and women who fight America's next war."

GENERAL JOSEPH DUNFORD (1/28/15)

"In order to maintain the readiness of our forward deployed forces, we've assumed risk in our home station readiness, modernization, infrastructure sustainment, and quality of life programs. As a result, approximately half of our non-deployed units, those who provide the bench to respond to the unexpected, are suffering personnel, equipment and training shortfalls. In a major conflict, those shortfalls will result in a delayed response and/or additional casualties. We're investing in modernization at an historically low level."

"BCA funding levels with sequester rules will preclude the Marine Corps from meeting the requirements of the Defense Strategic Guidance. Sequester will exacerbate the challenges we have today. It will also result in a Marine Corps with fewer active duty battalions and squadrons than would be required for a single major contingency. Perhaps disconcerting, it will result in fewer Marines and sailors being forward deployed in a position to immediately respond to crises involving our diplomatic posts, American citizens or interest overseas."

"The foundation of the all-volunteer force . . . is trust. Sequestration will erode the trust that our young men and women in uniform, civil servants and families have in their leadership. And the cost of losing that trust is incalculable."

SECRETARY OF STATE GEORGE SHULTZ (1/29/15)

"Sequestration seems to me like legislative insanity."

SECRETARY OF STATE MADELEINE ALBRIGHT (1/29/15)

"I'm very concerned about sequestration and the deep cuts that have been taken. . . I do think it jeopardizes America's military reach."

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE JAMES CLAPPER (2/26/15)

In the case of the Intelligence Community, the impacts "are more insidious in that predicting when we have a lesser capability will eventuate in a failure is hard to quantify. But just based on my best professional judgment and having served in this business for a long time I'm very concerned about it. And if we revert to sequestration in 2016, the damage to the intelligence community will be quite profound."

ASH CARTER (3/4/15)

"The prospect of sequestration's serious damage to our national security and economy is tragically not a result of an economic emergency or recession. It is not because these budget cuts are a mathematical solution to the nation's overall fiscal challenge—they are not. It is not because paths of curbing nondiscretionary spending and reforming our tax system have been explored and exhausted—they have not. It is not due to a breakthrough in military technology or a new strategic insight that somehow makes continued defense spending unnecessary—there has been no such silver bullet. And it is not because the world has suddenly become more peaceful—for it is abundantly clear that it has not. Instead, sequestration

is purely the collateral damage of political gridlock. And friends and potential enemies around the world are watching.”

“Under sequestration, our military—and our national security—would have to take on irresponsible and unnecessary risk—risk that previous Administrations and Congressional leaders have wisely chosen to avoid.”

“Allowing sequestration to return would deprive our troops of what they need to accomplish their missions.”

“All who bemoan unnecessary Pentagon program delays and the associated cost overruns should know that sequestration will only make these problems worse.”

MARTIN DEMPSEY (3/4/15)

“The PB16 budget. . . is what we need to remain at the lower ragged edge of manageable risk in our ability to execute the defense strategy. However, we have no slack, no margin left for error or strategic surprise.”

“Funding lower than PB16, especially if sequestration-level cuts return next year, combined with a lack of flexibility to make the reforms we need, will render the overall risk to our defense strategy unmanageable. In other words, our Nation’s current defense strategy will no longer be viable.”

“In an age when we are less certain about what will happen next, but quite certain that it will happen more quickly, we will be further away and less ready than we need to be. Simply stated, sequestration will result in a dramatic change in how we protect our nation and how we promote our national interests.”

GENERAL JOHN KELLY, COMMANDER, U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND (3/12/15)

“If sequestration returns in FY16, our ability to support national security objectives, including conducting many of our essential missions, will be significantly undermined.”

“Limited tactical ISR allocation and national technical focus is impairing virtually every one of our assigned missions and exposing the southern approaches to the United States to significant risk. Sequestration will compound this challenge. . . [S]equestration will likely eviscerate our already limited ISR capacity.”

“Its potential return in FY16 would jeopardize our progress; undermine our credibility and [Latin America’s] trust in our commitments; and present renewed hardships for our civilian and military workforce.”

“I would tell you in Latin America, in Southern Command, [sequestration] will be, just simply put, a catastrophe. It will essentially put me out of business.”

“If sequestrations happen, I will be down to maybe one Coast Guard, maybe two Coast Guard cutters. That means of the 158 [metric] tons [of cocaine] I would expect to get this year, I probably if I’m lucky will get 20 tons.”

ADMIRAL WILLIAM GORTNEY, COMMANDER, NORTHERN COMMAND, (3/12/15)

“Sequestration targets both current and future readiness and risks a hollow force undertrained and underprepared for today’s emerging threats. The across-the-board cuts required to meet sequestration spending levels beginning again in FY 2016 mean critical capabilities USNORTHCOM and NORAD depend on to accomplish our missions could be in jeopardy, even as our potential adversaries remain persistent and innovative.”

ADMIRAL CECIL HANEY, COMMANDER, U.S. STRATEGIC COMMAND, (3/19/15)

“The President’s FY16 Budget supports my mission requirements, but there is no margin to absorb risk. Any cuts to that budget including those imposed by sequestration will hamper our ability to sustain and modernize our military forces, and will add significant

risk to our strategic capabilities now and in the future.”

Mr. MCCAIN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

AMENDMENT NO. 443

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and I be allowed to call up amendment No. 443 and that the amendment be made pending.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Colorado [Mr. GARDNER] proposes an amendment numbered 443.

Mr. GARDNER. 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 protecting privately held water rights and permits)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO PROTECTING PRIVATELY HELD WATER RIGHTS AND PERMITS.

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 protecting communities, businesses, recreationists, farmers, ranchers, or other groups that rely on privately held water rights and permits from Federal takings 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. GARDNER. Mr. President, when you walk into the capitol of Colorado, there in that great rotunda is a mural on the wall by Thomas Hornsby Ferril, and it starts out with a very simple phrase that reads: “Here is a land where life is written in water.” So during this budget I will be offering amendment No. 443 to make sure we are protecting that lifeblood of Colorado—our water—and to make sure our State property rights, State law, is able to prevail against the intrusions by the Federal Government.

Over the past several decades, we have watched as the Federal Government has attempted to assert bypass flows or Federal reserve water rights that impede our ability to carry out private water rights and to, indeed, protect Colorado private water rights. Whether it is the imposition of a bypass flow on a ditch that is going through Forest Service ground or perhaps the new Forest Service ski area water rule or the groundwater rule they are now discussing, these are, once again, challenges to the supremacy of State water law.

This government has a long history of yielding to State water law—making

sure that State water law is supreme when it comes to how we carry out and manage our State water rights. Over the years, bipartisan coalitions in Colorado, Wyoming, and beyond have emerged to make sure we are protecting our water rights, to make sure the Federal Government isn’t coming in outside of our system of water law.

Colorado is extremely complex. We are the only State in the Union that carries out our water law, our surface water rights in the way we do. Unfortunately, whether it is the Forest Serve, the Department of Interior or the Department of Agriculture, other agencies have continued to seek their ways to impose a water right at the Federal level without going through the same channels, the same water law system that other people in Colorado do—people who by rights, by law, and by our constitution have the rightful ownership of Colorado water rights and water permits.

This amendment protects communities, businesses, recreationists, farmers, and ranchers that rely on these privately held water rights and permits from Federal takings. The amendment recognizes the longstanding authority to manage water according to our State law.

Today, water rights and permit holders face challenges, and this can come to an end when we put into our budget our principles, our purposes, and our efforts in making sure we put policies forward in the next several months that respects Colorado water law.

I urge all my colleagues to support this amendment, which is a vote to protect constitutionally held private water rights and permits.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

AMENDMENT NO. 777, AS MODIFIED

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Sanders amendment No. 777 be modified with the changes that are at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO CUTTING CARBON POLLUTION TO PREVENT HUMAN-INDUCED CLIMATE CHANGE.

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 protecting Americans from the impacts of human-induced climate change, which may include action on policies that reduce emissions by the amounts that the scientific community says are needed to avert catastrophic climate change, 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.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have the following Senators added as cosponsors to his amendment: Senators BOXER, MARKEY, and SCHATZ.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 801

(Purpose: To build on the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 by restoring a below-sequester level cut of \$9,000,000,000 to nondefense discretionary spending in 2017, replacing sequestration in 2016 and 2017 and increasing funding above sequester levels by a total of \$148,000,000,000 for the 2 years, increasing defense and nondefense discretionary spending above sequester levels by equal amounts, eliminating the overseas contingency operations gimmick contained in the committee-reported resolution, and offsetting the net increase in defense and nondefense discretionary spending by closing tax loopholes).

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up my amendment No. 801.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY], for herself, Mr. WYDEN, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. WARNER, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. BALDWIN, and Mr. KING, proposes an amendment numbered 801.

Mrs. MURRAY. 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 printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, as many of us here have said before, a budget is far more than simply numbers on a page. A budget is a statement of values, of priorities, the kind of Nation we are, and the kind of Nation we want to be.

For Democrats, that means our budget should help us move toward an economy that is built from the middle out, not from the top down, and a government that works for all families, not just the wealthiest few.

When Democrats wrote our budget last Congress, we made our values and priorities crystal clear. We put jobs, economic growth, and the middle class first. We replaced the automatic budget cuts evenly among defense and nondefense investments, with an equal mix of responsible spending cuts and revenue raised by closing wasteful tax loopholes used by the wealthiest Americans and biggest corporations. We addressed our long-term deficit and debt challenges fairly and responsibly. And we kept our promises that we have made to our seniors and families.

The Republican House didn't simply accept our budget, of course. But I am very proud that coming out of the terrible government shutdown at the end of 2013, we were finally able to break through the gridlock and dysfunction to reach a bipartisan budget deal that put in place a budget for 2 years, pre-

vented another government shutdown, and rolled back the worst of the automatic cuts.

That deal wasn't the budget I would have written on my own and it wasn't the one Republicans would have written on their own, but it did end the lurching from crisis to crisis, it helped workers, it helped our economy, and made it clear that there is bipartisan support for rolling back sequestration in a balanced way.

Our bipartisan deal was a strong step in the right direction, and I was hopeful we could work together to build on it. But Republicans have taken a very different approach this year.

Instead of building on our bipartisan budget deal, this Republican budget would be a huge step backward. Instead of moving us toward a government that works for all of our families, this budget would push us toward a budget that works for the wealthy and well-connected, but actually leaves the middle class and working families behind.

We know there is bipartisan support to replace sequestration in a balanced and fair way. Not only did we prove that with our bipartisan budget deal last time, but Democrats and Republicans across the country have continued to come out against the senseless cuts to defense and nondefense investments.

But in this Republican budget—a budget that aims nearly 70 percent of all its spending cuts at programs that combat poverty, that cuts more than \$1 trillion from Medicare and Medicaid, that calls for a total of \$5 trillion in spending cuts—in this budget, my Republican colleagues couldn't even find a single penny to pay for more investments in education, research, or defense investments for this coming year.

To put that in perspective, the budget agreement I reached with Chairman PAUL RYAN in 2013 found \$85 billion in savings to pay for sequester relief over 2 years. That is less than 2 percent of the total savings this Republican budget claims to have in it. And yet the across-the-board cuts to both defense and nondefense priorities remain in place. Why is that?

Well, instead of using a tiny fraction of the enormous cuts this budget has in it to pay for investments that both Republicans and Democrats agree must be made, it relies on a gimmick and increases OCO funding to appear to patch over the problem on the defense side, but then doesn't actually allow for the increased OCO funding to be even spent, and does nothing at all for nondefense investments such as education, research, jobs, and infrastructure.

I know our Republican colleagues are sincere when they say they want to find a way to increase the caps, especially for defense purposes, but this budget in front of us today simply does not do that. Gimmicks and lip service are not enough for me, and I don't see why they are enough for my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, especially given the deliberate choice not to use any of the \$5 trillion in cuts in this to pay for some relief, a choice

that should greatly concern anyone who genuinely wants to fix this problem.

So I come to the floor to offer another way—a way that would make it clear that we will in fact fix these senseless across-the-board cuts known as sequestration.

My amendment builds on the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 and extends the replacement of sequestration through fiscal years 2016 and 2017. This amendment maintains the principle that Democrats will not abandon—that sequestration should be replaced evenly across defense and nondefense investments. And it builds on the idea that sequestration should be replaced with a mix of responsible spending cuts and new revenue raised by closing wasteful tax loopholes.

By providing Defense with real resources to replace the sequester cuts, it gets rid of the OCO gimmick that was added in committee.

Finally, it includes language to automatically release the additional defense and nondefense funding to the Appropriations Committee upon the increase in the statutory caps, similar to language that we passed in the previous budget.

Now we all know there is going to have to be a solution to these automatic cuts. President Obama has said he will not sign spending bills that lock in sequestration. And the fact is we simply can't make the investments we need to make on both defense and nondefense if these caps remain in place.

We should be able to give our appropriations committees the guidance they need to write responsible bills at bipartisan levels, and not wait for another crisis to hit before we come together and make a deal.

I know there are Republicans who understand how devastating the automatic cuts are for our defense and nondefense investments. I know there are Republicans who understand the value of investing in jobs, infrastructure, education, and research. I know there are Republicans who have seen the impact of sequestration in their States the way I have seen in my home State of Washington. And I know there are Republicans who look at this budget and wonder why it couldn't use some of the trillions of dollars in cuts to reinvest in American innovation or in our investments.

So I am ready to work with any Republican truly interested in building on our bipartisan budget deal in a balanced and responsible way. I know my colleagues will stand with me because, to us, this is about middle-class economics, plain and simple.

We believe that when working families do well, they spend more, they boost demand, and they grow the economy in a healthy and sustainable way. We believe when low-income families

are offered a hand up and an opportunity to get a job or earn more or join the middle class, that means more taxpayers, less need for housing, less need for nutrition support, and it means a growing economy. We believe the wealthiest Americans and biggest corporations should pay just a bit more toward their fair share. And we believe that replacing these automatic cuts in a fair and responsible way is an important part of moving toward an economy that works for all families, not just the wealthiest few.

So I urge my colleagues to support this amendment so we can agree now on responsible and realistic top-line spending numbers for this year, so we can restore these investments in critical defense and nondefense programs, and so we can start to allow the appropriations committees to do their work and not wait until September for another crisis, another government shutdown, and the whole country looking at us as if we can't manage our way anywhere.

If my Republican colleagues have any other ideas for how we get this done, my door is open, and I am ready to get to work. But I hope we can support this amendment when we vote on it later this afternoon so we can get to work and not have another summer, another fall where the American public looks at Congress wondering if we can't get our act together.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I rise today to speak briefly on an amendment I have already submitted in the budget bill, but which also qualifies as a "Waste of the Week." So I am going to do a two-for here.

As I have said previously, I am coming to the floor every week to point out a waste of funds that, if eliminated and addressed, can save the taxpayer a lot of money. We have the thermometer growing in terms of the amount of money we have been able to offer—in terms of programs that simply are not working, can be reformed or changed or dropped, and save the taxpayer a lot of dollars.

This week's waste addresses a well-intentioned Federal program that has moved away from its original intention of addressing an important social need. Officially known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, this program is more commonly known to the American public as food stamps.

This program started under President Kennedy in the early 1960s as a temporary lifeline to those in need. Over time, the program grew. More than 30 years later, the Republican Congress, with a Democratic President—President Clinton—reformed welfare in 1996. During that reform, they made reforms to the SNAP program, or the food stamp program by adding some qualifying information.

These reforms required that in order to qualify for food stamps, able-bodied adults had to register for work and accept a job if it was offered to them or go to a training program in order to qualify for food stamps. That was in the law. It was a welfare reform program that was supported by both Democrats and Republicans, under a Democratic President and a Republican Congress, and history has shown that it worked.

In 2009, our current President, President Obama, as part of the stimulus law, modified this program and put it in a position where it now is spending a lot more money, and removed essentially those requirements that were agreed to by both Democrats and Republicans. As a journalist said: Today, SNAP is "an open-ended income-supplement program that discourages work."

According to the Wall Street Journal:

Between 2008 and 2013, SNAP recipients grew by nearly 69%. By contrast, the poverty rate increased just 16.5% during the same period.

With our economy recovering and more job opportunities becoming available, I have submitted this amendment to reinstate the requirements that was agreed to, as I said, in a bipartisan way under President Clinton.

This legislation, if we make this reform, has been scored as saving at least \$19 billion over a period of time—no small amount. It is good stewardship of our financial resources at a time when we need to have that stewardship because of the credit crunch we are now in.

What we add here to the ever-growing thermometer that tries to take us to \$100 billion of savings for taxpayers is a \$19 billion chunk of savings that has been documented as achievable simply by returning the program to the place where it was implemented by both Republicans' and Democrats' support.

In addition to the aforementioned amendment, I would also like to very briefly discuss two other important amendments I have submitted to the debate on the budget bill now before us.

AMENDMENT NO. 595

Mr. President, I therefore ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and that I be allowed to call up amendment No. 595, and that the amendment be made pending.

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 Indiana [Mr. COATS], for himself and Mr. WARNER, propose an amendment numbered 595.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that 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 to improve cybersecurity)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 3. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND TO IMPROVE CYBERSECURITY.

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 increased sharing of cybersecurity threat information while protecting individual privacy and civil liberties interests, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, 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. COATS. Mr. President, this amendment, which I will briefly state the intent of here and which I have offered, along with Senator WARNER, would help to strengthen our cyber security defenses by calling for increased sharing of information on cyber security attacks and threats.

Millions of Americans have been subject and impacted by cyber attacks on companies and universities, to mention a few, and the Coats-Warner amendment would help to strengthen our defenses against cyber attacks by calling for greater information sharing, but in a way that protects individual privacy and civil liberties.

AMENDMENT NO. 368

Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and that I be allowed to call up amendment No. 368, and that the amendment be made pending.

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 Indiana [Mr. COATS] proposes an amendment numbered 368.

Mr. COATS. 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 providing States the Medicaid flexibility they need to implement innovative reforms to improve care and enhance access for our Nation's most vulnerable)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO PROVIDING STATES THE MEDICAID FLEXIBILITY THEY NEED IMPLEMENT INNOVATIVE REFORMS TO IMPROVE CARE AND ENHANCE ACCESS FOR OUR NATION'S MOST VULNERABLE.

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 Medicaid that allows States the

flexibility to build off of successful State innovations to ensure our Nation's most vulnerable Americans have improved access to quality care while reducing taxpayer costs, 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. COATS. Mr. President, this amendment calls for States to have the flexibility to seek innovative Medicaid reforms that can both strengthen the program and make more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

My State of Indiana has been a leader in innovative Medicaid reforms and the advancement of consumer-driven health care under the leadership of our former Governor Mitch Daniels and our current Governor Mike Pence.

I believe States should have the opportunity to innovate the Medicaid Program by using flexible, accountable financing mechanisms that are transparent and that hold States accountable for efficiency and quality health care systems.

This program, carefully developed under two Governors, has now provided those in Indiana, of lower income, opportunities to enter into a program that uses innovative, cost-saving techniques, but provides quality health care with participation by our providers and the hospitals, with participation by our State, and with requirements that give the consumer more choices and provide for more quality of care. It is something that I think can serve as a model as we go forward trying to address our health care needs and reform of the Affordable Care Act or repeal with suggested substitutes that will achieve the goals of providing quality care to people who are of low income but at a much lower price and with much less regulation than is currently within the ACA.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The Senator from Illinois.

AMENDMENT NO. 545

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I would like to speak on my amendment, No. 545, which is an amendment that stands for the principle of building on the work of the bipartisan Menendez-Kirk legislation to call for consequences should Iran cheat on its obligations of the agreement with the United States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, we should stand for the principle remembering the 290 Americans who have died at the hands of Iranian terror, including 13 Americans from Illinois. Let me read their names: James Lewis from Illinois, William Sheil from Illinois, Alvin Belmer, David Gay from Illinois, Joseph Livingston from Illinois, John A. Phillips, Jr., who went to church with me, Eric Pullman, and Gary R. Scott—all killed at the hands of Iranian terror. In the memory of these Americans, we want to make sure we carry out a sense of the Senate that expresses our

views that if Iran cheats on this agreement, there should be sanctions.

I call on all Members to make sure they back the old bipartisan coalition of Menendez-Kirk.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time until 4:45 p.m. today be equally divided between the managers or their designees, and that at 4:45 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: Stabenow No. 755; Barrasso No. 347; Sanders No. 777, as modified, on climate change; Blunt No. 350 on EPA; Hatch No. 796 on Medicare; Bennet-Stabenow No. 601 on Medicare; Murray No. 801 on sequester replacement; Cotton No. 481 on Israel.

I further ask unanimous consent that there be 2 minutes equally divided between the managers or their designees prior to each vote, and that all votes after the first in this series be 10 minutes in length.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ENZI. For the information of all Senators, there will be up to eight roll-call votes at 4:45 p.m. I allocate time to the Senator from Montana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

AMENDMENT NO. 388

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, last night, I offered amendment No. 388, to ensure the States and local governments are the driving force behind the national monument designations. I ask unanimous consent to add Senator HATCH as a cosponsor to my amendment.

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

Mr. DAINES. This is a fair and commonsense proposal that I believe Members on both sides of the aisle can support. Before major land decisions are made by the Federal Government, the people affected most by these decisions should have a seat at the table and have their voices heard. I was confused when I heard the senior Senator from Nevada claim this morning that my amendment would in some way gut or repeal law, providing the ability for national monument designations to take place. That is simply false. In sharp contrast, it is designated to strengthen the law by ensuring that the voice of the people is heard as designations are considered. After all, it is the people who are affected by these decisions, not politicians in Washington.

As a fifth-generation Montanan and a lifelong sportsman, I treasure and am committed to protecting our public lands. I deeply appreciate that landmarks like Pompeys Pillar in Montana or Lehman's Cave in Nevada have been protected for future generations. But there is a difference between targeted designations to protect historic land-

marks and designating hundreds or even thousands or millions of acres against the will of the States and local residents.

The Senator from Nevada is saying that Washington, DC, should have more influence over local land use decisions than the folks in Western States who live and work on this land every day. I disagree. I believe the farmers, the ranchers, the sportsmen, the community members, and the State and local governments should have a say in local land decisions. I remind him the 1906 act was designed to prevent damage to specific sites of historical, scientific or cultural significance.

As the law States, ". . . the smallest area compatible with the proper care in management of objects to be protected." The law was not intended to block out access or damage operation of nearby landowners. The law was not intended to be used as a way for a President, as they are leaving office, to unilaterally make decisions without consulting the States in the local communities.

Strengthening the role of locally impacted residents and States is vitally important because, unfortunately, Presidents of both parties have also abused the Antiquities Act, designating unjustifiably excessive, large-scale pieces of ground through unilateral action despite local opposition from land users.

Let me remind the Senator from Nevada of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument designation. Local residents oppose that designation. Since the monument was designated in 1996, there has been a reduction in grazing. Development of a large coal mine has stopped. Local rural communities are struggling.

Wouldn't it have been better to protect the Grand Staircase in a way that also protected local communities? Look to New Mexico, where the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument was designated in 2014 May against the will of local communities.

Representative STEVE PEARCE had a bill to protect 50,000 acres of land, which he worked with local residents and affected communities to implement. That bill was ignored, and the administration instead introduced a monument of 500,000 acres that touches all the way to the Mexican border.

During President Obama's first term, an internal document surfaced from the Interior Department revealing the Obama administration's plans to use the Antiquities Act to designate 14 new national monuments, comprising millions of acres across our country. One of the areas on the list is 2.5 million acres of land across northern Montana, connecting Canada's Grasslands National Park to the Bitter Creek Wilderness Study Area. Right in the middle of this designation are significant swaths of public lands. This potential designation is very contentious in Montana, which I believe Montanans must have a voice in determining whether it goes forward.

During a recent House Natural Resources Committee hearing, Interior Secretary Sally Jewell confirmed that she wants public input and local input in Antiquities Act designations. So why would anyone oppose elevating State and local input in these designations?

Despite the claims made by the Senator from Nevada, my amendment will not repeal the Antiquities Act. It is not going to gut the law. It will not repeal existing protections on our national parks and national monuments. It will not prevent future designations from being made. My amendment simply ensures that local residents and the States have a meaningful voice in determining monument designations.

In 2010, former Interior Secretary Salazar stated during a Senate hearing that the administration would have a conversation and dialogue with people locally and across the country before any monument designations occur.

My amendment simply holds this and future administrations accountable to what they said they would do, and it protects the voice of the people in decisions such as this. Protecting the voice of the people should not offend Members of this body. It should be our abiding commitment. It should be our priority.

AMENDMENT NO. 465

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up amendment No. 465.

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 Montana [Mr. DAINES] proposes an amendment numbered 465.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that 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 Second Amendment rights)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 3. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO SECOND AMENDMENT RIGHTS.

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 upholding Second Amendment rights, which shall include preventing the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives from impinging upon those rights, 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. DAINES. Mr. President, my amendment will establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund for legislation to

make sure the ATF does not infringe on our Second Amendment freedoms. This amendment ensures that American sportsmen aren't left with empty relics good for nothing more than mounting on the mantel, symbols of a bygone era of American freedom, until even the relics are taken.

AMENDMENT NO. 387

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up amendment No. 387.

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 Montana [Mr. DAINES] proposes an amendment numbered 387.

Mr. DAINES. 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 postal reform)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO POSTAL REFORM.

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 the United States Postal Service, which may include measures addressing the nonprofit postal discount for State and national political committees, 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. DAINES. Mr. President, article I, section 8, clause 7, of the U.S. Constitution specifically provides for the establishment of the U.S. Postal Service. However, the Postal Service currently teeters on the brink of insolvency. In fact, a January 2015 Congressional Research Service report states that the Postal Service has reached its statutory borrowing limit of \$15 billion and has run up more than \$40 billion in deficits since fiscal year 2007. However in the midst of the Postal Service's financially tenuous circumstance, State and national political committees are granted postal discounts which can amount to as high as a 26-percent reduction in the standard rate paid by nonprivileged users.

Congress would do well to put State and national local committees on the same playing field as ordinary Americans. The Postal Service would certainly benefit from these groups paying the ordinary postage rate. Particularly in rural States like Montana, the Postal Service plays an important role in the vitality of our communities, and it connects people. Accordingly, I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting budget amendment No. 387, which

would signal the Senate's willingness to address the postage discount it provides to State and national political committees.

I thank the Chair. I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise to speak in opposition to the Republican budget resolution. I would ask—there are time restraints here. I will go as far in my speech as I can and then ask the remainder be included in the RECORD.

Mr. SANDERS. The Senator has 8 minutes.

Mr. FRANKEN. Please let me know—is that done without objection?

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

Mr. FRANKEN. Can the Presiding Officer tell me when 7 minutes have elapsed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will be so notified.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, the budget the Republicans in the Senate have presented us with imagines a future where we give even more tax breaks to millionaires and special interests, while pulling the rug out from under working families. Instead of addressing the major challenge facing our Nation today—that middle-class families continue to face an economy rigged against them and their efforts to attain a better future for themselves and their family—this budget is fundamentally misaligned with the values of working Americans.

Over the last 30 years, we have seen Wall Street and giant corporations make record profits and middle-class families have been left behind. According to the Economic Policy Institute, over the last 30 years, wages for the top 1 percent rose almost 10 times as fast as those for the bottom 90 percent. Last year, Oxfam calculated that the 400 wealthiest individuals in our country have more wealth than the bottom 150 million Americans. As a result, today the concentration of income at the very top has risen to levels last seen in the 1920s—a time of vast inequality that ended in economic disaster for our entire Nation.

We have a responsibility to turn back this dangerous trend, and Minnesotans know how to do it. We have done it in Minnesota. We know how to grow our economy. We know that we grow it from the middle out, not the top down.

Paul Wellstone had a saying: We all do better when we all do better. And we all do better when people in the middle have money to spend. A higher percentage of middle-class people are entrepreneurs. There is more social and economic mobility when there is a strong middle class. We all do better when we all do better. Even those at the top do better. We saw that during the Clinton administration when every quintile was helped.

Minnesotans know that a middle-class budget would ensure health care

access and fair workplaces for all Americans so that families can concentrate on doing the best job they can as workers, community members, parents, daughters, and sons instead of worrying about whether taking time off for a sick child will get them fired or whether a long-term illness will bankrupt their family.

So we could and we should be crafting a budget that supports middle-class families and those aspiring to be in the middle class. Opening up economic opportunity, helping to lay the foundation for economic growth, and supporting innovation are key to a dynamic economy.

We could have a budget that makes smart investments, finds sensible savings, and makes sure everyone is paying their fair share of taxes, but that is not the budget the Republicans have crafted. Instead of stability and opportunity for the middle-class Minnesotans, the Republican budget proposal would slash billions of dollars in investments that grow our economy. The Republican budget would do nothing to close the loopholes that disproportionately benefit large corporations and superwealthy individuals.

Since 2010, we have seen more than \$4 in spending cuts for every \$1 in revenue. The new Republican budget would make that situation even worse. This budget would bring that to \$10 in spending for every \$1 in revenue, and these cuts are coming directly at the expense of programs that serve middle and lower income families.

The budget would cut over \$6 million in job-creating research in my State of Minnesota alone, where we are making crucial investments in areas such as renewable energy and health innovations. In fact, the Economic Policy Institute says the cuts in the Republican budget would result in over 45,000 jobs lost in Minnesota. It would also cut funds for workforce training to help Minnesotans compete for 21st-century jobs. Over 35,000 workers would lose access to training opportunities, according to the Department of Labor. Considering the skills gap that every Senator on this floor acknowledges to me exists in their States, that just makes no sense whatsoever.

The Republicans would cut education in their budget. We are talking about Head Start Programs. The Republican budget would cut 620,000 children from Head Start. We would lose those slots over 10 years. In Minnesota, that means 883 fewer slots for preschoolers who would benefit from early childhood programs.

I will tell you something about Head Start. This quality early childhood education program has a return on investments of \$8 to \$16 per child, and I will explain why. A child who has had a quality early childhood education is less likely to be in special education, less likely to be left back a grade, and has better health care outcomes. The girls are less likely to get pregnant in adolescence. They graduate from high

school at a higher rate. They are more likely to go to college, graduate from college, have better jobs, pay more taxes, and they are much less likely to go to prison. That is why you have an \$8 to \$16 return for each kid who has a quality early childhood education. This is wrong. It is also wrong because kids are only 3 years old once, and they are beautiful children. They deserve this, and their parents deserve this. This is wrongheaded.

The Republican budget not only hits early childhood education, it hits Pell grants. In Minnesota, 160,000 students last year were able to go to college because of the Pell Grant Program. When my wife Franni and I went to college, a full Pell grant paid for almost 80 percent of a full public college education. Today, it pays for less than 35 percent. Further cuts will make it even harder for students to pay for college. Yet my colleagues want to cut Pell grants further. We should not be doing that, and that is why I am offering an amendment to restore funding for Pell Grants in this budget.

And that is also why I have worked with Senator WARREN on the amendment to make higher education more affordable by allowing Americans to refinance student debt. Student debt is now over \$1.3 trillion and this is holding back our economy because recent grads are less likely to buy a home, start a new business, or purchase other big-ticket items like a car because they are tied to this debt. Unfortunately, our amendment failed, but I am going to keep working with Senator WARREN on this commonsense issue.

One of the other keys to prosperity is infrastructure, and unfortunately, the Republican budget does nothing to address our Nation's crumbling roads, bridges, dams, levees, water systems, waste water plants, airports, and rail systems. And yet investing in infrastructure is one of the best ways to help businesses and create millions of middle-class jobs in the short and long-term.

As I said, the Republican budget also seeks to repeal the Affordable Care Act, even though we know that 16.5 million Americans now have health coverage because of the Affordable Care Act. In Minnesota, since the Affordable Care Act fully went into effect, the uninsured rate has dropped by over 40 percent, and now 95 percent of Minnesotans have health insurance. But under the Republican budget, we would go back to the days when someone with a pre-existing condition could not get health insurance. We would go back to the days when half the bankruptcies in this country were linked to someone getting sick, and back to the days when women were charged more than men for health insurance.

That is not what Americans want. Americans don't want to go back to the days of high-cost, low value health care.

Americans don't want a budget that will undercut the very sources of pros-

perity for the middle class. We can afford to make the investments we need for the future, and do it in a fiscally responsible way. Part of that is fixing our broken Tax Code. Our economy loses hundreds of billions of dollars from a wasteful, inefficient, and, frankly, unfair Tax Code riddled with loopholes. If we reform our Tax Code to make it fairer and more efficient—by doing things like closing the loophole on what is called carried interest—we can afford to invest in education, infrastructure, and innovation to help American workers compete in the global economy.

Instead, the Republican budget would allow U.S. companies to continue to shift billions in profits to tax havens and middle-class jobs overseas. It allows millionaires and billionaires to pay lower rates on their income than many middle-class taxpayers.

On top of this, the Republican budget leaves the deck stacked in favor of the rights of big corporations and Wall Street ahead of American workers. Americans want a fair chance. They want equal pay for equal work. They want us to preserve the promise of Social Security for their generation and generations to come. And they want everyone who works full time to be able to keep their family out of poverty. These are the things that could be in a budget that supports the middle class.

Finally, let me note that the Republican budget is filled with fiscally irresponsible budget gimmicks. Not only is it very vague about a lot of the cuts it would make, the budget also uses an off the books account, the Overseas Contingency Operations Fund, which falls outside of the budget caps, to significantly increase defense spending without paying for it. And even as the Republican budget repeals the Affordable Care Act, it doesn't say how it will replace the savings and revenue from the bill. This isn't even smoke and mirrors, it is right out there for us to see. This budget also repeals a rule the Senate has had in place since 2007 to prohibit reconciliation legislation that would increase the deficit.

Again, the Republican's budget plan for America is fundamentally out of step with the values of working Americans. It's the same tired trickle-down plan we have seen fail time and time again. It's a plan that says we can reduce our deficit and spend billions more on defense without raising a nickel of new revenue. It's a plan that says we can grow our economy by cutting health care for seniors and children and the poorest in our society. It's a plan that says that cutting preschool and college aid is a better investment than closing tax loopholes that encourage giant, multinational corporations to use elaborate accounting tricks and ship jobs overseas. This plan just doesn't make sense.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has consumed 7 minutes.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I will end by saying that this is not even

smoke and mirrors; this is riddled with gimmicks and is fundamentally unfair to working Americans. It is the same trickle-down economics that we have seen fail time and time again.

I urge my colleagues to reject this budget and embrace a real plan that supports middle-class families and those aspiring to the middle class. We need a budget that builds on the progress we made since the great recession and takes us into a better future for all Americans.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. How much time does the Democratic side have?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic side has 5 minutes remaining.

AMENDMENT NO. 350

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I wish to respond and speak as to why I am in opposition to the Blunt amendment which requires a point of order for a carbon tax.

The scientific community is not in debate. The scientific community tells us that climate change is real. It is caused by human activity and by a very significant increase in carbon emissions. The scientific community tells us that climate change is already causing devastating problems in our Nation and around the world. The scientific community tells us that if we do not get our act together—not just the United States but China, Russia, India, and the entire world—the planet we will be leaving for our kids and grandchildren will be substantially less habitable than the planet we enjoy.

We have a moral responsibility to respond to this crisis, and we have to use every tool we can in our arsenal. What does that mean? It means we need to invest heavily in weatherization and energy efficiency so we don't waste energy. It means we have to move aggressively toward wind, solar, geothermal, biomass, and other sustainable energies. It also means we have to tell those people who are producing carbon in significant amounts and are causing the problem that they cannot continue to do that with impunity. They will have to pay a tax on that.

We can argue about how we go forward in transforming our energy system and how we cut carbon pollution, but we should not pick out one particular approach and say that it is going to require 60 votes to go forward.

I strongly object to Senator BLUNT's amendment.

What we will be doing is offering a side-by-side. This side-by-side could not be simpler. The American people and the scientific community are pretty clear when it comes to climate change: It is, in fact, real, and it is caused by human activity. What we will do is offer a side-by-side to establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund to recognize that climate change is real, is caused by human activity, and that Congress needs to take action to cut carbon pollution.

Young people all over this country want action. While many of my Republican colleagues refuse to acknowledge the reality that climate change is caused by human activity, many Republicans outside of Capitol Hill, in fact, do understand that. We have prominent conservative economists and economic advisers, such as Nobel laureate economist Gary Becker, Mitt Romney's former economic adviser Gregory Mankiw, and former Reagan adviser Art Laffer, who have all called for taxing carbon. It is not a radical idea. These are conservative Republicans who understand that people who are causing the problem cannot do that with impunity.

More recently, George Shultz—I think we all know George Shultz is the former Secretary of the Treasury and Secretary of State under Presidents Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan—published an op-ed in the Washington Post calling for a carbon tax. The idea of a carbon tax is something that is gaining more and more support from Democrats, Republicans, Independents, people who are very worried about what is happening to our environment.

In terms of the side-by-side, I personally am strongly opposed to Senator BLUNT's amendment, which just looks at a tax on carbon. I should also say that as a coauthor, along with Senator BOXER, with regard to a carbon tax, we put huge amounts of money into helping those families who might see higher utility bills. That is probably the main source of funding allocation. So we are aware of the problem, and we address it in our legislation, and it should be addressed in any legislation.

But once again, in terms of the side-by-side, we are going to give our Republican colleagues an opportunity—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democrat's time has expired.

The Senator from Oregon.

AMENDMENT NO. 434

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up my amendment No. 434.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the amendment.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oregon [Mr. WYDEN], for himself and Mr. CRAPO, proposes an amendment numbered 434.

Mr. WYDEN. 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 provide for an adjustment to committee allocations for wildfire suppression funding)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . ADJUSTMENT FOR WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION FUNDING.

If a measure becomes law that amends the adjustments to discretionary spending limits

established under section 251(b) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 901(b)) for wildfire suppression funding, the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may adjust the allocation called for in section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (2 U.S.C. 633(a)) to the appropriate committee or committees of the Senate, and may adjust all other budgetary aggregates, allocations, levels, and limits contained in this resolution, as necessary, consistent with such measure.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

AMENDMENT NO. 777, AS MODIFIED

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, since my friend from across the aisle raised the issue of climate change, I will use the remainder of my time to talk about that issue because I will urge my colleagues to vote no on amendment No. 777.

We voted earlier—and it was a unanimous vote—that climate change is real. I believe virtually everyone agrees that over time the Earth's climate has shifted at various levels of speed and in various directions.

I had an opportunity to go on a trip to China, and we visited one of the country's labs researching climate change. I had the opportunity to tour the lab with the Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN. One of the amazing things was—as we finished the tour after looking at five different ways the scientists were measuring what caused climate change and how real it was—when Senator DURBIN said to me: I am sure glad Senator INHOFE is not with us because this backs up everything Senator INHOFE has been saying.

So climate change is an issue that has not really been resolved among all the scientists, even in some countries that have different opinions than we do.

Every snowstorm, every heat wave that we have today—we have changed it from global warming to climate change because now we are blaming everything on this phenomenon. One of the comments I made is that instead of spending \$5 billion on one side to prove there is climate change and another \$5 billion on the other side to disprove climate change, maybe we ought to spend \$10 billion a year just on fixing things.

So I think there are some problems with the amendment, and I hope my colleagues will vote no.

I see that it is almost time for the vote, so I yield back our time.

Go ahead and start on the vote.

AMENDMENT NO. 755

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote in relation to amendment No. 755, offered by the Senator from Michigan, Ms. STABENOW.

The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to support the Stabenow amendment.

This amendment would establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund that would do a few things. First of all, it would

ensure that the Clean Water Act is focused on protecting water quality, upholding the existing exemption in the Clean Water Act for agriculture, ranching, and forestry that has existed for decades so our foresters and ranchers have the certainty they need. It would ensure that we rely on scientific evidence as we examine the impact that water quality has on the different types of water bodies, and it provides certainty to landowners and rural communities that are guided by the scope of the Clean Water Act.

I appreciate my colleague from Wyoming and his approach. I believe mine is much more specific. It is deficit neutral instead of spending neutral, so it allows us to offset any changes we would like to make to support these efforts through either revenues or spending cuts as opposed to a spending-neutral reserve fund. Most importantly, it makes very clear support for both the Clean Water Act and agriculture.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. We would be happy to take that amendment. We would prefer to do that by voice vote because we have a lot of votes pending.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I actually would prefer a recorded rollcall vote. I appreciate that offer, but I would ask for a recorded rollcall vote.

I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I support the Stabenow amendment. Ranchers and property owners in rural America think the EPA is out of control. I agree. It is right to rein in the EPA and restore current protections and exemptions for rural America.

A key area where the Stabenow amendment falls short is excluding cities, suburbs, and the job-creating businesses and working families that reside outside of rural America.

My amendment, which will be next, addresses concerns raised by the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Association of Counties, which want certainty regarding the EPA's power grab.

The Senator from Michigan does things to protect farmers and ranchers from the EPA. My amendment is supported by the American Farm Bureau. This support is because my amendment is specific and holds the EPA and the Corps to the promises they have already made.

I thank the Chair.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, we yield back the time in opposition.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, if there is time remaining, I would simply say that I think our amendment is stronger and much more specific. Also,

it upholds two goals: supporting the Clean Water Act, which has for 40 years protected us with clean fishing and drinking water—and in our beautiful Great Lakes, certainly all that we hold dear—but it also clarifies specifics for agriculture, ranchers, foresters, and communities.

I yield the floor.

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

The yeas and nays have been ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ).

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

The result was announced—yeas 99, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 87 Leg.]

YEAS—99

Alexander	Flake	Murray
Ayotte	Franken	Nelson
Baldwin	Gardner	Paul
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Perdue
Bennet	Graham	Peters
Blumenthal	Grassley	Portman
Blunt	Hatch	Reed
Booker	Heinrich	Reid
Boozman	Heitkamp	Risch
Boxer	Heller	Roberts
Brown	Hirono	Rounds
Burr	Hoeven	Rubio
Cantwell	Inhofe	Sanders
Capito	Isakson	Sasse
Cardin	Johnson	Schatz
Carper	Kaine	Schumer
Casey	King	Scott
Cassidy	Kirk	Sessions
Coats	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cochran	Lankford	Shelby
Collins	Leahy	Stabenow
Coons	Lee	Sullivan
Corker	Manchin	Tester
Cornyn	Markey	Thune
Cotton	McCain	Tillis
Crapo	McCaskill	Toomey
Daines	McConnell	Udall
Donnelly	Menendez	Vitter
Durbin	Merkley	Warner
Enzi	Mikulski	Warren
Ernst	Moran	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Murphy	Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Cruz

The amendment (No. 755) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 347

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote in relation to amendment No. 347, offered by the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. BARRASSO.

The Senator from Wyoming.

AMENDMENT NO. 347

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise in support of my amendment No. 347, an amendment to hold the EPA and the Army Corps to their word about the scope of their proposed waters of the United States rule. The administration says there is a lot of misunderstanding with their proposed waters of the United States regulation and what it covers.

Time and time again, we have heard from the EPA and the Corps that this

rule would not cover things such as puddles, rainwater, snowmelt, and irrigation ditches. The Barrasso amendment would help to make sure this rule is crystal clear by listing out those things the EPA and the Corps have indicated or led folks to believe would not be covered under the rule.

So if you believe the waters of the United States rule does not go far enough, that the Federal Government should be in the business of regulating puddles in our constituents' backyards, then vote against my amendment. That is what voting against my amendment would mean. That is why I urge a "yes" vote on this amendment to protect the waters of the United States.

I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, we just voted together on a very specific amendment that makes it clear that all of our traditional agriculture, forestry efforts, all of the local government efforts that are occurring in this country right now will continue even under a revised clean water rule, which, by the way, is only having to be done because of two Supreme Court decisions that created a tremendous amount of confusion for communities and farmers and ranchers.

Unfortunately, regardless of what was just said, the Barrasso amendment is very general, very broad. It does not add any clarity. It would keep the confusion that is out there. I would urge that we vote no. We have already made a clear statement here in the Senate. We do not need to go back to what the Supreme Court did when in 2006 they had five different opinions coming from nine different Justices and created chaos. We do not need two different amendments that say two different things. We just did something very clear and specific. Let's hold that and vote no.

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

The yeas and nays have been ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ).

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

The result was announced—yeas 59, nays 40, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 88 Leg.]

YEAS—59

Alexander	Cochran	Ernst
Ayotte	Collins	Fischer
Barrasso	Corker	Flake
Blunt	Cornyn	Gardner
Boozman	Cotton	Graham
Burr	Crapo	Grassley
Capito	Daines	Hatch
Cassidy	Donnelly	Heitkamp
Coats	Enzi	Heller

Hoeven	McCaskill	Sasse
Inhofe	McConnell	Scott
Isakson	Moran	Sessions
Johnson	Murkowski	Shelby
King	Paul	Sullivan
Kirk	Perdue	Thune
Klobuchar	Portman	Tillis
Lankford	Risch	Toomey
Lee	Roberts	Vitter
Manchin	Rounds	Wicker
McCain	Rubio	

NAYS—40

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Reid
Bennet	Heinrich	Sanders
Blumenthal	Hirono	Schatz
Booker	Kaine	Schumer
Boxer	Leahy	Shaheen
Brown	Markey	Stabenow
Cantwell	Menendez	Tester
Cardin	Merkley	Udall
Carper	Mikulski	Warner
Casey	Murphy	Warren
Coons	Murray	Whitehouse
Durbin	Nelson	Wyden
Feinstein	Peters	
Franken	Reed	

NOT VOTING—1

Cruz

The amendment (No. 347) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 777, AS MODIFIED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote in relation to amendment No. 777, as modified, offered by the Senator from Vermont, Mr. SANDERS.

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, this amendment could not be simpler.

The scientific community has been very clear in telling us that climate change is the great environmental crisis of our time. It is caused by human activity, it is real, and it is already causing devastating problems in the United States and throughout the world.

This amendment establishes a deficit-neutral reserve fund to recognize that climate change is real, it is caused by human activity, and that Congress needs to take action to cut carbon pollution.

Let us stand with science. Let's pass this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

AMENDMENT NO. 350 WITHDRAWN

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, without using the minute from our side, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw Blunt amendment No. 350.

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

The amendment is withdrawn.

AMENDMENT NO. 777, AS MODIFIED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, this really wasn't the week of the Senator from Vermont. In an article in the Wall Street Journal on Monday, "The Myth of the Climate Change '97%,'" they say the 97 percent figure came from 79 respondents out of 3,146.

Secondly, today is the day they finalized the annual Gallup poll. The Gallup poll came out and made the statements that came to the conclusion that the current level of worry on global warm-

ing and climate remains at record lows, right behind the loss of tropical rain forests.

So don't vote for this based on the assumption that the 97 percent figure is accurate or that people care that much.

Mr. SANDERS. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the Sanders amendment No. 777, as modified.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ).

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

The result was announced—yeas 49, nays 50, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 89 Leg.]

YEAS—49

Ayotte	Gillibrand	Peters
Baldwin	Graham	Portman
Bennet	Heinrich	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Reid
Booker	Kaine	Sanders
Boxer	King	Schatz
Brown	Kirk	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Leahy	Stabenow
Carper	Markey	Tester
Casey	McCaskill	Udall
Collins	Menendez	Warner
Coons	Merkley	Warren
Donnelly	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murphy	Wyden
Feinstein	Murray	
Franken	Nelson	

NAYS—50

Alexander	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Gardner	Perdue
Blunt	Grassley	Risch
Boozman	Hatch	Roberts
Burr	Heitkamp	Rounds
Capito	Heller	Rubio
Cassidy	Hoeven	Sasse
Coats	Inhofe	Scott
Cochran	Isakson	Sessions
Corker	Johnson	Shelby
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Crapo	Manchin	Tillis
Daines	McCain	Toomey
Enzi	McConnell	Vitter
Ernst	Moran	Wicker
Fischer	Murkowski	

NOT VOTING—1

Cruz

The amendment (No. 777), as modified, was rejected.

AMENDMENT NO. 796

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote in relation to amendment No. 796, offered by the Senator from Utah, Mr. HATCH.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, we all know Medicare is on an unsustainable course. Independent actuaries at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services—CMS—estimate that, over the next 75 years, the program has \$35 trillion—that is with a T—in unfunded obligations.

CBO says that, without reforms, Medicare's hospital insurance trust fund will be insolvent early in the decade following 2025. And according to the Medicare trustees themselves, the hospital insurance trust fund could be insolvent as early as 2021. At that time Medicare will no longer be able to pay out full benefits to seniors.

We need to reform Medicare in order to save Medicare. We have a moral obligation to put Medicare on a sustainable path. It is crucial we ensure its solvency into the decade if we want to keep the promise we have made to those at or near retirement.

That is where we are, and that is about all I am going to say about it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time in opposition?

There is 45 seconds remaining in opposition to the amendment.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I think there is no objection to the amendment on this side. If the Senator would like a voice vote, we would be fine with that.

Mr. HATCH. A voice vote would be fine.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 796) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 601

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is now 2 minutes of debate prior to a vote in relation to amendment No. 601.

The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise today in offering an amendment with Senator STABENOW to guarantee we keep a sacred promise to our Nation's seniors to protect the Medicare Program for years to come.

The budget we have in front of us doesn't balance our values or priorities as a country. Unfortunately, it misses the mark entirely for our seniors. To put it into perspective, the Senate Republican budget cuts the Medicare Program by almost three times as much as the House Republican budget.

My amendment ensures we protect our seniors from any effort to cut Medicare beneficiaries' guaranteed benefits, privatize Medicare into a premium support plan or increase out-of-pocket spending on drugs or prevention services.

In 2013, over half the Medicare beneficiaries had incomes below \$23,000 a year. We can't attempt to balance the Nation's budget on the backs of our seniors. There is a reason why the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare is urging a "yes" vote on this amendment and a "no" vote on the Republican budget.

I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on the Bennet-Stabenow amendment, and I yield whatever time remains to the senior Senator from Michigan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I will raise a point of order against this amendment. The amendment offered by my

friends across the aisle would prohibit consideration of certain Medicare legislation.

I know all my colleagues are committed to preserving Medicare. We all want Medicare to be there for today's and tomorrow's seniors, and right now its finances are deteriorating rapidly. However, my colleague's amendment is not germane to the budget resolution.

The Committee on Finance has jurisdiction over the Medicare program. The Committee on the Budget does not. The Bennet-Stabenow amendment instructs the Committee on Finance how to write a Medicare reform bill—language that is inappropriate to include in a budget resolution. In fact, adopting this amendment would kill the privilege of the budget resolution.

For this reason, I am compelled, as chairman of the Committee on the Budget, to raise a point of order against the amendment.

Mr. President, the pending amendment, No. 601, is not germane to the budget resolution now before the Senate. Therefore, I raise a point of order against this amendment under section 305(b)2 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, pursuant to section 904 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, I move to waive all applicable sections of that act for the purpose of the pending amendment. I ask for the yeas and nays on protecting Medicare.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ).

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 46, nays 53, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 90 Leg.]

YEAS—46

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Nelson
Bennet	Heinrich	Peters
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Reed
Booker	Heller	Reid
Boxer	Hirono	Sanders
Brown	King	Schatz
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cardin	Leahy	Shaheen
Carper	Manchin	Stabenow
Casey	Markey	Tester
Collins	McCaskill	Udall
Coons	Menendez	Warren
Donnelly	Merkley	Whitehouse
Durbin	Mikulski	Wyden
Feinstein	Murphy	
Franken	Murray	

NAYS—53

Alexander	Coats	Ernst
Ayotte	Cochran	Fischer
Barrasso	Corker	Flake
Blunt	Cornyn	Gardner
Boozman	Cotton	Graham
Burr	Crapo	Grassley
Capito	Daines	Hatch
Cassidy	Enzi	Hoeven

Inhofe	Murkowski	Sessions
Isakson	Paul	Shelby
Johnson	Perdue	Sullivan
Kaine	Portman	Thune
Kirk	Risch	Tillis
Lankford	Roberts	Toomey
Lee	Rounds	Vitter
McCain	Rubio	Warner
McConnell	Sasse	Wicker
Moran	Scott	

NOT VOTING—1

CRUZ

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 46, the nays are 53.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected. The point of order is sustained and the amendment fails.

AMENDMENT NO. 801

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote in relation to amendment No. 801, offered by the Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, Democrats and Republicans agree that the automatic spending cuts across defense and nondefense investments are terrible policy, and it has to be fixed.

I am proud that the bipartisan budget act that we passed last Congress did exactly that for the past 2 years. It offered us a template for how we can tackle this challenge in a bipartisan way once again. That deal succeeded because it rolled back cuts to defense and nondefense equally, and it did it with a balanced and responsible mix of savings and new revenue.

The amendment before us builds on that deal and extends the sequester relief for 2 more years. We don't need to rely on gimmicks in this budget or the hopes that we are going to solve this later. We need to fix this now.

In 2013, it took a government shutdown to bring both sides to the table to get a deal for this. I am hoping we don't have to wait for another crisis, and I encourage our colleagues who oppose sequestration to support this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, if we want to change the Budget Control Act of 2011, we need to pass the bill to do so later in the year. The budget resolution cannot fix sequestration. This particular amendment increases both defense spending and nondefense spending. Without a justification, it calls for spending \$148 billion more than allowed by the BCA. The BCA requires the defense program to receive half of the reductions. That is not the case here. With nondefense limits, much work remains to eliminate inefficiencies in the nondefense side of the ledger.

According to the CBO, there are 260 programs spending \$293 billion in the 2015 budget that are not operating under a current authorization. That means the policy experts haven't done their work. So we can't tell if we need that much more money.

This amendment seeks more money for nondefense. This amendment calls for an increase in spending and pays for it by extracting more taxes from American taxpayers. The tax increases in this amendment total \$120 billion. Finally, perhaps the most important reason—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. ENZI. I ask for a "no" vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment offered by the Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ).

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

The result was announced—yeas 46, nays 53, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 91 Leg.]

YEAS—46

Baldwin	Heinrich	Peters
Bennet	Heitkamp	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Reid
Booker	Kaine	Sanders
Boxer	King	Schatz
Brown	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cantwell	Leahy	Shaheen
Cardin	Manchin	Stabenow
Carper	Markey	Tester
Casey	McCaskill	Udall
Coons	Menendez	Warner
Donnelly	Merkley	Warren
Durbin	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wyden
Franken	Murray	
Gillibrand	Nelson	

NAYS—53

Alexander	Fischer	Paul
Ayotte	Flake	Perdue
Barrasso	Gardner	Portman
Blunt	Graham	Risch
Boozman	Grassley	Roberts
Burr	Hatch	Rounds
Capito	Heller	Rubio
Cassidy	Hoeven	Sasse
Coats	Inhofe	Scott
Cochran	Isakson	Sessions
Collins	Johnson	Shelby
Corker	Kirk	Sullivan
Cornyn	Lankford	Thune
Cotton	Lee	Tillis
Crapo	McCain	Toomey
Daines	McConnell	Vitter
Enzi	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	

NOT VOTING—1

CRUZ

The amendment (No. 801) was rejected.

AMENDMENT NO. 481

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote in relation to amendment No. 481, offered by the Senator from Arkansas, Mr. COTTON.

The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, for decades, this Congress has provided bipartisan support to the U.S.-Israel alliance in part because the support of the

American people for the Israeli people is so strong. Unfortunately, for almost as long, the United Nations has singled out Israel for unfair, discriminatory treatment, whether it is the 1975 Zionism is Racism Resolution or the recent obsession of the Human Rights Council.

It has been the longstanding U.S. policy to prevent unfair, discriminatory treatment against Israel at the United Nations and other international institutions. I believe it is urgent that this Congress reaffirm that policy.

This amendment will allow a funding mechanism to adjust funding to the United Nations or other international institutions should they target Israel for unfair, discriminatory treatment. I hope we never need this mechanism, but I believe it is critical that Congress reaffirm our commitment to the U.S.-Israel alliance in preventing unfair, discriminatory treatment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time in opposition?

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I believe there is general support on this side of the floor for that amendment, and I suggest a voice vote.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the amendment offered by the Senator from Arkansas, Mr. COTTON.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ).

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

The result was announced—yeas 99, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 92 Leg.]

YEAS—99

Alexander	Flake	Murray
Ayotte	Franken	Nelson
Baldwin	Gardner	Paul
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Perdue
Bennet	Graham	Peters
Blumenthal	Grassley	Portman
Blunt	Hatch	Reed
Booker	Heinrich	Reid
Boozman	Heitkamp	Risch
Boxer	Heller	Roberts
Brown	Hirono	Rounds
Burr	Hoeven	Rubio
Cantwell	Inhofe	Sanders
Capito	Isakson	Sasse
Cardin	Johnson	Schatz
Carper	Kaine	Schumer
Casey	King	Scott
Cassidy	Kirk	Sessions
Coats	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cochran	Lankford	Shelby
Collins	Leahy	Stabenow
Coons	Lee	Sullivan
Corker	Manchin	Tester
Cornyn	Markey	Thune
Cotton	McCain	Tillis
Crapo	McCaskill	Toomey
Daines	McConnell	Udall
Donnelly	Menendez	Vitter
Durbin	Merkley	Warner
Enzi	Mikulski	Warren
Ernst	Moran	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Murphy	Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Cruz

The amendment (No. 481) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, just to get things in order here, I ask unanimous consent that first Senator PAUL be recognized to call up an amendment and then after that, that Senator WYDEN be recognized to call up an amendment and for 3 minutes; that Senator COONS be recognized to call up an amendment and for 3 minutes; that Senator BALDWIN be recognized to call up an amendment and for 2 minutes; that Senator MANCHIN be recognized to call up an amendment and for 3 minutes; and then I be recognized to call up an amendment.

Mr. SANDERS. Reserving the right to object, I would like 1 minute to bring forth eight amendments.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Can we let Senator PAUL, who is simply calling up an amendment, proceed first?

Mr. SANDERS. Sure.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I so modify my request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection to the request, as modified?

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, are they going back and forth or exactly in that order? Normally, we allow both sides.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator restate?

Mr. ENZI. I was suggesting that he revise his unanimous consent request so that we would go back and forth from side to side, rather than a whole lot of people going on one side, and people waiting on the other side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the further modification?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Just a clarification. As I understand it, the order I asked will be the order on the Democratic side. There will be an interspersing of Republicans as they come to the floor, but everybody is going to be kept to 2 or 3 minutes rather than there being long speeches because if someone is going to give a long speech, they should go to the end. We are just trying to call up a lot of amendments quickly.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Reserving the right to object, the Senator from Kentucky and I would just like to make our amendments pending. If we could just get that done.

Mr. SANDERS. So would we.

Mr. MCCAIN. Good.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the request as further modified is so ordered.

The Senator from Kentucky.

AMENDMENT NO. 940

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up my amendment No. 940.

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

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. PAUL] proposes an amendment numbered 940.

Mr. PAUL. 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 increase new budget authority for fiscal years 2016 and 2017 and modify outlays for fiscal years 2016 through 2022 for National Defense (budget function 050) with offsets)

On page 14, line 2, increase the amount by \$76,513,000,000.

On page 14, line 3, increase the amount by \$48,578,000,000.

On page 14, line 6, increase the amount by \$112,990,000,000.

On page 14, line 7, increase the amount by \$87,604,000,000.

On page 14, line 11, increase the amount by \$29,603,000,000.

On page 14, line 15, increase the amount by \$11,863,000,000.

On page 14, line 19, increase the amount by \$6,396,000,000.

On page 14, line 23, increase the amount by \$3,274,000,000.

On page 15, line 19, decrease the amount by \$21,000,000,000.

On page 15, line 20, decrease the amount by \$15,750,000,000.

On page 15, line 23, decrease the amount by \$21,000,000,000.

On page 15, line 24, decrease the amount by \$19,950,000,000.

On page 16, line 3, decrease the amount by \$4,998,000,000.

On page 16, line 7, decrease the amount by \$15,498,000,000.

On page 16, line 11, decrease the amount by \$14,700,000,000.

On page 17, line 12, decrease the amount by \$14,000,000,000.

On page 17, line 13, decrease the amount by \$9,100,000,000.

On page 17, line 16, decrease the amount by \$14,000,000,000.

On page 17, line 17, decrease the amount by \$11,900,000,000.

On page 17, line 21, decrease the amount by \$4,200,000,000.

On page 17, line 25, decrease the amount by \$2,100,000,000.

On page 18, line 4, decrease the amount by \$700,000,000.

On page 20, line 13, decrease the amount by \$10,000,000,000.

On page 20, line 14, decrease the amount by \$6,500,000,000.

On page 20, line 17, decrease the amount by \$10,000,000,000.

On page 20, line 18, decrease the amount by \$8,500,000,000.

On page 20, line 22, decrease the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 21, line 1, decrease the amount by \$1,500,000,000.

On page 21, line 5, decrease the amount by \$500,000,000.

On page 28, line 20, decrease the amount by \$20,000,000,000.

On page 28, line 21, decrease the amount by \$10,920,000,000.

On page 28, line 24, decrease the amount by \$20,000,000,000.

On page 28, line 25, decrease the amount by \$13,720,000,000.

On page 29, line 4, decrease the amount by \$3,080,000,000.

On page 29, line 8, decrease the amount by \$280,000,000.

On page 33, line 19, decrease the amount by \$41,000,000,000.

On page 33, line 20, decrease the amount by \$29,520,000,000.

On page 33, line 23, decrease the amount by \$41,000,000,000.

On page 33, line 24, decrease the amount by \$41,000,000,000.

On page 34, line 3, decrease the amount by \$11,480,000,000.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

AMENDMENT NOS. 697, 798, 800, 812, 951, 345, AND 817
EN BLOC

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment to call up the following amendments en bloc: amendment Nos. 697, 798, 800, 812, 951, 345, and 817.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to calling up the amendments en bloc?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendments are called up en bloc.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 697

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund for legislation that reforms and strengthens elementary and secondary education)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 3 . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION.

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 reforming and strengthening elementary and secondary education 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 798

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund for legislation to allow Americans to earn paid sick time)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 3 . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR LEGISLATION TO ALLOW AMERICANS TO EARN PAID SICK TIME.

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 efforts to improve workplace benefits and reduce health care costs, which may include measures to allow Americans to earn paid sick time to address their own health needs and the health needs of their families, and to promote equal employment opportunities, 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 800

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to a comprehensive approach to crude-by-rail safety)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 3 . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO CRUDE-BY-RAIL SAFETY.

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 the safe movement of crude oil by rail, which may include—

- (1) strengthening design standards for rail tank cars;
- (2) rapidly phasing out the legacy rail tank car fleet for crude-by-rail operations;
- (3) improving railroad operations to reduce derailments;
- (4) limiting the volatility of crude oil shipped by rail;
- (5) disclosing crude-by-rail train movements to States and first responders; or
- (6) increasing resources that provide for the training and equipping of first responders to respond to worst-case accidents,

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.

AMENDMENT NO. 812

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund to provide women with affordable access to comprehensive health care, including preventive services (such as contraception and breast cancer screenings), improve maternal health, and ensure that a woman has the same benefits and services no matter what part of the United States she lives in, all of which is critical to improving the health and well-being of women, children, their families, and society as a whole, and is an essential part of a woman's economic security and opportunity)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE INTO THE 21ST CENTURY.

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 improving women's healthcare services, which may include measures to—

- (1) expand comprehensive preventive services, including full access to contraceptive coverage for all women;
- (2) invest in access to women's primary care by investing in nurse practitioners and other health care providers;
- (3) improve maternal safety and quality of care;
- (4) provide compassionate assistance through emergency contraception and awareness for survivors of rape; or
- (5) ensure that women have access, awareness, and are provided the full range of preventive services, including contraception, breast cancer screenings, mammograms, domestic violence screenings and counseling, and more as provided for by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act;

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.

AMENDMENT NO. 951

(Purpose: To establish and fund a new Federal-State partnership to expand access to high-quality preschool programs for children from low- and moderate-income families, offset with revenue from closing loopholes)

- On page 5, line 6, increase the amount by \$1,500,000,000.
- On page 5, line 7, increase the amount by \$2,800,000,000.
- On page 5, line 8, increase the amount by \$3,100,000,000.
- On page 5, line 9, increase the amount by \$3,300,000,000.
- On page 5, line 10, increase the amount by \$3,400,000,000.
- On page 5, line 11, increase the amount by \$4,500,000,000.
- On page 5, line 12, increase the amount by \$3,700,000,000.
- On page 5, line 13, increase the amount by \$3,900,000,000.
- On page 5, line 14, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.
- On page 5, line 19, increase the amount by \$1,500,000,000.
- On page 5, line 20, increase the amount by \$2,800,000,000.
- On page 5, line 21, increase the amount by \$3,100,000,000.
- On page 5, line 22, increase the amount by \$3,300,000,000.
- On page 5, line 23, increase the amount by \$3,400,000,000.
- On page 5, line 24, increase the amount by \$4,500,000,000.
- On page 5, line 25, increase the amount by \$3,700,000,000.
- On page 6, line 1, increase the amount by \$3,900,000,000.
- On page 6, line 2, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.
- On page 6, line 6, increase the amount by \$1,316,000,000.
- On page 6, line 7, increase the amount by \$3,309,000,000.
- On page 6, line 8, increase the amount by \$5,941,000,000.
- On page 6, line 9, increase the amount by \$7,907,000,000.
- On page 6, line 10, increase the amount by \$9,508,000,000.
- On page 6, line 11, increase the amount by \$569,000,000.
- On page 6, line 12, increase the amount by \$437,000,000.
- On page 6, line 13, increase the amount by \$302,000,000.
- On page 6, line 14, increase the amount by \$166,000,000.
- On page 6, line 15, increase the amount by \$44,000,000.
- On page 6, line 19, increase the amount by \$1,316,000,000.
- On page 6, line 20, increase the amount by \$3,309,000,000.
- On page 6, line 21, increase the amount by \$5,941,000,000.
- On page 6, line 22, increase the amount by \$7,907,000,000.
- On page 6, line 23, increase the amount by \$9,508,000,000.
- On page 6, line 24, increase the amount by \$569,000,000.
- On page 6, line 25, increase the amount by \$437,000,000.
- On page 7, line 1, increase the amount by \$302,000,000.
- On page 7, line 2, increase the amount by \$166,000,000.
- On page 7, line 3, increase the amount by \$44,000,000.
- On page 7, line 7, increase the amount by \$1,316,000,000.
- On page 7, line 8, increase the amount by \$1,809,000,000.

On page 7, line 9, increase the amount by \$3,141,000,000.

On page 7, line 10, increase the amount by \$4,807,000,000.

On page 7, line 11, increase the amount by \$6,208,000,000.

On page 7, line 12, decrease the amount by \$2,831,000,000.

On page 7, line 13, decrease the amount by \$4,063,000,000.

On page 7, line 14, decrease the amount by \$3,398,000,000.

On page 7, line 15, decrease the amount by \$3,734,000,000.

On page 7, line 16, decrease the amount by \$3,956,000,000.

On page 7, line 21, increase the amount by \$1,316,000,000.

On page 7, line 22, increase the amount by \$3,125,000,000.

On page 7, line 23, increase the amount by \$6,266,000,000.

On page 7, line 24, increase the amount by \$11,073,000,000.

On page 7, line 25, increase the amount by \$17,281,000,000.

On page 8, line 1, increase the amount by \$14,450,000,000.

On page 8, line 2, increase the amount by \$10,387,000,000.

On page 8, line 3, increase the amount by \$6,989,000,000.

On page 8, line 4, increase the amount by \$3,255,000,000.

On page 8, line 5, decrease the amount by \$701,000,000.

On page 8, line 8, increase the amount by \$1,316,000,000.

On page 8, line 9, increase the amount by \$3,125,000,000.

On page 8, line 10, increase the amount by \$6,266,000,000.

On page 8, line 11, increase the amount by \$11,073,000,000.

On page 8, line 12, increase the amount by \$17,281,000,000.

On page 8, line 13, increase the amount by \$14,450,000,000.

On page 8, line 14, increase the amount by \$10,387,000,000.

On page 8, line 15, increase the amount by \$6,989,000,000.

On page 8, line 16, increase the amount by \$3,255,000,000.

On page 8, line 17, decrease the amount by \$701,000,000.

On page 28, line 20, increase the amount by \$1,300,000,000.

On page 28, line 21, increase the amount by \$1,300,000,000.

On page 28, line 24, increase the amount by \$3,250,000,000.

On page 28, line 25, increase the amount by \$3,250,000,000.

On page 29, line 3, increase the amount by \$5,780,000,000.

On page 29, line 4, increase the amount by \$5,780,000,000.

On page 29, line 7, increase the amount by \$7,580,000,000.

On page 29, line 8, increase the amount by \$7,580,000,000.

On page 29, line 7, increase the amount by \$8,960,000,000.

On page 29, line 8, increase the amount by \$8,960,000,000.

On page 42, line 2, increase the amount by \$16,000,000.

On page 42, line 3, increase the amount by \$16,000,000.

On page 42, line 6, increase the amount by \$59,000,000.

On page 42, line 7, increase the amount by \$59,000,000.

On page 42, line 10, increase the amount by \$161,000,000.

On page 42, line 11, increase the amount by \$161,000,000.

On page 42, line 14, increase the amount by \$327,000,000.

On page 42, line 15, increase the amount by \$327,000,000.

On page 42, line 18, increase the amount by \$548,000,000.

On page 42, line 19, increase the amount by \$548,000,000.

On page 42, line 22, increase the amount by \$569,000,000.

On page 42, line 23, increase the amount by \$569,000,000.

On page 43, line 2, increase the amount by \$437,000,000.

On page 43, line 3, increase the amount by \$437,000,000.

On page 43, line 6, increase the amount by \$302,000,000.

On page 43, line 7, increase the amount by \$302,000,000.

On page 43, line 10, increase the amount by \$166,000,000.

On page 43, line 11, increase the amount by \$166,000,000.

On page 43, line 14, increase the amount by \$44,000,000.

On page 43, line 15, increase the amount by \$44,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 345

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to increasing funding for Federal investments in biomedical and basic scientific research)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO INCREASING FUNDING FOR FEDERAL INVESTMENTS IN BIOMEDICAL AND BASIC SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH.

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 increasing funding for Federal investments in scientific research, which may include helping find cures for life-threatening and chronic illnesses, increasing our national security, supporting new energy technologies, or supporting innovative solutions that advance private sector efforts to grow the economy and create millions of middle jobs, 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 817

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund to provide tax benefits to patriot employers that invest in American jobs and provide fair pay and benefits to workers and to eliminate tax benefits for corporations that ship jobs or profits overseas)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND TO PROVIDE TAX BENEFITS TO PATRIOT EMPLOYERS THAT INVEST IN AMERICAN JOBS AND PROVIDE FAIR PAY AND BENEFITS TO WORKERS AND TO ELIMINATE TAX BENEFITS FOR CORPORATIONS THAT SHIP JOBS OR PROFITS OVERSEAS.

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 income taxes paid by businesses,

which may include measures providing tax breaks for companies that have not inverted, have maintained or expanded their United States workforce, or have provided livable wages and health care, and may also include measures ending tax breaks that encourage businesses to ship jobs offshore, 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

AMENDMENT NO. 360

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendments to call up my amendment No. 360.

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

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Arizona [Mr. MCCAIN], for himself and Mr. FLAKE, proposes an amendment numbered 360.

Mr. MCCAIN. 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 deterring the migration of unaccompanied children from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO DETERRING THE MIGRATION OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN FROM EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, AND HONDURAS.

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 deterring the attempted migration of unaccompanied children from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras into the United States, which may include the expedited removal of unlawful entrants from non-contiguous countries and for providing in-county consulate processing of refugee applications, 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

AMENDMENT NO. 708

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment to call up my amendment No. 708.

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

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oregon [Mr. WYDEN], for himself and Mr. BENNET, proposes an amendment numbered 708.

Mr. WYDEN. 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 simplifying and expanding tax incentives for higher education to boost student attendance and completion)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO SIMPLIFYING AND EXPANDING TAX INCENTIVES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION.

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 simplifying and expanding tax incentives for higher education to boost student attendance and completion at colleges and vocational schools, 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. WYDEN. The first of the three amendments I call up would expand and simplify the tax credits to help students afford the sky-high costs of a college education.

Students and their families today spend hours wading through a Byzantine web of tax incentives for college and too often miss out on opportunities in the Tax Code to pay for their education. Students are taking on loan debt that weighs them down for years.

AMENDMENT NO. 791

Second, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside in order to call up the Wyden, Murray, Stabenow amendment No. 791.

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

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oregon [Mr. WYDEN], for himself, Mrs. MURRAY, and Ms. STABENOW, proposes an amendment numbered 791.

Mr. WYDEN. 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 strike reconciliation instructions to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and Finance and require regular order)
Strike title II.

Mr. WYDEN. This amendment would delete the reconciliation instructions in Section 201 of the budget resolution.

When it comes to tackling the big economic challenges in this country, the best legislation is bipartisan legislation. Using the procedural tactic called budget reconciliation is a guaranteed path to partisanship and gridlock. It would be particularly damaging in the cause of tax reform, where Democrats and Republicans understand, just as in 1986, there is an opportunity for common ground.

I also think it would be very unfortunate to use reconciliation to appeal the

Affordable Care Act. If it is repealed, America goes back to the dark days when health care was reserved for the healthy and the wealthy.

AMENDMENT NO. 870

Finally, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside in order to call up amendment No. 870.

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

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oregon [Mr. WYDEN], for himself, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. STABENOW, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. BROWN, Mr. BENNET, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. WARNER, proposes an amendment numbered 870.

Mr. WYDEN. 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 extending tax provisions expiring in 2013 or 2014 for 2 years, such as those contained in the EXPIRE Act of 2014)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO EXTENDING TAX PROVISIONS EXPIRING IN 2013 OR 2014 FOR 2 YEARS.

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 extending tax provisions that expired in 2013 or 2014 for 2 years, which may include provisions and policies like those contained in the EXPIRE Act of 2014, 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. WYDEN. This amendment deals with the stop-and-go tax cuts known as extenders. Last December, the Senate approved a package of tax extenders for the 2014 year. That law expired before the ink could dry. By New Year's Day, taxpayers were thrown back in the dark about what they will owe in the future.

Let's not repeat that mistake. A grab bag of tax breaks is nobody's idea of perfect tax policy. My amendment will definitely move the ball forward on tax policy. It will send a clear signal that the Senate is ready to put these tax incentives in place through the year 2016.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 453, 452, 457, AND 456 EN BLOC

Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment to call up my amendments Nos. 453, 452, 457 and 456 en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendments are called up en bloc.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 453

(Purpose: To establish a spending-neutral reserve fund relating to ensuring that the Secretary of Transportation prioritizes the construction of projects that are of national and regional significance and projects in high priority corridors on the National Highway System, which will improve the safe, secure, and efficient movement of people and goods through the United States and facilitate economic development and create jobs in the United States)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . SPENDING-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO PRIORITIZING THE CONSTRUCTION OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS THAT ARE OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE AND PROJECTS IN HIGH PRIORITY CORRIDORS.

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 the prioritization of the Federal investment in the infrastructure of the United States on projects that are of national and regional significance and projects in high priority corridors of the National Highway System 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 452

(Purpose: To establish a spending-neutral reserve fund relating to ensuring that the Secretary of the Interior enters into candidate conservation agreements with each of the relevant 11 Western States before the United States Fish and Wildlife Service makes a listing determination on the greater sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act of 1973)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . SPENDING-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND TO ENSURE THAT THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR ENTERS INTO CERTAIN CANDIDATE CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS WITH WESTERN STATES.

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 Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) determinations, which may include determining whether the greater sage-grouse warrants protection, 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 457

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to prohibition of Veterans Benefits Administration executive bonuses until the backlog of disability claims for veterans is eliminated)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO ELIMINATION OF CERTAIN BONUSES FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION.

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 bonuses paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs, which may include prohibitions on awards to employees responsible for eliminating the backlog of claims, 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 456

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to ensuring that medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs meet the privacy, dignity, and safety needs of women veterans)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO ENSURING THAT MEDICAL FACILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEET THE NEEDS OF WOMEN VETERANS.

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 medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs meet the needs of women veterans 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. HELLER. Mr. President, before I begin, I thank all of those involved with this intricate process. Senate Budget Committee chairman MIKE ENZI and ranking member BERNIE SANDERS have worked tirelessly leading up to this point. It certainly is not an easy process, and I do not want their efforts to go unnoticed.

I stand here today to discuss many important issues that concern my constituents across the great State of Nevada. These are issues that I hope to address during this year's budget process to improve the quality of life in the Silver State.

I have filed several amendments to this year's budget ranging from infrastructure and tourism, to medical care at VA facilities, and to protecting our way of life in Nevada with the support of the Second Amendment. These amendments will deliver needed solutions.

Developing critical infrastructure for Nevada is a top priority of mine. It re-

mains the first step toward long-term job growth and sustainability. Trucking, tourism, and trade needs are met when proper infrastructure is in place.

In fact, I filed amendment No. 466 that would help promote travel and tourism here in the United States. Last year, over 40 million visitors came to the Silver State, supporting almost 400,000 jobs. The future Interstate 11, and the many other important highway projects throughout our Nation, have the potential to open more markets for tourism and trade, which will create jobs and improve our economy. In Nevada, we are a State that welcomes more visitors, both domestic and international, on a yearly basis. We want more people to experience all our State has to offer and strive to provide the best services to those already visiting Nevada.

I recognize there are limited resources dedicated for transportation and infrastructure. I believe it is important we prioritize roads and bridges that give us the biggest bang for our buck. It is important we expand high priority corridors and projects of regional and national significance, because those are the types of projects that will spur long-term economic development.

One example of these critical projects is the proposed I-11 corridor. This future highway would connect Phoenix and Las Vegas, the two largest cities in the Nation not connected by an interstate, cutting the travel time by over 1 hour. It would provide new economic development opportunities in the Southwest and would play a large role in boosting the global competitiveness of the region. My amendment, amendment No. 453 would prioritize Federal investments in infrastructure projects with national and regional significance such as the I-11 corridor.

In Nevada, we have a local resident called the sage grouse. Listing the sage grouse as an endangered species would have a devastating impact on Nevada's economy. Like many of the other States, Nevada's Ecosystem Council has spent years diligently developing a robust action plan to avoid a listing. Further collaboration between the Federal Government, the State, and local stakeholders will go a much longer way to protect and balance both Nevadans' way of life and the sage grouse population. My amendment, amendment No. 452, says the Department of the Interior should enter into State conservation agreements with each of the 11 States with sage grouse populations. State plans should be given the opportunity to show results before the Federal Government intervenes.

If the Federal Government adds the sage grouse to the endangered species list, it would devastate rural economies across these affected States, including Nevada. States must be given an opportunity to show they can foster a sustainable sage grouse population.

Since becoming a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, ad-

ressing the backlog of disability claims has remained one of my top priorities. The fact that Nevada's veterans continue to have one of the longest waiting times in the Nation at 257 days on average is unacceptable. That is why I invited VA Secretary Robert McDonald to come and see what is going on in the Silver State. It is also why I offered amendment No. 457. This amendment says we should prohibit bonuses for certain VA executives until the backlog of veterans' disability claims is eliminated. Our veterans have been waiting too long, and my amendment brings us one step closer to eradicating the backlog.

Furthermore, ensuring America's veterans receive timely and quality health care is also a promise our nation must keep. And as our military continues to have more women in uniform, VA facilities must adapt to the meet their specific health care requirements. That is why my amendment No. 456 is so important because it keeps this promise by ensuring VA medical facilities properly meet the needs of women veterans. Safety, privacy, and dignity should be accounted for in every VA hospital and clinic. As I continue holding the VA accountable in my role on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, quality health care and timely benefits will remain a priority of mine, and it is a priority now as we consider the budget resolution.

As an avid sportsman and gun-owner, I enjoy our way of life in Nevada, but I am concerned by actions from this administration that would directly infringe on the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens.

Recently, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, ATF, issued a proposal that would ban popular .223 caliber ammunitions, severely limiting access to one of the most widely used cartridges in America for sporting purposes. That is why I filed amendment No. 454 to protect law-abiding American citizens' Second Amendment rights and prohibit the ATF from reclassifying ammunition primarily intended for sporting purposes. This issue is important to Nevadans, and it is important to me. Amendment No. 454 makes sure that the constitutional rights of Nevadans are protected.

There are an estimated 400,000 untested rape kits sitting in law enforcement and crime lab storage facilities across the Nation. Each one of these untested rape kits represents a missed opportunity to help bring justice and healing to a survivor of sexual assault. That is why I filed amendment No. 455. This amendment prioritizes the elimination of the rape kit backlog to hold perpetrators accountable and help prevent these despicable crimes from happening in the first place.

Finally, I would like to discuss a sense of the Senate amendment I filed regarding the bipartisan principles of no budget, no pay legislation, Amendment No. 451. My sense of the Senate would endorse the solutions in No

Budget, No Pay that would encourage Members of Congress to come to the table and work together to pass their own budget and appropriations bills on time in order to receive pay. It just makes sense—if Members of Congress do not do their jobs, they should not get paid. And by the way, we also say pay is not retroactive.

My amendments take the needs of Nevadans into consideration and make them a national priority.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in order to make them a reality.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 343, 391, 392, 394, AND 802 EN BLOC

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment to call up the following amendments en bloc: Nos. 343, 391, 392, 394, and 802.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendments are called up en bloc.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 343

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to preserving mandatory appropriations for agricultural conservation programs)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO PRESERVING MANDATORY APPROPRIATIONS FOR AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION PROGRAMS.

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 the importance of preserving mandatory appropriations for agricultural conservation programs, which may include financial and technical assistance, conservation easements, and working land management assistance, 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 391

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to the expansion of access to the income tax credit for employee health insurance expenses of small employers)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO EXPANSION OF ACCESS TO THE INCOME TAX CREDIT FOR EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE EXPENSES OF SMALL EMPLOYERS.

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 expansion of access to the income tax credit for employee health insurance ex-

penses of small employers 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 392

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to promoting the use of college savings accounts while students are in elementary school and secondary school)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO PROMOTING THE USE OF COLLEGE SAVINGS ACCOUNTS.

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 promoting the use of college savings accounts while students are in elementary school and secondary school, 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 394

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to special treatment of the income tax credit for research expenditures for startup companies)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO SPECIAL TREATMENT OF THE INCOME TAX CREDIT FOR RESEARCH EXPENDITURES FOR STARTUP COMPANIES.

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 special treatment of the income tax credit for research expenditures for startup companies 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 802

(Purpose: To offset the costs of the war against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria)

On page 5, line 5, increase the amount by \$8,800,000,000.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak about our Nation's war against ISIS and why we must pay for it responsibly. As our Nation's Armed Forces continue their critical mission to degrade and destroy ISIS, which is already months underway, we need to consider another part of our strategy—paying for the war. This is not a new concept. Our Nation has a long history of paying for our military missions. In fact, every war since the Revolutionary War, to the first Gulf War, was paid for.

Through each of our Nation's armed conflicts, new revenue streams not

only provided the resources our military needed, they reminded the American people that our country was at war and we all needed to contribute to the effort. But after 14 years and 2 wars that have cost our Nation trillions of dollars, I fear we have forgotten this important lesson from our history.

We cannot write another blank check for a war. Paying for a war against ISIS is the right thing to do. It is fiscally, morally, and militarily responsible. As we continue to debate this war authorization in Congress, we need to be honest with the American people and each other about what it will cost our Nation. That is why, as we debate the budget this week, I have offered an amendment that requires us to raise the revenue to pay for the fight against ISIS. The American people deserve no less.

I urge my colleagues to join me on this amendment to pay for a critically important war against ISIS and ensure we fight this battle together as one country.

Thank you.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

AMENDMENT NO. 432

(Purpose: To provide additional resources to create the opportunity for more Americans to obtain a higher education and advanced job skills by supporting two free years of community college paid for by raising revenue through requiring millionaires and billionaires to pay their fair share)

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up my amendment No. 432, which is cosponsored by Senators SCHUMER, SANDERS, and STABENOW.

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

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Wisconsin [Ms. BALDWIN], for herself, Mr. SANDERS, and Mr. SCHUMER, proposes an amendment numbered 432.

Ms. BALDWIN. 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 the RECORD of Tuesday, March 24, 2015, under "Text of Amendments.")

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, my amendment would create a free community college program, making a bold investment in our Nation's students, its workforce, and the future of our economy. It pays for this investment in a balanced way, and my amendment would actually reduce the deficit by enacting the Buffett rule—asking millionaires and billionaires to pay their fair share of taxes while giving our students a fair shot at the opportunities a higher education brings. I believe every student in America deserves a fair shot and an affordable education, and I believe a college education should be a path to the middle class, not a path into debt.

Inspired by programs in Tennessee and Chicago, this spring President Obama proposed a program that would allow students to attend community college for 2 years at no cost. This will give students who are willing to work hard the opportunity to obtain a certificate, an industry-recognized credential, or associate's degree. That provides the skills they need to access in-demand jobs or earn credits they can transfer into a 4-year institution.

I would urge all my colleagues to support the Baldwin, Schumer, Sanders, Stabenow amendment in order to support higher education, to support free community college, and invest in our students and our workforce.

AMENDMENT NO. 436

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside in order to call up Baldwin amendment No. 436.

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

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Wisconsin [Ms. BALDWIN], for herself, Mr. WARNER, Mrs. MCCASKILL, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE, propose an amendment numbered 436.

Ms. BALDWIN. 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 preserve the point of order against reconciliation legislation that would increase the deficit or reduce a surplus)

Strike section 405.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, amendment No. 436 is also cosponsored by Senators WARNER, MCCASKILL, and WHITEHOUSE. This amendment is very simple. It would strike section 405 of the chairman's mark. Section 405 eliminated a point of order against reconciliation legislation which either increases the deficit or would reduce a surplus.

I see no good reason why we should be making it easier to increase the debt and deficit that the majority claims to care so much about. If their reconciliation legislation is so important, then they ought to pay for it. If this amendment fails to be adopted, we will find ourselves in the same situation we were in the early 2000s.

In 2001 and 2003, the then-Republican majority used reconciliation to pass a \$1.3 trillion tax cut in 2001 and then another \$350 billion tax cut in 2003. Both of these efforts were entirely unpaid for. Not a single dime was offset. So much for fiscal responsibility. It was not until 2007, when Chairman Conrad took control of the Senate Budget Committee, when a point of order was put into place to stop reconciliation from being used as a tool to add to the deficit. Let's not use the reconciliation process to add to our deficit.

I urge my colleagues to support my commonsense amendment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

AMENDMENT NO. 694

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and call up amendment No. 694.

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

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from West Virginia [Mr. MANCHIN] proposes an amendment numbered 694.

Mr. MANCHIN. 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 investing in advanced fossil energy technology research and development)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO INVESTING IN ADVANCED FOSSIL ENERGY TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT.

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 investing in advanced fossil energy technology research and development at the Department of Energy, to reduce the impacts of climate change while ensuring the reliability of the electric grid, 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. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I agree with my friends that we cannot deny that climate change is real and that humans do contribute to it. However, we also cannot deny that we will continue to rely on fossil fuels for decades to come, including for the bulk of our electricity. Coal, specifically, is one of the only two baseload fuels we have that we are able to run 24/7, rain or shine.

With new regulations, we are facing more pressure on our baseload coal. Last winter during the polar vortex, the PGM system that provides electricity for West Virginia and the electricity we are using right now in DC will be running full capacity. We saw a record number of plant outages when they were most needed.

Further threats to our reliability could result in rolling blackouts, which puts the lives of the most vulnerable, the elderly, the sick, and the poor at risk. The Fossil Energy Research and Development Program at the Department of Energy supports a group of 1,000 projects, including \$7 billion of private sector investment, representing

55,000 jobs across the United States. Research supported in this program has led to cleaner burning plants over the past decade, and we have reduced pollutants and increased the efficiency of coal-fired powerplants.

Right now, DOE has \$8 billion of fossil energy loan guarantees that need to be utilized. The best way to reduce impacts of climate change while still ensuring a reliable electric grid is to invest in the research and development of advanced fossil fuel technology. To combat climate change, I would ask for the support of this amendment.

AMENDMENT NO. 578

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and call up amendment No. 578.

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

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from West Virginia [Mr. MANCHIN] proposes an amendment numbered 578.

Mr. MANCHIN. 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 addressing methamphetamine abuse in the United States)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO ADDRESSING METHAMPHETAMINE ABUSE IN THE UNITED STATES.

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 methamphetamine abuse in the United States, 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. MANCHIN. Mr. President, this amendment would encourage our country to increase our investment in combatting methamphetamine use. Meth abuse has devastated communities across the country. Meth can cause violent behavior and psychosis. In the long run, it changes the way the brain works, causing long-term emotional and cognitive problems.

Domestic meth labs, fueled by demand from addicts, endanger communities and the environment. In 2013, in West Virginia, law enforcement officials seized 533 meth labs. That was an 86-percent increase over 2012. I have fought in my State to address meth abuse from every angle: reducing access to the products that are used to make meth, taking down meth labs, and improving treatment for addicts.

But this is a national problem, not just a West Virginia problem. It requires a national response. During

committee markup I had a similar amendment to enhance investments in efforts to reduce prescription drug abuse and heroin abuse, which passed by voice vote.

This drug addiction is devastating families and communities all over America. Too many young people have lost before their lives begin, and too many adults are being pulled away from productive lives. We must change. Congress must do more to combat meth abuse. That is why I urge the support of my amendment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 700, 867, AND 895 EN BLOC

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside; further, that three amendments be called up en bloc. They are amendments Nos. 700, 867, and 895.

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

The amendments are called up en bloc.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 700

(Purpose: To ensure high-income earners pay a fair share in taxes and to use the revenue to invest in repairing our Nation's bridges, coastal infrastructure, and damage from wildfires)

On page 4, line 1, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 4, line 2, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 4, line 3, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 4, line 4, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 4, line 5, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 4, line 6, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 4, line 7, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 4, line 8, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 4, line 9, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 4, line 10, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 4, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 5, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 6, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 7, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 8, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 9, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 10, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 11, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 12, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 13, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 17, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 18, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 19, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 20, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 21, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 22, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 23, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 24, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 5, line 25, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 6, line 1, increase the amount by \$7,000,000,000.

On page 19, line 15, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 19, line 16, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 19, line 19, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 19, line 20, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 19, line 23, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 19, line 24, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 20, line 2, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 20, line 3, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 20, line 6, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 20, line 7, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 20, line 10, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 20, line 11, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 20, line 14, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 20, line 15, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 20, line 18, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 20, line 19, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 20, line 22, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 20, line 23, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 21, line 2, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 21, line 3, increase the amount by \$3,000,000,000.

On page 24, line 15, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 24, line 16, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 24, line 19, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 24, line 20, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 24, line 23, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 24, line 24, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 25, line 2, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 25, line 3, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 25, line 6, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 25, line 7, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 25, line 10, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 25, line 11, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 25, line 14, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 25, line 15, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 25, line 18, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 25, line 19, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 25, line 22, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 25, line 23, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 26, line 2, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

On page 26, line 3, increase the amount by \$4,000,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 867

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to making it more difficult for corporations and billionaires to secretly influence elections by making unlimited undisclosed campaign expenditures, and to prevent such entities from evading campaign finance law, including through making false statements to government agencies)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND TO MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR CORPORATIONS TO SECRETLY INFLUENCE ELECTIONS.

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 campaign finance reform, including disclosure of campaign spending and the prevention and enforcement of false statements to the Government, 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 895

(Purpose: To prohibit budget resolutions that support cutting over \$1,000,000,000,000 in spending without identifying specific programmatic effects)

At the end of subtitle A of title IV, add the following:

SEC. 4 . POINT OF ORDER AGAINST BUDGET RESOLUTIONS THAT SUPPORT CUTTING OVER \$1,000,000,000,000 IN SPENDING WITHOUT IDENTIFYING SPECIFIC PROGRAMMATIC EFFECTS.

(a) POINT OF ORDER.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider a concurrent resolution on the budget that would reduce new budget authority or outlays during the fiscal years covered under the resolution by more than \$1,000,000,000,000 (as compared to the fiscal year before the budget year for the resolution) unless the committee print accompanying the resolution identifies the specific programmatic effects proposed to meet the recommended levels and amounts in the resolution.

(b) WAIVER AND APPEAL.—Subsection (a) may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under subsection (a).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 632 AND 633 EN BLOC

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside so I can call up amendments Nos. 632 and 633 en bloc.

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

The amendments are called up en bloc.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 632

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to providing reasonable accommodations for pregnant workers)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PREGNANT WORKERS.

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 efforts to increase employment opportunities and prevent employment discrimination, which may include measures to prevent employment discrimination against pregnant workers, to provide pregnant workers with a right to workplace accommodations, and to ensure that employers comply with requirements regarding such workplace accommodations for pregnant workers, 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 2020 through 2025.

AMENDMENT NO. 633

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to enhancing the child and dependent care tax credit)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 3 ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO ENHANCING THE CHILD AND DEPENDENT CARE TAX CREDIT.

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 enhancing the child and dependent care tax credit in order to offset the growing costs of child care, including by making the credit fully refundable, 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 2020 through 2025.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, just a brief description of both. Both are deficit-neutral reserve funds. The first provides reasonable accommodations for pregnant workers. That is No. 632. We have had a standard in place for a quarter century pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act that individuals who have a disability in the workplace are given reasonable accommodations at the worksite.

We should have the same for pregnant workers. We have a case that was decided today by the Supreme Court, *Young v. UPS*. This was a mixed result, but I think Peggy Young, the plaintiff in that case, got a good result. But there is still not a clear standard which we could place in the law, just like we have in the context of an individual with a disability in the workforce. So we need a clear standard to increase employment opportunities and prevent employment discrimination against pregnant workers.

Secondly, amendment No. 633 is a further development of existing poli-

cies as it relates to childcare. We have had in the Tax Code now for a long time a tax credit for families who are paying for the cost of childcare.

That tax provision is a way to provide tax relief to offset childcare expenses for families. The problem, though, is under current law—as it is currently structured—it doesn't provide the kind of relief it should. In fact, the way it is designed now, very few families are able to benefit from it. I want to make it—I think it should be refundable. That is the best way to provide a measure of relief that is not there now for families.

Childcare for some families—if it is not the most expensive part of their budget, it is often second or third—thousands of dollars. It has gone up across the country by some 70 percent in less than 30 years. We need to help families be able to pay for something as essential as childcare. That is what that amendment is about.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 842, 843, 952, AND 953 EN BLOC

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment to call up en bloc amendments Nos. 842, 843, 952, and 953.

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

The amendments are called up en bloc.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 842

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to consumer financial protection)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION.

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 consumer financial protection, which may include measures ensuring that the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection has authority and autonomy to continue to protect consumers from predatory lending, misleading or abusive behavior in the financial marketplace, or other unscrupulous practices, 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 2020 through 2025.

AMENDMENT NO. 843

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to restoring reductions in the Republican budget to the Stafford loan program that would mandate that students currently in college pay interest on their loans before they have received their education benefits, to make college more affordable, to reduce the debt burden of students, and to help graduates afford to pay back student loans)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO REDUCING THE COST OF ATTENDANCE AT AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND ENSURING THAT STUDENTS CAN AFFORD TO PAY BACK STUDENT LOANS BY AVOIDING NEW MANDATES THAT STUDENTS PAY INTEREST.

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 reducing the cost of attending an institution of higher education and ensuring that students who graduate can afford to pay back their student loans, which may include avoiding new mandates that students pay interest on Stafford loans while attending an institution of higher education 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 2020 through 2025.

AMENDMENT NO. 952

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to establishing a more level playing field in trade agreements)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO TRADE AGREEMENTS.

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 trade agreements, which may include measures ensuring that trade agreements put United States manufacturers on a level playing field with manufacturers in foreign countries with low environmental and wage standards, 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 2020 through 2025.

AMENDMENT NO. 953

(Purpose: To save student financial aid and reduce the student loan debt levels in the Republican budget by 15 percent by eliminating new mandated interest charged while students are still in school)

On page 6, line 6, increase the amount by \$2,031,000,000.

On page 6, line 7, increase the amount by \$3,776,000,000.

On page 6, line 8, increase the amount by \$4,147,000,000.

On page 6, line 9, increase the amount by \$4,479,000,000.

On page 6, line 10, increase the amount by \$4,785,000,000.

On page 6, line 11, increase the amount by \$5,095,000,000.

On page 6, line 12, increase the amount by \$5,404,000,000.

On page 6, line 13, increase the amount by \$5,735,000,000.

On page 6, line 14, increase the amount by \$6,075,000,000.

On page 6, line 15, increase the amount by \$6,387,000,000.

On page 6, line 19, increase the amount by \$1,266,000,000.

On page 6, line 20, increase the amount by \$2,876,000,000.

On page 6, line 21, increase the amount by \$3,577,000,000.

On page 6, line 22, increase the amount by \$3,899,000,000.

On page 6, line 23, increase the amount by \$4,195,000,000.
 On page 6, line 24, increase the amount by \$4,490,000,000.
 On page 6, line 25, increase the amount by \$4,784,000,000.
 On page 7, line 1, increase the amount by \$5,095,000,000.
 On page 7, line 2, increase the amount by \$5,420,000,000.
 On page 7, line 3, increase the amount by \$5,712,000,000.
 On page 7, line 7, increase the amount by \$1,266,000,000.
 On page 7, line 8, increase the amount by \$2,876,000,000.
 On page 7, line 9, increase the amount by \$3,577,000,000.
 On page 7, line 10, increase the amount by \$3,899,000,000.
 On page 7, line 11, increase the amount by \$4,195,000,000.
 On page 7, line 12, increase the amount by \$4,490,000,000.
 On page 7, line 13, increase the amount by \$4,784,000,000.
 On page 7, line 14, increase the amount by \$5,095,000,000.
 On page 7, line 15, increase the amount by \$5,420,000,000.
 On page 7, line 16, increase the amount by \$5,712,000,000.
 On page 7, line 21, increase the amount by \$1,266,000,000.
 On page 7, line 22, increase the amount by \$4,142,000,000.
 On page 7, line 23, increase the amount by \$7,719,000,000.
 On page 7, line 24, increase the amount by \$11,618,000,000.
 On page 7, line 25, increase the amount by \$15,813,000,000.
 On page 8, line 1, increase the amount by \$20,303,000,000.
 On page 8, line 2, increase the amount by \$25,087,000,000.
 On page 8, line 3, increase the amount by \$30,182,000,000.
 On page 8, line 4, increase the amount by \$35,602,000,000.
 On page 8, line 5, increase the amount by \$41,314,000,000.
 On page 8, line 8, increase the amount by \$1,266,000,000.
 On page 8, line 9, increase the amount by \$4,142,000,000.
 On page 8, line 10, increase the amount by \$7,719,000,000.
 On page 8, line 11, increase the amount by \$11,618,000,000.
 On page 8, line 12, increase the amount by \$15,813,000,000.
 On page 8, line 13, increase the amount by \$20,303,000,000.
 On page 8, line 14, increase the amount by \$25,087,000,000.
 On page 8, line 15, increase the amount by \$30,182,000,000.
 On page 8, line 16, increase the amount by \$35,602,000,000.
 On page 8, line 17, increase the amount by \$41,314,000,000.
 On page 28, line 20, increase the amount by \$2,015,000,000.
 On page 28, line 21, increase the amount by \$1,250,000,000.
 On page 28, line 24, increase the amount by \$3,700,000,000.
 On page 28, line 25, increase the amount by \$2,800,000,000.
 On page 29, line 3, increase the amount by \$3,945,000,000.
 On page 29, line 4, increase the amount by \$3,375,000,000.
 On page 29, line 7, increase the amount by \$4,125,000,000.
 On page 29, line 8, increase the amount by \$3,545,000,000.

On page 29, line 11, increase the amount by \$4,270,000,000.
 On page 29, line 12, increase the amount by \$3,680,000,000.
 On page 29, line 15, increase the amount by \$4,405,000,000.
 On page 29, line 16, increase the amount by \$3,800,000,000.
 On page 29, line 19, increase the amount by \$4,530,000,000.
 On page 29, line 20, increase the amount by \$3,910,000,000.
 On page 29, line 23, increase the amount by \$4,665,000,000.
 On page 29, line 24, increase the amount by \$4,025,000,000.
 On page 30, line 2, increase the amount by \$4,795,000,000.
 On page 30, line 3, increase the amount by \$4,140,000,000.
 On page 30, line 6, increase the amount by \$4,925,000,000.
 On page 30, line 7, increase the amount by \$4,250,000,000.
 On page 42, line 2, increase the amount by \$16,000,000.
 On page 42, line 3, increase the amount by \$16,000,000.
 On page 42, line 6, increase the amount by \$76,000,000.
 On page 42, line 7, increase the amount by \$76,000,000.
 On page 42, line 10, increase the amount by \$202,000,000.
 On page 42, line 11, increase the amount by \$202,000,000.
 On page 42, line 14, increase the amount by \$354,000,000.
 On page 42, line 15, increase the amount by \$354,000,000.
 On page 42, line 18, increase the amount by \$515,000,000.
 On page 42, line 19, increase the amount by \$515,000,000.
 On page 42, line 22, increase the amount by \$690,000,000.
 On page 42, line 23, increase the amount by \$690,000,000.
 On page 43, line 2, increase the amount by \$874,000,000.
 On page 43, line 3, increase the amount by \$874,000,000.
 On page 43, line 6, increase the amount by \$1,070,000,000.
 On page 43, line 7, increase the amount by \$1,070,000,000.
 On page 43, line 10, increase the amount by \$1,280,000,000.
 On page 43, line 11, increase the amount by \$1,280,000,000.
 On page 43, line 14, increase the amount by \$1,462,000,000.
 On page 43, line 15, increase the amount by \$1,462,000,000.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

AMENDMENT NO. 825

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and that I be permitted to call up amendment No. 825.

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

The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Connecticut [Mr. BLUMENTHAL] proposes an amendment numbered 825.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. 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 expand the deficit-neutral reserve fund for veterans and servicemembers)

On page 54, between lines 20 and 21, insert the following:

(6) vocational programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs, which may include legislation that improves vocational rehabilitation and counseling for veterans with service-connected disabilities and members of the Armed Forces with severe injuries or illness;

(7) improving research at the Department of Veterans Affairs, which may include legislation that expands research on post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, or toxic exposures;

(8) improving the delivery of health care and benefits to veterans or members of the Armed Forces, which may include legislation that improves delivery of health care and benefits to victims of military sexual trauma;

(9) improving the delivery of care and benefits to veterans, which may include legislation that enhances oversight and investigations by the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General;

(10) maintaining and enhancing access, choice, and accountability in veterans care through the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-146);

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, this amendment builds on the reserve fund in section 307 to provide for better medical research into the issues affecting women in our military, most particularly women who become veterans, which is a neglected aspect of health care in our Veterans Affairs health care system.

It focuses on military sexual trauma, which is continuing to be a scourge in the military, and its effects. But it also deals more generally with the need for research into post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury, which is unfortunately lagging in our Veterans Affairs system, as determined as our VA is to do more of it.

It would also build on existing programs for job training and vocational rehabilitation so our veterans entering the job market and seeking to become productive in well-paying jobs will be able to fulfill that ambition. It essentially fills in some of the gaps left by the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act which this body passed not long ago, to meet the emergency as well as the sustained needs of our veterans that are unfulfilled by our present VA.

It is our obligation to do better for our Nation's heroes, keep faith with them and leave no veteran behind when it comes to jobs and health care.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I would like to speak briefly about four of the amendments I have brought up this evening to provide some background and detail.

AMENDMENT NO. 391

First, I would like to speak about amendment No. 391, an amendment I have offered that would help small

businesses to provide health insurance to their employees.

The Affordable Care Act made important strides toward making health care more affordable and accessible to millions of Americans. One of the ways the ACA was intended to expand coverage was through business tax credits, to help business owners who want to do right by their workers and provide health insurance. These tax credits were a good first step.

But over the past 2 years, it has become clear we need to do more, to expand and simplify them to help more small businesses. Although many people I speak with have benefitted greatly from the new coverage afforded by the ACA, I have also spoken to many small business owners in Delaware who have wanted to take advantage of the tax credit but could not because it was too complicated or they did not qualify.

We need to listen to these concerns and strengthen our health care system so it works for everyone. That is why I am offering my amendment to expand access to the ACA's small business tax credit, which is based on legislation I have introduced with eight of my colleagues. The small business owners I speak with who do not see their employees as labor costs or lines on a balance sheet, who see them as members of their family and a key part of their business and community, those small business owners want to do right by their workers and help ensure that their health care needs are covered.

We should do everything we can to help them meet those goals. So I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this amendment to expand health care tax credits for small business owners.

If I might very briefly speak to the three remaining amendments I have made pending.

AMENDMENT NO. 394

Amendment No. 394 is cosponsored by Republican Senator PAT ROBERTS of Kansas and is also cosponsored by Senator SCHUMER. It is the startup innovation credit. It makes the research and development tax credit accessible to early-stage and startup companies, an important way that we can take a long-established tax credit that is of real benefit to significant, profitable companies that invest heavily in R&D and make it accessible to those fast-growing, early-stage companies in our economy.

AMENDMENT NO. 392

Second, I have the college savings bill. This is amendment No. 392 with Senator RUBIO of Florida. It is a deficit-neutral reserve fund that encourages the use of college savings accounts. Study after study has shown that if young children have even as little as \$500 in a savings account for college, they are three times more likely to enroll in college.

Access is also reliant on affordability. College savings accounts make college more affordable and thus more accessible, but it also lifts young peo-

ple's sights and helps them focus on the importance of a college education.

AMENDMENT NO. 343

The last amendment is No. 343, which provides for support for farm bill conservation programs, which have been cut over the last 5 years by \$2 billion.

It is important that we preserve the long bipartisan-supported conservation programs in our farm bill that make a huge difference for farms of all kinds across our Nation.

I urge my colleagues to support each of my amendments I discussed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

AMENDMENT NOS. 341, 539, AND 795 EN BLOC

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside to call up my amendment Nos. 341, 539, and 795 en bloc.

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

The amendments are called up en bloc.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 341

(Purpose: To establish a spending-neutral reserve fund relating to the promotion of United States offshore energy production)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . SPENDING-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO THE PROMOTION OF UNITED STATES OFFSHORE ENERGY PRODUCTION.

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 the expansion of United States offshore energy production that would result in American job growth, lower energy prices, economic growth, and stronger national security 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 539

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to improving Medicaid based on successful and bipartisan State demonstration projects)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO IMPROVING MEDICAID BASED ON SUCCESSFUL AND BIPARTISAN STATE DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS.

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 initiatives that would improve the Medicaid program and provide stable and predictable funding for long-term services and supports under the program, including initiatives that are based on successful and bipartisan State demonstration projects, by the amounts provided in such legislation for such purpose, 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 795

(Purpose: To establish a spending-neutral reserve fund relating to authorizing Federal permitting for manufacturing and energy construction projects relating to national primary or secondary ambient air quality standard for ozone lower than a certain existing standard)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . SPENDING-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO AUTHORIZING FEDERAL PERMITTING FOR MANUFACTURING AND ENERGY CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS RELATING TO NATIONAL PRIMARY OR SECONDARY AMBIENT AIR QUALITY STANDARD FOR OZONE LOWER THAN A CERTAIN EXISTING STANDARD.

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 the regulation by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency of the national primary or secondary ambient air quality standard for ozone, which may include a prohibition on withholding Federal permits for manufacturing and energy construction projects in States that are in nonattainment with the most recent effective ozone national primary or secondary ambient air quality standard, 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. CASSIDY. Mr. President, speaking first to amendment No. 341, a principal challenge in our society today is how do we create better jobs with better benefits for working families.

There are some industries that clearly have done that. Those include the energy industry and, by extension, the low cost energy being produced domestically that in turn is creating new manufacturing jobs.

To further this process, I will first point out that over 85 percent of the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf is closed off to energy exploration and production.

Opening the American OCS, as it is called, will provide hundreds of thousands of jobs and increase our national security by increasing our energy security.

My amendment encourages the security and these jobs by opening up America's Outer Continental Shelf to energy exploration and production.

Amendment No. 539. I am a doctor. I have been working in the public hospital system of Louisiana for the last 25 years caring for the uninsured. I am so aware of the importance of safety-net programs such as Medicaid. I point out, though, that Medicaid is a broken program—so broken that it is bankrupting State governments and contributing to our runaway national debt.

The question is how do we preserve this important program but, at the same time, also preserve the financial integrity of our State government, of our Federal Government, and, if you will, ultimately the pocketbook of the taxpayer.

This amendment would build upon proven models that will provide financial security for the patients who benefit from Medicaid as well as for the States that provide those benefits for those Medicaid patients.

This is an important beginning to reform Medicaid to preserve its benefits, but, again, to protect the American taxpayer.

Lastly, amendment No. 795. I return to what I said earlier. A chief challenge now is how do we create better jobs with better benefits for working families. Those jobs oftentimes are in construction, mining, and manufacturing.

The EPA is promulgating new regulations which they estimate for ambient air quality standards, which they estimate the cost of compliance will be \$3.9 billion in the year 2025.

This is estimated to decrease our gross domestic product by \$140 billion, a \$3.9 billion cost, leading to a \$140 billion decrease in our economy. Inevitably, there are lost jobs associated with it, working families that are less well off.

The EPA would prevent construction of manufacturing and energy-intensive enterprises.

My amendment ensures the American energy and manufacturing renaissance is not interrupted by EPA's costly regulation. It preserves those jobs for the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

AMENDMENT NO. 715

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside, and on behalf of Senator BENNET call up amendment No. 715.

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

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Delaware [Mr. COONS], for Mr. BENNET, proposes an amendment numbered 715.

Mr. COONS. 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 create clean energy jobs through predictable and fair incentives for renewable energy)

On page 55, beginning with line 24, strike through line 2 on page 56 and insert the following:

(4) operations and administration of the Department of the Treasury; or

(5) creating clean energy jobs, including extending over a reasonable period of time, as a bridge to tax reform, expired and expiring tax credits for renewable energy production and investment,

Mr. COONS. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AMENDMENTS NOS. 607 AND 743 EN BLOC

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, at this time I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside to call up Senator THUNE's amendments Nos. 607 and 743 en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendments are called up en bloc.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 607

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund to allow for the permanent elimination of the Federal estate tax)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND TO PERMANENTLY ELIMINATE THE FEDERAL ESTATE TAX.

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 changes in the Federal income tax laws, which may include eliminating the Federal estate tax, by the amounts provided in such legislation for that purpose, 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 743

(Purpose: To reduce funding for the General Services Administration by \$1,000,000 until 50 percent of counties in nonattainment for the 1997 National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ground-level ozone as of January 30, 2015, achieve the air quality standard set forth in the 1997 NAAQS, and direct those funds to the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency for the purpose of helping municipalities reach attainment with the 2008 NAAQS for ground-level ozone, acknowledging that (1) given limited State and Federal resources and the delay of the Administrator in issuing to States implementation guidance for the 2008 ground-level ozone NAAQS, priority should be given to achieving the 2008 standard, (2) the Administrator has not sufficiently implemented that standard, (3) focusing by the Administrator on the most polluted areas that are in nonattainment with that standard would benefit public health, and (4) promulgating a lower standard at this time would impose undue costs on the economy and workforce of the United States)

On page 20, line 13, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 20, line 17, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 20, line 21, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 20, line 22, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 20, line 25, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 21, line 1, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 21, line 4, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 21, line 5, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 21, line 8, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 21, line 9, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 21, line 12, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 21, line 13, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 21, line 16, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 21, line 17, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 21, line 20, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 21, line 21, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 21, line 24, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 21, line 25, increase the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 43, line 19, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 43, line 23, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 44, line 2, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 44, line 3, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 44, line 6, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 44, line 7, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 44, line 10, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 44, line 11, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 44, line 14, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 44, line 15, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 44, line 18, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 44, line 19, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 44, line 22, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 44, line 23, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 45, line 2, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 45, line 3, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 45, line 6, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

On page 45, line 7, decrease the amount by \$1,000,000.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 838 AND 770 EN BLOC

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside to call up my amendments Nos. 838 and 770 en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendments are called up en bloc.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 838

(Purpose: To establish a spending-neutral reserve fund relating to the disposal of certain Federal land)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . SPENDING-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO THE DISPOSAL OF CERTAIN FEDERAL LAND.

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 initiatives to sell or transfer to, or exchange with, a State or local government any Federal land that is not within the boundaries of a National Park, National Preserve, or National Monument, 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 770

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to the construction of Arctic polar icebreakers)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF ARCTIC POLAR ICEBREAKERS.

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 the construction of Arctic polar icebreakers, 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.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I have two amendments that I want to speak to very briefly this evening that I hope we will have an opportunity to consider tomorrow when we move to a very accelerated process. One of them relates to lands and one relates to water—our oceans and how we move about on our oceans.

The first amendment I would like to speak to is an amendment that would establish a neutral reserve fund for land sales, transfers, and exchanges.

Before I get to describing that, I want to take just a couple of minutes and speak to the overall budget itself in comparison and contrast to that submitted by the President. The budget before us is a stark contrast to the President's request, which simply pretended that sequestration didn't exist, never came remotely close to balancing, and would have led to the return of trillion dollar deficits by 2025.

The Republican budget we have in front of us, as compared to the President's request, while far from perfect—believe me, far from perfect—does present a very significant choice between a direction on energy that takes us backwards and a proposal that we see laid out in this Republican budget that gives us a clear choice when it comes to the future of our energy and natural resources policy.

The President's budget featured tens of billions of dollars of tax hikes and fees for our Nation's oil, gas, and coal producers. It would have stripped away offshore revenue sharing, which is a matter of fairness and should be expanded to all coastal producing States.

I know that is an issue the Chair and I agree on.

The President's budget also ignored basic responsibilities such as cleaning up abandoned legacy wells that the Federal Government drilled. They drilled these years ago, decades ago, and while we have seen major spending increases at most agencies and departments, in the one area where they are obligated to do the cleanup, we are not seeing that addressed. The President's budget would have done nothing to promote resource development even in places where there is overwhelming public support for it, such as my State of Alaska, which has seen restriction after restriction placed upon it by this administration. I have had an opportunity to speak many times on this floor about that.

Instead, the President sought new programs to subsidize the high costs of his regulatory plans, and he has tried to find ways to avert the serious consequences, such as the weakening of the reliability of our electric grid that will consequently fall on its weight.

Ultimately, the President's budget would have led to lower energy and mineral production in our country. It would have lowered energy and mineral security. It would have led to fewer jobs, lower revenues, higher prices, and higher dependence on others. It would have lavished subsidies as it deepens our debt. It takes us in exactly the wrong direction when we talk about our energy future, our energy security.

The President's budget would have done nothing to turn around the negative trends we are seeing in production on Federal lands either. His energy proposals are about as balanced as the budget that he offered.

As we have seen increased oil production around the country, we have seen the benefits that it has yielded in terms of lower prices, we have seen the jobs that it has created, and we have seen the opportunities for us. Yet this oil production is not happening on our Federal lands. It is going gangbusters on State and private lands. Natural gas production has outright declined for years on Federal lands, and the President's regulators are now hard at work to ensure that coal follows suit.

We talk a lot about the conventional fuels—fossil fuels—and it is important to recognize that we are seeing similar patterns on Federal lands when it comes to other energy sources. The President talks a lot about increasing generation from our renewables. I agree. It is something we need to move towards. We are seeing increased renewable production, but are we seeing it on our Federal land? It may come as a surprise to the Chair and to others in this body what we heard from representatives of the wind industry.

My staff asked what percentage of wind projects are actually on Federal land? And surely, given the commitment we have to renewable energy, one would expect that to be a high percentage. The answer back was hardly any. Some 98.6 percent of wind projects are apparently on State and private land—

98.6 percent. Not even 2 percent are on Federal land.

That stat shows what we mean and why we are right when we say it is incredibly hard to develop any type of energy on Federal lands. Secretary Jewell said as much in front of our committee. She said: It is just hard to do so on Federal lands.

So I am glad to be here as the chairman of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources to affirm that we have a better way forward.

The energy revolution—renewable and petroleum—in this country has been on State and private lands. That is a fact. So I have filed an amendment that would complement language that is already in the resolution by focusing on sales, transfers or exchanges of land with State or local governments.

The budget resolution already contains language for land acquisition and conservation efforts. So nothing in the language that we have included in this amendment actually sells, transfers or exchanges a specifically identified piece of property. Any legislation enabled by this spending-neutral reserve fund will have to go through the process and be voted either up or down in regular order.

The language does specify what cannot be considered, and that is any land that is located within a national park, within a national preserve or a national monument. Those would continue to be protected.

This language would provide balance by enabling the types of exchanges, sales or transfers with States or local governments that are often used to craft balanced, comprehensive land policies, such as we did in the lands package on NDAA that we passed last Congress.

When we have an opportunity to consider this amendment, a vote for it is really a vote in support of—as a priority of this Congress—comprehensive approaches to land policies to facilitate economic development, empower States, and improve our conservation systems.

I would encourage Members to take a look at what I have offered here this evening and what I hope we will be able to take up for a vote tomorrow.

The second matter, very briefly—and I know the Senator from Colorado is here as well, and others wish to speak tonight—is an amendment I have offered just now that I hope we will have a chance to vote on which focuses our priorities as a nation on what is happening in the north.

We are an arctic nation. Now we are by virtue of my home State. But it is not just Alaska. We are an arctic nation, and as such we have responsibilities, we have obligations. There is activity happening in the north country that is without question.

What is also without question is that as an arctic nation, we are woefully behind in certain infrastructure related to our Arctic. What do most people think of when they think of the Arctic?

Ice. How do we move through the Arctic Ocean filled with ice? An ice breaker. And it is not just for commerce, it is from a national security perspective, it is from a research perspective. It is for all those things that, again, would allow us to be a leader as an arctic nation.

This is not easy for us, because ice breakers don't come cheap. But it should be a priority for us, as a national asset, for an arctic nation.

I won't go through the list of what other nations have in terms of their assets, but suffice it to say our neighbors to the east in Russia have over 30 ice breakers. The ice breaker capacity our Canadian friends have is six.

But it is not just arctic nations that have arctic capacity through their ice breakers. It is nations such as China. Think how far away China is from the Arctic. India is considering building an ice breaker. Think how far away they are. It begs the question: Why, as an arctic nation, are we not stepping up? So I am challenging my colleagues: Think broader.

I invited all Members of the Senate to join the Arctic Caucus and understand again what it means for you and your respective States, the benefits, but also the obligations.

I look forward to the discussion on the issue of how we build out our arctic capacity and our infrastructure, and I also look forward to further discussion on how we can do more to ensure the opportunities we have for our economic development and our energy security can continue on the lands we are blessed to have as a nation, and the opportunities that will be made further available if we are able to move forward with the ideas I have proposed this evening.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, 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 Colorado.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 485, 490, AND 852 EN BLOC

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside to call up the Ayotte amendments numbered 485, 490, and 852 en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendments are called up en bloc.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 485

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund to provide equity in the tax treatment of public safety officer death benefits)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND TO PROVIDE EQUITY IN THE TAX TREATMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER DEATH BENEFITS.

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 providing tax equity for death benefits paid to the families of public safety officers who lose their lives in the line of duty, 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 490

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund to address the disproportionate regulatory burdens on community banks)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND TO ADDRESS THE DISPROPORTIONATE REGULATORY BURDENS ON COMMUNITY BANKS.

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 alleviating disproportionate regulatory burdens on community banks, 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.

AMENDMENT NO. 852

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to providing small business regulatory relief and preventing duplicative regulations for investment advisors)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO PROVIDING SMALL BUSINESS REGULATORY RELIEF AND PREVENTING DUPLICATIVE REGULATIONS FOR INVESTMENT ADVISORS.

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 alleviating regulatory burdens on small businesses, fostering small business export growth, and preventing duplicative regulations for investment advisors 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. REED. Mr. President, earlier today I came to the floor to talk about the danger this Republican budget poses to our economic and national security. I would like to expand on why this budget is out of balance and to further highlight the risks of using OCO, as some of my colleagues on the other side have proposed, instead of eliminating the sequester.

This budget, instead of taking a balanced approach to growing our econ-

omy and fiscal responsibility, like raising revenue by closing egregious tax loopholes and investing that revenue in job creation measures, doubles down on unrealistic and unfair cuts to programs that help grow and strengthen America's middle class. This perverse standard is evident across this budget and it reinforces a disturbing trend by my colleagues on the other side—if it is a broad-based investment in our economy, like investing in infrastructure or providing aid to jobseekers, then it must be paid for by cuts on the backs of middle-class Americans; but, if it is for a set of powerful special interests like the extension of tax expenditures then the deficit doesn't matter to many of my colleagues on the other side. This sort of double standard is what causes the American people to feel that Congress is out of touch.

Most alarmingly, this budget does not eliminate the automatic spending reductions, known as the sequester, contained in the Budget Control Act. The Senate Republican budget leaves hundreds of billions of dollars in devastating automatic cuts to discretionary spending in place and then makes an additional \$236 billion in cuts over 10 years to investments for middle-class families. These cuts to our non-defense and defense budgets will cause substantial harm to our economic and national security. That is why we have to eliminate the sequester—and why there must be balance in relief for non-defense and defense sides of the ledger.

Every senior civilian and military leader in the Department of Defense who has come before the Armed Services Committee has warned that if defense budgets are subject to sequestration, we will likely not be able to meet the national defense strategy without an unacceptable level of risk. It will have a damaging impact on our military readiness, modernization, and the welfare of our service members and their families.

Earlier today I mentioned the testimony of Admiral Gortney and General Kelly and how the non-defense and defense sides of the budget work together to protect our homeland. Indeed, helicopters and cutters from the Coast Guard, which falls on the non-defense side of the ledger, are critical to stopping drug smuggling and human trafficking into the homeland. And General Kelly made clear that, because of the limited number of Coast Guard cutters available, they are only stopping about 20 percent of the traffic—and there is a direct correlation: the more cutters they have, the more trafficking they can stop.

Senator MCCAIN and Senator GRAHAM have been trying repeatedly to increase spending for defense accounts. Their absolute commitment to the men and women of the armed services is without question. However, they have been compelled, by those opposed to an increase of the base budgets of the Armed Forces and who favor the continuation

of sequestration, to resort to a budgetary gimmick.

They would use the Overseas Contingency Operation account to try and increase defense spending to the President's base level of \$561 billion.

First, I believe we should just eliminate the sequester all together, and that means going to the Budget Control Act cap of \$577 billion for defense in FY16. Second, using OCO as an escape valve as my Republican colleagues have suggested isn't sustainable. It is a gimmick and as we have heard in testimony, OCO funding isn't flexible as discretionary spending and could damage our long-term readiness.

General Odierno, Chief of Staff of the Army, made this point:

So first, I would just say there's a risk to not funding the base, in putting it in OCO, because with that has to come flexibility within OCO for us to spend it on the things that are necessary. So . . . because OCO has limits and it has restrictions, and it has very strict rules that have to be followed. And so if we're inhibited by that, it might not help us. What might happen at the end of the year, we have a bunch of money we hand back because we're not able to spend it.

General Welsh, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, made a similar point in describing the Air Force's need for modernization and how one-off funding through OCO particularly constrains its platform-based force.

That is not how we should support the greatest fighting force in history. This may seem to be a clever way to bypass the Budget Control Act, but it has real ramifications for our men and women in uniform.

Indeed, the problem with these approaches is that they don't work. And, it seems even Senator GRAHAM's amendment to boost OCO funding in the budget runs into technical difficulties. Indeed, it does not appear to do what it purports to do—to boost defense spending—because it fails to lift the actual OCO cap. Now, it is true that a budget resolution isn't law, but plays an important role in the process of governing and setting the rules for our appropriations process.

Now, I expect there will be an attempt to correct that on the floor, but we shouldn't be engaging in these diversions to begin with. We should be crafting a budget that is serious and acknowledges our economic and security needs.

So my colleagues and I are offering several amendments in order to demonstrate there is a better path and to address some of the glaring problems with this budget. However, as we have seen with Senator SANDER's reasonable attempt to provide \$478 billion in transportation funding, paid-for by closing egregious offshore tax loopholes, my colleagues refuse to agree to the kind of commonsense proposals that I believe a vast majority of Americans would support.

But I hope my colleagues can join with me on some of these types of measures like ones to establish a budget point of order that will keep bor-

rowing costs down for students; closing egregious offshore tax loopholes—which during our last budget debate was a bipartisan amendment adopted by voice vote; or lowering drug prices for seniors by letting the Secretary of HHS negotiate drug prices—indeed, it is particularly troubling that many pharmaceutical companies dodge taxes through offshore tax loopholes, but profit off of Medicare, and are legally protected from having to negotiate drug prices with the government.

We have a blueprint for responsibly managing the budget and meeting the needs of a great and growing nation. It requires a balance of cuts, which we have done already, and new revenue. And as we see demonstrated by the Republican budget, we cannot cut our way to prosperity—much less cut our way towards a balanced budget. And we all know that the best way forward is to promote broad-based economic growth so that millions of hardworking Americans and their families can have a brighter and stable economic future.

So I hope my colleagues on the other side will join with us in supporting amendments that put middle-class families and broad-based economic growth first.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TAX EXPENDITURES

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to correct the record on the matter of tax expenditures. Many myths have been created and reinforced by my friends on the other side of the aisle on the subject of tax expenditures. In my 4 years as ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, I came to the floor several times to set the record straight. I am afraid I need to do it again today, this time as chairman. Today I will focus on the tax expenditures in the individual income tax. According to 2014 Congressional Budget Office data, the individual income tax accounts for 47.1 percent of Federal revenue. By contrast, the corporate income tax accounts for 11.9 percent of Federal revenue.

It boils down to three basic points. All points that can be derived from an objective, nonpartisan review of the data from Congress's nonpartisan official tax scorekeeper. I am referring to the Joint Committee on Taxation, of which I am the vicechair.

First point: Tax expenditures are not spending, with one exception. That exception is for refundable tax credits. They count as outlays under the Congressional Budget Act. Ironically, refundable tax credits are the policies my friends on the other side are most

in favor of expanding. Just look at the slew of Democratic amendments filed to that effect. My Democratic friends erroneously describe most tax expenditures as spending. Yet they seek to expand the minority of tax expenditures which score as spending. Go figure.

Second point: The vast bulk of tax expenditures tend to distribute disproportionately to middle and lower income taxpayers. A cursory examination of the Joint Committee on Taxation's annual tax expenditure pamphlet will lead an unbiased reader inevitably to that conclusion.

Third point: The vast bulk of tax expenditures are attributable to widely applicable tax benefits, like the charitable contribution deduction, mortgage interest deduction, and State and local tax deduction.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an analysis of Joint Committee on Taxation data, performed by the Finance Committee staff.

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

[March 25, 2015]

Fact Sheet: Who Benefits From Tax Expenditures?

Tax expenditures are often portrayed as "loopholes" that disproportionately benefit the wealthy. However, examination of the facts reveals that many of the largest tax expenditures disproportionately benefit middle class Americans or those with income below \$200,000.

According to recent (Feb. 2013) Joint Committee on Taxation estimates, those taxpayers with adjusted gross income exceeding \$200,000 collectively pay 57% of the individual income tax burden. The remaining 43% of the individual income tax burden is paid by those taxpayers with less than \$200,000 of adjusted gross income. The following summarizes how the benefit of various tax expenditure items is split between "high income" taxpayers with adjusted gross income exceeding \$200,000 and the remaining taxpayers with less than \$200,000 of adjusted gross income:

Mortgage Interest Itemized Deduction: 35% of the benefit of the mortgage interest tax expenditure goes to taxpayers with income exceeding \$200,000. Taxpayers with income below \$200,000 receive 65% of the benefit. By a ratio of almost 2 to 1, taxpayers under \$200,000 benefit from it.

Earned Income Credit: The earned income credit is fully refundable. This means that taxpayers receive it in full whether they pay income tax or not. The earned income credit is phased out as earned income rises. High income taxpayers are not eligible to receive any benefit from the earned income credit.

Child tax Credit: This credit is also limited to lower and middle income taxpayers. Again, none of it goes to higher income taxpayers.

Charitable Contribution Deduction: Of all of the tax expenditures listed, at 57% this one distributes in the highest proportion to taxpayers above \$200,000 in income. The tax savings benefit of the charitable contribution deduction is distributed to wealthy taxpayers in the exact same proportion as the share of total income taxes they pay. This result hardly seems unfair.

State and Local Income and Sales Tax Deduction: 55% of this broad-based deduction goes to high income families leaving the remaining 45% to middle class earners. High