

We have fires that are ravaging the great Western part of the United States. The government entities that are fighting these fires don't have the money to fight them. The two worst fires in the history of the State of California are just being tamped down, but they are still not completed. Hundreds of homes have burned. We have a country that is burning up.

The Governor of Nevada is a good man. He is a Republican Governor, and I have great admiration for him. I suggested his name to the President of the United States to become a Federal judge, and he accepted my recommendation. He then resigned that position to run for Governor. He is now conducting a 3-day event in Nevada—bringing people in from all over the West and all over the country—to talk about what is happening to Nevada. We are having so many problems in Nevada. Lake Mead is drying up, and Lake Tahoe is having tremendous problems. We have a snowpack that basically doesn't exist. We don't have many rivers in Nevada, but those little rivers that we have, including the mighty Colorado, are in deep trouble. We have snowpack in upper Colorado that evaporates before it gets into the river.

I am willing to do whatever is necessary to move forward in funding this government, but to blame us for not funding the government is really carrying things to extremes.

I have completed my statement, Mr. President.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator withhold his suggestion of the absence of a quorum?

Mr. COCHRAN. I withhold my suggestion.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:49 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

HIRE MORE HEROES ACT OF 2015— Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for the following Senators to speak about the importance of the reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank. I ask that Senator COONS be recognized for 5 minutes but first that Senator KING be recognized for 5 minutes and that I be recognized for 10 minutes, reserving the remaining time for others who may join us.

I wish to initially yield time to Senator KING.

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

The Senator from Maine.

EXPORT-IMPORT BANK REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. KING. Mr. President, as the Senator from North Dakota just mentioned, we are here on the floor to talk about the importance of the reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank. There are a lot of issues here that are contentious and controversial, and there are arguments to be made on both sides, but this one, frankly, puzzles me. I do not understand why the Congress has not moved with alacrity to reauthorize an agency of the Federal Government that fills a gap in the private market which is not filled by private enterprise, which has been in business for over 80 years, and which helps and assists businesses large and small across America and returns money to the Treasury. This is not a cost to the Treasury. This is not some kind of budget bill that increases our deficit. This actually will increase revenue because this agency makes a net return for the taxpayers.

When General Electric last week announced the possible layoff of 500 people across the country and the moving of jobs overseas—because virtually every other industrialized country in the world has an export-import bank, an export promotion authority that is comparable to what we have, General Electric says: We are going to have to go where they provide that kind of support.

One staff member of the committee in the other body, which has voted to not reauthorize this, said: Well, for General Electric, this is a drop in the bucket.

Well, of those 400 or 500 jobs General Electric is talking about, 80 of them are at a General Electric plant in Bangor, ME, and 80 good jobs in Bangor, ME, is not a drop in the bucket.

I would invite that staff member to come to Bangor, ME, and talk to the families of those people who are going to lose their jobs because of this ridiculous policy of not reauthorizing a governmental agency that is serving the public needs of this country, particularly in an age of expanding global trade. We are competing with the rest of the world, and we are shooting ourselves in the foot in the process. It simply makes no sense.

I have visited with small businesses in Maine—as few as 35 jobs which depend upon the actions of the Export-Import Bank in order to be able to finance their receivables from foreign countries and then they can compete in the international marketplace.

There is simply no reason to not move with some speed to reauthorize this agency. We are penalizing American businesses in global competition for no good reason that I can discern. If there are issues at the Bank with its management or whatever, let's fix those. Let's have hearings. Let's find what the problems are and fix them but not eliminate an agency that is doing good and returning money to the taxpayers, particularly at this moment in American and world history where

international trade and world exports are so important.

I hope my colleagues in both Houses, on both sides of the aisle will join with us to make a simple reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank so it can continue to do the good work it has done on behalf of businesses in Maine and North Dakota and Texas and California and New York and all over this country.

This is just common sense. There are things around here that I understand we have controversies about and we can argue about, but I have not heard any argument that holds any water as to why this agency should not be continued and allowed to provide the benefits it has and does and will do for the businesses and, more importantly, the employees of those businesses all across the country.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I wish to address the issue of the Export-Import Bank reauthorization, if I might, for a few moments. My colleague, the Senator from the State of Maine, has just spoken to it, and I expect my colleague from the State of North Dakota will also follow along the same lines. I wish to join with my colleagues here today in standing up for American manufacturing and in standing up for American businesses that rely on the Export-Import Bank for the critical financing they need to export their products to the markets of the world. Many of us have said the same thing on this floor over the weeks or months since its authorization expired.

It is striking to me that because of the views of a few Members of the House and Senate, this valuable tool which has helped American companies sell their goods around the world for more than 80 years has been allowed to expire. As we just heard from the Senator from Maine, the Export-Import Bank actually operates at no cost to the taxpayer, and it is something that has helped American businesses sell almost \$30 billion in goods and supported more than 150,000 American jobs last year alone. So I really think the opposition to the reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank is badly misguided. It is my hope that we will find some bipartisan path toward the restoration of this critical tool.

In my first 4 years in the Senate, I was the chair of the Africa subcommittee on the Foreign Relations Committee, and I took advantage of that opportunity to learn a great deal more about this vast continent with 54 countries and the opportunities it provides for American companies to sell their exported products to their growing markets.

Most folks think of the Export-Import Bank as principally providing financing for a few very large companies—companies such as General Electric and Boeing—and it does provide essential financing for their export sales,

but those big companies also have enormous supplier chains that employ folks all over the country. I could focus today on the important sales that Boeing and GE have made to Africa and its growing market, but I wish to focus on a very small company with an important story that I think helps illuminate why Ex-Im financing matters.

This little company is called Acrow Bridge. Although it is headquartered in New Jersey, it has a manufacturing plant right near Lewisburg, PA. That plant rolls out steel bridges. It is in Milton, PA. It has been making bridges from the same model Patton's troops used as they rolled across France and Germany during the Second World War, modular bridges that are easy to install in remote places without a whole lot of infrastructure support.

Why does that matter? Because they recently successfully competed for big contracts to sell hundreds of bridges to areas in Africa, including countries like Cameroon or Zambia that badly need infrastructure.

Who are their competitors? Comparable companies from China and from Europe that are also seeking to sell into these growing markets.

Why do I care? I am from Delaware. I care about manufacturing all over this country, but this Acrow Bridge company ships their bridges from Pennsylvania to Delaware, where, in New Castle, the Voigt & Schweitzer hot dip galvanizing company takes each bridge and dips it in zinc and galvanizes it before it is put on a ship and sent off to places all over the world. Voigt & Schweitzer doesn't employ thousands of people, but it employs dozens of people. Acrow Bridge in Milton, PA, doesn't employ thousands of people, but it employs dozens of people. Manufacturing across our country critically depends on access to export markets.

I recently had a chance to meet up with the Acrow Bridge export sales specialist at a conference in Gabon in Africa. He was alarmed that in the absence of Ex-Im financing, his key competitors are much more likely to succeed in the next contract and the next contract and the next contract.

We folks are just unilaterally disarming here in the fight to access the growing markets of the world, and I can't for the life of me fathom why we have done this. As my colleague from Maine said, if there are issues with the Ex-Im Bank, put them on the floor, put them on the table, and let's address them.

In my experience, when the Bank makes a loan to American businesses, it is not replacing private capital that would otherwise have been making that loan. Most often, it supplements private capital or makes a private bank more inclined to put up its own. And more often than not, Ex-Im serves as the lender of last resort, especially when you are financing sales into risky, growing markets in countries like Cameroon, Zambia, or elsewhere in Africa.

I don't think the Export-Import Bank is doing something best left to the private sector; I think it picks up where the private sector leaves off and it provides key financing to level the global playing field and make it possible for our manufacturers, for our small businesses to compete around the world.

Frankly, most of our competitors have much more robust financing available for their export sales than the Export-Import Bank provides. I just can't fathom why we would allow American businesses to be put at such a key competitive disadvantage. It is my real hope that before it is too late, we will take up and reauthorize the Export-Import Bank.

There were disappointing and concerning announcements just in recent weeks by General Electric and by Boeing that they are already moving employment overseas or they are seriously considering it. GE just announced they are moving a turboprop engine development center to Europe because they can't remain competitive in the absence of Ex-Im financing. That is going to cause the loss of 500 jobs in a community here in America. And Boeing has made even more concerning announcements.

I think it is critical that we in Congress come together and show that we care about American jobs and that we care about fighting for American manufacturers because we recognize that 95 percent of the opportunity in the world is in the growing sectors that are represented by the export markets of the world.

It is my hope that we can find a way through this, that the unwillingness to reopen the Bank, which is sending the wrong message to the world markets, is something we can come together and address. At a time when our economy is gaining steam and Americans are going back to work, we need to continue to help American companies to compete around the world, not make it harder. So I think we should stop playing politics with American jobs, stop pursuing an ideological agenda, and reauthorize the Export-Import Bank immediately.

Thank you.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, we have just heard what I think is almost a horror story from two great Senators, one representing 80 jobs, one representing maybe just dozens of jobs, but every one of those jobs matters in America. We come here every week and we say we are here fighting for the middle class. We are here fighting to build the American economy. We are here fighting to make sure our manufacturing and our businesses are competitive in a highly charged and highly competitive world. And we have an institution that is critical to making sure we have access to these export markets, doesn't cost the Treasury a

dime, is used by large corporations and small corporations alike, and it is supported by Democrats and Republicans. But why do we shut down the Ex-Im Bank?

I serve on the banking committee, and we had a hearing. The bill we have been considering these many months is the Kirk-Heitkamp bill. I have taken responsibility for addressing some of the concerns about the Ex-Im Bank and looking at how we can reform some of the things that are legitimate concerns about how the Bank operates. But I will tell my colleagues from that hearing that what we saw is the National Association of Manufacturers, we saw the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. And we might imagine that those two witnesses were the Republican witnesses. They were not the Republican witnesses; they were the Democratic witnesses. The Republican witnesses came from intellectual think tanks. They came from institutions of higher learning with conservative think tanks. They all had a theory about the Ex-Im Bank. I asked them a simple question when it came time for me to ask them a question. I asked every one of those persons who represented a think tank or represented an academic institution how many jobs they have created, what their output is, what their contribution to the gross domestic product was. They didn't have much of an answer. I said: Why should I believe what you are telling me in terms of this being the slippery slope toward the demise of democracy as we know it, which is really how the Ex-Im Bank has been categorized against the word of the National Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers.

This has become an irrational ideological fight. And, unfortunately, we have irrational ideological fights almost daily in the Congress, to no good end for the American people. But this Senator will say this: This fight has devastating consequences. We now have shut down the Bank. No new credit is coming in for 2½ months—2½ months where a small manufacturer in Delaware may say: Well, how have we done this in the past? How have we taken on currency risk? How have we taken on debt risk? How have we guaranteed this in the past? Call your local bank. Do you know what the banker is going to tell you? Call the Ex-Im Bank because in spite of what they tell you, somehow magically in this market will emerge a private institution that will carry on the responsibility of the Ex-Im Bank.

That is not reality. The largest supporters of the Ex-Im Bank are those financial institutions that want to continue to provide credit and help grow those American businesses that are putting Americans back to work.

One of the things I did want to talk about today is that way too often we hear about the so-called bank of Boeing, the bank of GE, and how it is that this institution helps only those large

manufacturers. What I would tell you, first, is if you look at the business model of GE or the business model of Boeing, what they do is assemble. They assemble products that are manufactured all across the country, and the components are manufactured in large shops and small shops all the way down the supply chain to small communities that are doing things in Jamestown, ND, that are growing jobs. In the communities that you just heard about in Bangor, ME, and communities in Delaware, they are building out those jobs. Those are the people we are hearing from. Those are the people who are shaking their heads, saying: Why is it that you guys talk all the time about helping American business, growing the economy, growing exports? You talk all the time about jobs and the need to bring back the innovation, and you curtail and limit my ability to grow and, quite frankly, my ability to survive. How does that happen?

I want to talk about the equipment wholesalers that will see a negative impact. Look at this—35 to 40 percent, if Ex-Im isn't reauthorized.

Equipment wholesalers stated that without the Export-Import Bank, it will be at a disadvantage in increasingly globalized markets. No access—do you know why? Because there are 80 other countries that have export credit agencies.

The first thing China and India did when Asia slowed down, when they knew their economies were beginning to suffer some of the consequences of slow growth—guess what they did. The first thing they did is pump more money into their export credit agencies—in fact, billions more into those export credit agencies. Then, when this institution shut down the Ex-Im Bank, they shouted: Hip, hip, hooray. They knew that not only did they have money to capitalize and to guarantee these sales, but they were operating in a market where we have unilaterally, economically disarmed in the export market.

When we go back and take a look at how the U.S. Export-Import Bank has supported more than 850,000 jobs, when we look at Wahpeton, ND—Wahpeton, ND, is the largest town next to my hometown. Not a lot of people live there, but for the people who work there, those jobs matter. Look at that—almost \$1 million—and those jobs are being threatened today because of the inactivity of this institution.

Sixty percent of WCCO Belting's annual sales and revenues come from customers who are located outside the United States of America. This is a small town in Wahpeton, ND. Many of the pages here probably didn't even know such a place existed, but the people who work there are doing a great job, and they are contributing to the global economy. More importantly, they are building up their local economy, and they are building up the U.S. manufacturing and trade deficit. This is something I know the Presiding Offi-

cer, as a former member of the OMB and somebody who has watched the American economy, is very concerned about, making sure that the trade deficit is favorable to us, that we are actually exporting more than we are importing. That is how we grow our economy. That is called new wealth creation.

When we look at not just manufacturing, but we look at J.M. Grain, a business that I visited—built out of nothing by a mom and pop who put their heads together and said: This is something I think we can do. They built this great business. The Export-Import Bank provides credit and credit insurance needed for J.M. Grain to export its products. If Ex-Im isn't reauthorized, J.M. Grain may be forced to sell its products to larger corporations that can finance the exports—consolidation—because we can't take care of small business.

Even though we hear the platitudes and all of the statements quite to the contrary on the floor of the Senate and the Congress, that we care about small business, we do nothing in terms of our actions to really prove that.

Amity Technology is a great story. This is a family—the developers of this company come from the family who developed the Bobcat skid-steer loaders, if you can imagine that. That company was sold and has moved on, yet those young entrepreneurs—those young inventors—have taken the next step. This is a company that is absolutely dependent on the Export-Import Bank. If you look at this, it has supported more than \$50 million in exports in the last decade. Without the help of the Export-Import Bank, Amity would lose at least 10 percent of its business.

Story after story in America—this is just North Dakota. We can tell you more stories about what is happening in North Dakota, but stories after stories in the State of North Dakota and across the country include small businessmen and small businesswomen who are shaking their heads, saying: What did we do? Why is it that something such as the Export-Import Bank, which is so critical to our being successful and doesn't cost the American taxpayers a dime. Why is it that this is so hard?

I have to try and explain how it is that we got 64 votes for the Export-Import Bank here on the floor of the Senate—a huge majority. We think we actually have the support of about 67 Members of the Senate—a veto-proof majority, if you look at it that way.

And we know that over in the House of Representatives there is well over 50 percent of the Members of that body that would vote for the Ex-Im Bank. Where is the hangup? Where is the problem?

Quite honestly, the problem is with leadership because if this isn't a priority or if the Ex-Im Bank may be a problem for a Speaker who has a small but vocal group of conservatives who hate the Ex-Im Bank and who have

made this their celebrity cause, then we will just send it over here and we will try to sneak it in. That is kind of the idea, right? We need a vehicle.

I hear that so often for good ideas and for things we know we have majority votes for and well over majority votes for: We need a vehicle. I joke to my staff that I am going to introduce a bill, and it is going to be called "the vehicle." Then we will be able to do everything we have to do to keep the American economy moving forward—the things that we can all agree on—because then, maybe, the American public will see something that is not rancor and disagreement. They will see us listening to American business, to American manufacturers, to American workers, and they will hear that we actually will respond, and we will move this bill forward.

Now there is a lot of talk that we may not get this done in September. No, it doesn't look very good. And if you had told me when we shut down the Bank in June, if you had told me that we were going to open it up in July, I would have said: That is not likely. We will get the Bank reopened in July.

July came and went, and the promise of the vehicle, which was supposed to be the Transportation bill, never materialized. And the promise of putting it somewhere where we could actually get it done never materialized. So we went home in August, and I said: Well, we will get it done in September. We will figure out a way to reauthorize the Ex-Im Bank in September because we can't shut it down for that long.

September has come and gone. We have got other priorities—no opportunity for floor time. Now we are looking at October, and the promise once again in October is that we are going to put it on the Transportation bill. Well, this Senator has heard that promise twice. So I think it is now time to ask for consideration of this bill.

People say: We all need to reserve the special floor time of the Senate for really important ideas. I say that these people, the 80 people, 90 people in Bangor, ME, think this is an important idea. All the people now who supply GE who are looking at GE's plan to move a lot of this manufacturing and assembly overseas, they think this is very important. They think American jobs, American manufacturing, our trade deficit, and our access to global markets, are very important for the Congress to consider.

So we have a bill that has broad bipartisan support: the Kirk-Heitkamp Export-Import Reauthorization bill. We can put that bill on the floor. We can move it in an expedited fashion because we have a procedure to do this. When there is a will, there is a way. We can move pretty quickly to votes here if we want to, and we can pass this bill. Then we can send it over to the House of Representatives. They can put it on the floor, and they can pass this bill. It

can get sent to the President's desk and get signed, and we can reopen the Export-Import Bank. We can hang out a big sign: "Open for business once again."

But the longer we wait, the longer we continue to allow this to become the celebrity cause of a very, very small minority of hard-core conservatives in this country, the harder it is going to be to reauthorize the Export-Import Bank. Make no mistake. At the end of the day, it is not about inside-the-beltway politics. It is not about whether we are going to have political winners or losers. What this is about is people's livelihoods. It is about helping American workers do what we know we do best: innovate, create, manufacture, and export.

I thank the Presiding Officer so much for the time. We will continue to be talking about the Ex-Im Bank. As you know, I almost can't even approach a group because they think I am going to regale them with 20 hours of the Ex-Im Bank and the challenges we have with reauthorization.

But I will tell you this: The Ex-Im Bank is not only about manufacturing; it is almost a metaphor for what is wrong in the Congress. What that is, is an institution that creates jobs, has broad bipartisan support, and has the ability to provide opportunity for American workers, and we shut it down because the Congress cannot figure out how to avoid a minority of people dictating the agenda.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

TRIBUTE TO ASHLEY ALDRIDGE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to share a story with Members of the Senate and those following us this evening. It is an amazing story of the selfless courage of a young Illinois mother who many are calling—with good reason—a guardian angel.

Ashley Aldridge of Auburn, IL, was home making lunch for two little babies last Tuesday. She heard someone outside crying for help. She looked out her kitchen window and saw an elderly man in a wheelchair on the railroad tracks near her mobile home. He was calling for help.

Without a moment's hesitation Ashley asked a neighbor to stay with her kids and she ran toward the man in distress. She saw the railroad guard arms coming down and heard the oncoming train. When she reached the man in the wheelchair, Earl Moorman, Ashley discovered that the wheel of his chair was lodged in the tracks. There was no moving it. So Ashley tried to pick up Mr. Moorman. Now, Mr. Moorman is 75 years old and he weighs about 200 pounds. Ashley could not move him. She tried again. With an Amtrak train barreling down the tracks at 81 miles an hour, Ashley Aldridge somehow, some way found the strength to lift Earl Moorman up and out of his

trapped wheelchair. Not 5 seconds after she dragged him off the railroad track, the train hit the wheelchair and smashed it into bits.

When the last car on the Amtrak train passed, Ashley looked up and saw a police car on the other side of the tracks. Someone had heard Mr. Moorman and called 911. The police were there quickly, but they could not get there fast enough to save Mr. Moorman. Ashley Aldridge, a 19-year-old wife and stay-at-home mom with two little kids got there in time. No wonder Earl Moorman is calling Ashley his guardian angel.

Ashley Aldridge and Earl Moorman live in Auburn, IL. It is a little town about 20 miles south of my hometown of Springfield. Auburn's mayor and town council and all the folks around town are hailing Ashley Aldridge as a hero. She is that and more. In a world in which we often hear the message that we should only be concerned about ourselves and our own families, Ashley is an inspiration. Without a moment's hesitation this brave, young mom risked her own life to save the life of a man she had never met. It is an amazing story of selfless courage. In this world filled with so many innocent people in danger, I hope we will all remember and be inspired by the courage of this remarkable young woman.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, this is a historic week in Washington, DC. Later today Pope Francis will arrive in Washington for a 2-day visit. During his time here, the Holy Father will meet with President Obama, celebrate mass, canonize a new saint, and address a joint meeting of Congress. This will be the first time a Pope has ever addressed Congress.

In light of Pope Francis's historic visit, I believe today is an appropriate time to reflect on the importance of religious liberty in American life. This will be the first of a series of addresses I will be delivering on this vital subject. Religious liberty is an issue of deep significance to me. I come from a family of faith. I represent a State that was founded by religious pioneers fleeing persecution.

In my many travels, I have seen people express religious devotion in a multitude of ways, affirming their belief in the Divine through song, word, and deed. I have also seen misguided government officials limit religious expression, often in the name of security or some other nebulous goal. I have seen people of courage stand up to these officials, refusing to accept claims that the commands of the State trump rights of religious belief, nor am I alone in viewing religious liberty as a vitally important subject. Indeed, throughout our history, protecting religious liberty has been a priority of lawmakers and laymen alike.

As far back as 1657, residents of the community known today as Flushing,

NY, petitioned colonial leaders to end restrictions on religious practice that prevented some community members from practicing their faith. Their petition, known as the Flushing Remonstrance, declared that community members should be allowed to decide for themselves how to worship.

In 1776, 120 years later, Virginia adopted a declaration of rights that proclaimed in no uncertain terms that "all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion according to the dictates of conscience."

This was followed a decade later by the famous words of the First Amendment, which forbids Congress from making any law that prohibits the free exercise of religion. More recently, our leaders have continued to affirm the importance of religious liberty in both word and deed. In 1984, the United States joined 47 other nations in approving the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which of course proclaims that every person has a right to "manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship or observance."

Four decades later, in 1800, Congress passed a law declaring that government may not "substantially burden a person's exercise of religion," unless doing so is necessary to further a compelling government interest. Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama have all issued proclamations affirming the continued importance of religious liberty in American life. President Obama's most recent proclamation, issued on January 15 of this year, called religious freedom a "fundamental libert[y]."

He declared that every person should be "free to choose and live their faith." There can be no question that religious liberty has been a central concern throughout our Nation's history. Over the coming weeks, I will discuss a number of topics related to religious liberty. These topics will include, among other things, the legal and political history of religious liberty in our country, the ways in which religious liberty is under attack both at home and abroad, and what we in Congress should do to protect religious freedom against such encroachments. I will also address the history and importance of religion in the public square and the ways in which religion is beneficial to society.

Today, however, I begin with first principles: why religious freedom matters, why it is important, why it is worth protecting. It is common, when speaking of religious liberty, to begin by noting that religious exercise is the first individual right listed in the Constitution. This priority of place denotes that religious exercise has special significance.

Of all the potential rights out there, both God-given and manmade, the Founders chose to list religious freedom first. Part of this, no doubt, had to do with history. The United States exists because of religious freedom. The

Pilgrims set sail because they wanted to go to a place where they could practice their beliefs free from state interference. The Founders of Maryland similarly sought a new land where an oppressed religious minority, Catholics, could live out their faith openly and honestly.

Pennsylvania was a haven for Quakers and other religious groups. Although the motivations of colonists were multifaceted, the desire for religious freedom was a driving force behind many settlers' decisions to come to America. They came to escape persecution, to practice their religion as they wished without the need for official state sanction or the threat of state-sponsored suppression.

But history is not the end of the story. There is something inherent in the nature of religious exercise that merits special protection. To explain, I first need to talk a bit about the character of government. I will then connect my discussion back to religious liberty. Government is, at bottom, a war of wills. It is how we answer the fundamental question of all human relations: Who decides?

Government is the instrument by which we place certain conduct off-limits or make other conduct compulsory and then back up those rules with threat of force. We may extol democracy as the best and highest form of government, while at the same time disparaging autocracy or other dictatorial regimes, but the difference between these governments is a difference of form, not function.

All governments limit individual freedom. The question is, Who decides what those limits are and how far they extend? When government limits freedom, it makes a value judgment that the conduct proscribed is less important, less worthy, than whatever goal the government is seeking to accomplish. Take the fight against drugs. Long ago, Congress made a decision that avoiding the devastating consequences of drug addiction and drug violence is a more worthy goal than permitting people to choose for themselves whether to ingest certain mind-altering substances. We made a value judgment that reducing violence and preventing addiction is more important than giving people unfettered control over what they consume.

It is easy to see why. Violence and addiction are tangible, devastating harms that ruin lives and destroy aspirations. The ability to consume mind-altering substances, by contrast, is a narrow concern that does not go to any core concept of personhood. In other areas, the calculus may be more complicated. Whether we are debating the proper approach to energy production, health insurance, infrastructure investment, education standards or tax reform, we weigh competing values. The policy we ultimately select depends on which values to which we give greater weight.

Now to religious liberty. I said earlier that religious liberty merits spe-

cial protection. Indeed, it deserves pre-eminent protection against all other rights. The reason is that rights of conscience and of religious exercise go to the very heart of who we are as human beings and how we make sense of our world. There can be no higher value than enabling people to find purpose in their lives, to make sense of the sorrows and disappointments, as well as the joys that attend life here on the Earth.

Indeed, the choices we make about what we believe and about whom we stand among are the most important choices we make in life. When a person feels called by a higher power to perform some act or to refrain from some activity, that person is defining himself by reference to his beliefs. Those beliefs may seem irrational to some or silly to others, but to the person who holds those beliefs they make all the difference in the world.

When government interferes with religious exercise, it seeks to insert itself into the place of God. It tells a believer that his views about what really matters may be an interesting curiosity, a nice psychosocial experiment, perhaps, but that at the end of the day they are illegitimate. The state's interests must prevail because the state is the source of justice and truth.

What is going on is a value judgment. Just as with all other government decrees, when a state commands a person to violate his religious beliefs, it makes a value judgment that the state's objectives override all contrary concerns. It just so happens that in this case, those contrary concerns are an individual's most personal, deeply held beliefs.

This is a problem for three reasons: First, we have or are supposed to have a limited government. Our government is supposed to serve us. It is supposed to help us flourish, not vice versa. But the government that overrides religious belief is not a limited government; it is a tyranny. It presumes power to decide for its citizens the most fundamental and defining choices of life: who we are, why we are here, what our purpose is, and how we find happiness.

No decision is more fundamental to human existence than the decision we make regarding our relationship to the Divine. No act of government can be more intrusive or more invasive of individual autonomy and free will than the act of compelling a person to violate his or her sincerely chosen religious beliefs. We should have more humility than to think we can define better than our fellow citizens the purpose of life and the ends thereof. Certainly a limited government such as ours ought not tell its people that it knows best on matters far beyond its ambit.

Second, valuing transient policy objectives over deeply held religious beliefs places citizens on the horns of an impossible dilemma: either obey God whose commands are eternal and unalterable or obey the state, which con-

trols life, liberty, and property here on Earth. There are some who seek to equate religious liberties with other forms of liberty or to downgrade it to a form of "belief liberty."

Under this view, as explained by LDS Apostle Dallin H. Oaks, there is nothing particularly special about religious liberty. It is merely the ability to believe as one chooses about spiritual matters, just as one might choose a political party, a favorite philosopher or a favorite actor, but there is no equivalency. Religious liberty alone goes to one's conception of self of one's place in the universe. It alone goes to those most fundamental questions that help us find purpose in our lives. What is more, it implicates duties that transcend mere personal choice and become obligatory in the life of the believer.

Professor Robbie George, the chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, explains powerfully the flaw in the claim that religious liberty is just another type of so-called belief liberty:

The right to follow one's conscience, and the obligation to respect conscience—especially in matters of faith—obtain not because people as autonomous agents should be able to do as they please; they obtain, and are stringent and sometimes overriding, because people have duties and the obligation to fulfill them. . . . The right of conscience is a right to do what one judge's oneself to be under an obligation to do, whether one welcomes the obligation or must overcome strong aversion in order to fulfill it.

When government denies religious freedom, it forces believers to choose between duty to God and duty to man—duty to man backed by a threat of force. No government that values its citizens' agency and certainly no limited government that exists at the suffrage of the people should put its citizens to such an impossible choice.

The third reason why valuing State objectives over religious beliefs is a problem is that it sets up the State as moral arbiter. I will speak only briefly to this point.

When the State declares certain beliefs out of bounds or unworthy of protection, it tells the world that the opinions of government officials trump rights of conscience. It tells believers that government knows best and that their benighted views—the believers' views, that is—have been weighed and found wanting. The current wisdom, which may be contrary to the wisdom of all human history, must triumph for no reason other than it is current and currently favored by government elites. All must fall before the State, which is supreme both in matters of might and morality.

This aggressive view of the State's moral authority has no place in a system of limited government and is completely contrary to our constitution. Humility should be our watchword. We should remember that we may be wrong.

Now, this doesn't mean religious freedom should be unlimited, that

there should be no boundaries on religious exercise. When a religious practice causes injury or threatens to upend important State goals, government does have a proper role to play in balancing interests. But the standard that must be met before the State intervenes should be very high.

Again, we are not talking here about mere personal preferences, about things people would rather do or not do, all else being equal; we are talking about acts that, as Professor George puts it, individuals feel they have an obligation to do, an obligation that comes not from family or friends or from society but from God himself.

Before we ask individuals to contravene commands they believe come from a higher power, we had better be sure that what we are asking is absolutely necessary. We had better be sure that what we are asking furthers a compelling government interest and is the only way to accomplish that interest. Only this standard, which requires government to exhaust all other options before invading the religious liberty over its citizens, adequately accounts for the centrality of faith in the lives of believers and the proper relationship between individual and State.

Mr. President, my argument today has been based on first principles, on the inviolate right of each and every person to look out for himself or herself, the purpose of life, and his or her place in the universe. It has also been based on the principle, enshrined in our Constitution, that ours is a limited government that exists to serve, not dominate, its people.

I have purposely stayed away from arguing that religion is a good thing, a net benefit to society, because I believe religious freedom deserves special protection separate and apart from whether religion makes men and women better citizens. Religious liberty should be a protected value because the State has no authority to tell individuals how they should approach the Divine or prescribe for them the meaning of their lives. It is a matter of autonomy, a question of who serves whom. But I would be remiss if I did not briefly outline the many ways religion and religious exercise have benefited our Nation.

Today, many people sadly view religion as a sort of fetter, a chain that holds us back as a society from achieving our true potential. They see religion as the antagonist of social justice, as a refuge for reactionaries who do not understand or who fear our modern world. This view is not only shortsighted, it is ignorant.

The two greatest social movements in our Nation's history—the abolition movement and the civil rights movement—were inspired by religious conviction and led by religious leaders. We speak today of Dr. Martin Luther King, but we forget that before he was a doctor, he was a reverend. In 1967, the year before his death, Reverend King proclaimed:

Before I was a civil rights leader, I was a preacher of the Gospel. This was my first calling and it still remains my greatest commitment. . . . [A]ll that I do in civil rights I do because I consider it a part of my ministry.

Religion instills in our youth principles of morality and right behavior. I do not claim that religion is necessary for a person to be a good citizen, but I do affirm that religion, rightly practiced, instills virtues—concern for others, a desire for good, objectives beyond the mere pursuit of something pleasurable—that lead to engaged citizens and a healthy society. Happily, religious freedom is not just a good in and of itself but is a good for society as well.

I will have much more to say on this topic in a future set of remarks. For present purposes, I will conclude with this point: Religious liberty is a fundamental feature of our Republic. It is why we exist as a nation. It helps to explain why we have endured so long despite our many differences. It has been a bedrock of our laws for centuries and was largely uncontested until only a few years ago. It deserves continuing protection as a preeminent value because it safeguards our ability as citizens to find purpose in our lives and to divine for ourselves who we are. It matters more than any other freedom. That is why it was listed first in the Constitution.

Too many of our fellow citizens—perhaps even too many in this body—have lost sight of the purpose and importance of religious liberty and of our duty as legislators to protect the freedom of all citizens to believe and to act according to their beliefs.

I will return to this theme in the coming weeks as I deliver additional remarks on this most crucial topic. All I can say is that religious freedom means everything to me. I think it means everything to people of good will who really have studied how this Nation came about, how it progressed, how it has overcome some of the most monumental problems in the history of the world, and how we have been so successful after all these years.

We have a tendency in this current climate, in this current world to start to decry religious belief. I want to make sure that we don't end it, that we augment it, and that we get back to where we should be as a Nation so that we can continue to maintain this great Nation as the greatest Nation with the greatest freedom and the greatest Constitution in the world.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks, the Senator from Alaska be recognized.

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

PAIN-CAPABLE UNBORN CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, today I was proud and honored to vote for closure on the motion to proceed to the

Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, offered by my dear friend and leader, Senator GRAHAM of South Carolina.

Nearly 17 years ago to this day, I came to the Senate floor to cast a vote to override then-President Clinton's veto of the Federal partial-birth abortion ban and to speak out for the voiceless unborn children who were victims of that deplorable practice. As supporters of that effort to end partial-birth abortions in the United States will recall, it was a long journey to see legislation finally signed into law in 2003 but a journey fully consistent with America's long commitment to the rights and dignity of all human life. Enacting that legislation called upon our Nation's moral conscience in the same way our country is compelled to action in the face of injustice at home and abroad, and I believe we as a nation are better off for it today.

The Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act the Senate considered today is no different. I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation to protect the lives of unborn children by banning abortions beyond the time when a child in the womb can feel pain. My support for this bill is a continuation of my longstanding and unequivocal pro-life record since I was first elected to the Senate.

As was the case when the Senate considered the ban on partial-birth abortion, we have to recognize that the bill the Senate voted on today does not fit neatly into the traditional debate about whether you are pro-life or pro-choice. The bill is about banning the extreme practice of late-term abortions and protecting the lives of fully formed human beings who can feel real pain. These abortions occur at the beginning of the sixth month of pregnancy. They end the life of a human being who has been found worthy of fetal anesthesia to dull the pain the procedure causes but somehow unworthy of life. I submit that to oppose this bill, to vote to allow this practice to continue to be legal in this country, is extreme and unconscionable.

This effort puts us on the right side of the American people and the right side of history. This legislation has 45 cosponsors in the Senate, and it passed the House by a vote of 242 to 184 in May of this year. A recent poll found that 64 percent of Americans support restricting late-term abortions.

I am proudly pro-life because I believe this is a human rights issue inextricably tied to the values of our Nation. These are the same values that have resulted in a long-held American commitment to fighting for human rights and for the disadvantaged and the voiceless around the world. The same commitment to fighting for human life must be true in our Nation today for unborn children.

In April 2014, Time magazine ran a story called "A Preemie Revolution: Cutting-edge medicine and dedicated caregivers are helping the tiniest babies survive—and thrive." The article

discussed remarkable medical advancements that have resulted in a steadily decreasing age of viability for infants born prematurely. It details the complexities of caring for premature babies, the challenge of seeing to things as basic as breathing for these babies, as well as the “round-the-clock SWAT team of nearly 300 [medical professionals]” that come together at neonatal intensive care units, NICU, to fight for these tiny lives.

In the author’s words:

[I]n some ways, the work of a NICU will always seem like an exercise in disproportion—an army of people and a mountain of infrastructure caring for a pound of life. But it’s a disproportion that speaks very well of us.

The painstaking fight for human life that goes on in NICUs around the country is irreconcilable with the current status quo in our Federal law that permits late-term abortions.

As we know, what is at stake in this debate is made all the more real and urgent by the heinous video footage showing Planned Parenthood’s role in the harvesting of unborn babies’ body parts. I was proud to vote in support of defunding Planned Parenthood while preserving Federal funding for women’s health services in facilities such as community health centers.

I urge my colleagues to consider the significance of this vote today, the reality of the practice that this bill is aimed at prohibiting, and what permitting late-term abortions says about our Nation’s commitment to fighting for life and standing up for human rights when our conscience calls us to. I deeply regret that this body failed today to vote for the voiceless and ban late-term abortions and protect life. I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to reconsider their position on this important issue.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, listening to the last two speakers, I am reminded what a privilege and honor it is to be able to serve in the Senate alongside great Americans—the President pro tempore, the Senator from Utah, and the Senator from Arizona, JOHN MCCAIN, who have served this country for decades—decades—with honor and distinction, and, as we saw in their remarks just a few minutes ago, with wisdom from experience and conviction.

We took two important votes today. One, as Senator MCCAIN was talking about, was the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, very important pro-life legislation. I agree with what the Senator from Arizona said about that very important bill and commend the Presiding Officer for his leadership throughout the country.

We also voted on the Defense appropriations bill today, another important bill. I am not sure it is going to get a lot of press, but I wish to talk about what is going on there because it is ac-

tually very important for the American people to really have a sense of what is happening. We saw in the media, we see all over Washington and on TV this talk concerning a government shutdown. I think a lot of people have concerns about it. Let me talk about that in the context of the bill we voted on today, which, unfortunately, was filibustered by our colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

A lot of us who are new here in the Senate—the Presiding Officer, my colleague from North Carolina—ran on the issue of a dysfunctional Senate, where the most basic function of government was not happening. Let me give one critical example. We weren’t passing a budget, we weren’t funding government, and we weren’t doing regular order in terms of appropriations bills. So many of us ran to say: Enough, we are going to change things here. With all due respect to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, they neglected this function—no budget, no appropriations bills—for years. The most basic function of government was not happening in the Senate.

So many of us campaigned to change that—to work hard to change that—because we knew that is what the American people wanted. And we have done it. We are starting to do it. For example, we passed the budget resolution.

If we look at the 10 years out of our budget versus the 10 years out of the President’s budget, we cut \$5 to \$7 trillion in terms of the President’s wasteful spending. That is serious. We did that. We passed the budget resolution. We debated it here for a number of weeks, not days. The other side of the aisle hadn’t done that for years.

When I went back home and said we did that, a lot of people in Alaska said: Well, big deal, my household passes a budget every year. My business passes a budget every year. The State of Alaska passes a budget every year.

But it is a big deal because we hadn’t done it here. But now we are doing it because that is what we committed to do.

So that is one step: We passed a budget. Then the Members of this body, working hard, particularly through the Appropriations Committee, passed 12 appropriations bills—9 of which passed out of the committee with very, very strong bipartisan votes—to fund the government. So far so good—that is what we are supposed to be doing here. We are back to work, back to regular order.

One of these bills was the Defense appropriation bill. What does that mean? It is kind of a wonky term. That is the bill that funds our military, that funds our national defense, that funds the sergeant in the Marine Corps and the Army—a really important bill. It passed out of the committee with a very strong bipartisan vote of 27 to 3. We almost can’t get any more bipartisan than that, 27 to 3. Virtually everybody, Democrats and Republicans, voted for that because they know how important it is.

So what happened today? We took the next step in the regular order process as we promised the American people to fund our government by bringing forward that bill. At 27 to 3, it should be no problem passing it in the Senate. Look at how many Democrats voted for that bill. So we wanted to move forward on that bill. We all know how critical that bill is—probably one of the most critical appropriations bills we have because it is funding the defense of our Nation and the brave men and women who serve our Nation.

So what happened in the vote today? Well, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle decided: No, we are going to filibuster that. I know we voted 27 to 3 to move it out of committee, but now we are going to filibuster that.

In fact, according to the leader on the other side of the aisle, the Democrats are saying they are going to filibuster all 12 appropriations bills—all 12 of them.

Let me repeat. Here is what is happening. We passed the budget. We passed, for the most part, very bipartisan appropriations bills. Let me read a few of them: Agriculture, 28 to 2, out of committee; Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, 27 to 3; Defense, 27 to 3; Energy and Water, 26 to 4; State and Foreign Operations, 27 to 3.

This is a list of very bipartisan work by the Senate in the Appropriations Committee. I commend all the Members of this body who worked so hard on that. But now we hear that the other side is going to filibuster every single one of these. They did it today. That is actually the second time they did it with regard to the Defense appropriations bill. They are going to do it again and again and again.

It is my view that we should bring all 12 of these bills to the Senate floor, like we did today. We are trying to move forward and fund this government. We are trying to get back to regular order, the way the Senate used to work. It hadn’t worked like that for years, but now we are trying to do that. If the other side of the aisle wants to continually filibuster the funding of our government, let them stand up to the American people and do that.

For example, I think we should bring up the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill that passed out of committee 21 to 9. It is very important for the country. Let’s bring it up. Let’s have a vote on it. If they want to filibuster that, I think they will have to explain why they are not supporting veterans.

This will make one thing clear, though. In all the talk we hear in the media every day about Republicans wanting to shut down the government, I think it is pretty clear when we look at what is happening here with the filibustering of all the appropriations bills that there is another side to this story. There is another side to this story. The

defunding of the government—of our troops, as we saw today—is happening because of the filibuster.

It is my hope that our friends in the media, who love to talk about this story, are going to look a little bit more deeply—look at these votes today, look at the budget, look at what the Appropriations Committee has been doing—and tell the real story. There are people very focused on stopping the funding of the government. We saw it today. It is not the majority party in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

PAIN-CAPABLE UNBORN CHILD PROTECTION BILL

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from the great State of Alaska for his comments. I wish to be associated with those comments. I also thank him not only for his service in the Senate but for his service in the Marines.

I stand here today heartbroken over the failure to advance a bill that would protect the lives of unborn babies—babies who are old enough, who, with proper care, can survive when born at this age.

Many of my colleagues have spoken regarding all that we know about the science of fetal development—how unborn babies feel pain, when they feel pain, the related neurological data, and so on. Others will tell us that the United States is out of step with the overwhelming majority of other nations on this policy. Others will show poll numbers that demonstrate that an overwhelming majority of Americans, especially women, think this policy is a good policy—the policy that was voted down in this Chamber today.

But we don't need to know all that to know what is right and what is wrong. We know what is right. Any of us who have ever watched our wife's belly grow, as I did with the miracle of my son and daughter; any of us who have ever experienced the excitement before learning the results of a prenatal test; any of us who have seen an ultrasound or attended a baby shower, we all know. We know because of the hundreds and thousands of friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers whose own baby stories we have watched over our lives. The stories of successful deliveries, the complications, the joys, the tragedies, and all of these stories—the beautiful stories and the bittersweet stories—have taught us the truth about the unborn. We all know. We don't need to be scientists to understand what the science can tell us.

So I wish to tell some stories that illustrate what this bill, which was voted down today in this Chamber, is about.

I want to start with Samuel. As early as 1999, we were doing fetal surgeries here in the United States. Samuel's parents, Julie and Alex, were given the terrible news that their unborn son had permanent nerve damage from an opening in his spine due to spina bifida.

Doctors said that half of all babies with spina bifida were aborted, but Julie and Alex chose a different path for Samuel. This was at 21 weeks. Samuel was operated on in utero. Today he is all grown up. Samuel said that he believes God sent him to Earth to help stop abortion.

Then there is Elijah.

When April Leffingwell's ultrasound at 20 weeks revealed a life-threatening tumor growing in Elijah's left lung, she knew his life was in grave danger. Thankfully, this fateful diagnosis was not the end of the story. Instead, Elijah's life was saved by an innovative fetal surgery performed at just 25 weeks. During the surgery, 3 years ago, 5-month-old baby Elijah was given anesthesia to protect him from pain. He was then partially removed from his mother's womb, and the life-threatening tumor the size of an orange was removed. Elijah's primary surgeon at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia said that he would have died if the operation were not done before birth. Now, several years later, after a challenging beginning, Elijah is a healthy and very active toddler.

Here is another story, about Micah.

Micah's mom Danielle went into labor and delivered Micah when he was just 22 weeks old. This is little Micah shortly after delivery as shown in this picture. She was given the worst of news—that her son would not survive. But Micah received state-of-the-art care and spent the next 4 months in the neonatal intensive care unit, or NICU. Micah's parents kept vigil at his side and watched all the developmental milestones, which should have been reached in utero, be reached in the artificial environment in the NICU. And slowly, day by day, he made it. He thrived and is 3 years old.

Micah and his family are here today at the Senate. I met them earlier today. He actually gave me this band that says "Miracles for Micah." Surely my colleagues can see what Micah's parents see; that their son was just as precious at 22 weeks as he is today at 3 years old.

There are more stories. Some of us remember former Philadelphia Eagles player Vaughn Hebron. Vaughn and his wife Kim were given the news that their twins, 5 months old in utero, were facing what is called twin-transfusion—a life-threatening condition. Doctors said there was a 70-percent chance that one or both of the twins would die, but Vaughn and his wife chose to fight for their boys. They received state-of-the-art care and both boys are now healthy teenagers.

All of these children—the Hebron twins, Micah, Elijah, Samuel—there is only one difference between them and the babies aborted, dismembered, and sold by Planned Parenthood; the only difference is that these children were wanted and welcomed. If they are wanted and welcome, we fight like mad to save them. We throw everything at them that science and medicine can

possibly do. We save their lives and we create miracles every day.

We need this bill to protect those poor babies who are unwanted and unwelcome. We don't strip born children of their right to life and protection just because their parents don't want them. We take care of them at taxpayer expense. We try to help their parents support them. We provide health care for them. If their parents will not or can't raise them, we seek adoptive families for them. But if they are a few months, even a few days or a few minutes younger, our law denies them the opportunity to grow, to learn, and to become the bright-eyed, world-changing children we all cherish and protect.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. I think this one says it better than anything any of us will say on this Senate floor. This is a baby in utero around 20 weeks. There is simply no arguing that this is a baby. At this age, she is about 10 ounces, about 10 inches long—about the size of a big banana. A baby this age is practicing swallowing for the first time. She is moving. Her skin is thickening up so it is starting to lose that translucent look. A good fraction of the babies who are delivered prematurely at this age survive. A few weeks later, almost all of them survive.

The bill we voted on today would have protected babies from this age and older—when they can feel pain, when they look like humans in photographs and sonograms, and when they are kicking around in their mama's bellies. Although we didn't advance this bill today, we must not give up. I am not giving up on my colleagues because I believe justice can still win out. This bill must eventually pass. History will clothe us in disgrace if we fail to do so. The law should protect these children. Nobody put it better than the late great children's author Dr. Seuss when he said: "A person's a person, no matter how small."

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

CORPORATE CULTURE IN THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, Volkswagen has become part of the lexicon of the American economy, American culture. Volkswagen Beetles, at the time when I was growing up as a kid, were all a part of the America we know and love. Now we find out that Volkswagen for years has been purposely deceiving the American public—for that matter, their customers around the world—on their diesel cars by deceptively telling them what the mileage is on the cars. And oh, by the way, in the United States, because they were supposedly getting great mileage, there was a tax benefit to the purchasers of those vehicles.

What in the world is happening to the American automobile industry and those foreign manufacturers that are selling automobiles here to take advantage of the American automobile-

consuming public? It is an outrage that VW would take advantage of its consumers by purposely deceiving them on their mileage on diesel vehicles.

First there was General Motors. Over 100 people died as a result of a defective ignition switch that General Motors did not tell us about, and in the process just recently—last week—announced a fine of \$900 million. Where are our U.S. regulatory agencies? What is the Obama administration doing about this in its regulatory agencies? Why are they not dropping the hammer on corporations and corporate executives that are purposely deceiving the American people about faulty automobile products that cause the loss of lives and property? It was General Motors. Then it was Takata airbags, which are in a lot of automobiles but especially in Hondas and Toyotas. We know that a number of people have lost their lives, a number of people have been maimed, and they are driving around with an airbag in the middle of the steering wheel—which now there have been millions and millions of recalls—and in the middle of that steering wheel is an explosive grenade because it hasn't been replaced.

Today, Volkswagen admitted, over the course of the last half dozen years, that they have deceived people on their diesel vehicles by deceptively telling them what the gas mileage was. Has the corporate culture in what is an automobile society shrunk so low that we can't be upfront when our products are defective or when we are trying to gain competitive advantage? I lay this not only on the corporate culture, I lay it at the feet of the U.S. regulatory agencies that ought to be doing their job and ought to be doing it in a forceful way. Then there ought to be some prosecutions, and corporate executives who knew this and have done it ought to be going to jail.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, in the coming days we know that we are going to have an extraordinary visit. This is a historic occasion. We are going to gather both Houses of Congress to hear from Pope Francis. During his time in the United States, Pope Francis has chosen to do something that I think is extraordinary—to visit with the imprisoned.

In his address here, he may or may not discuss the American criminal justice system, but this visit alone, which speaks to something deep within the Catholic faith, deep within the Christian religion, reflected in Matthew 25: "I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." This step by the Pope, to me, is an extraordinary accomplishment in bringing a further highlight to the challenges we have in the United States with our criminal justice system.

The Pope has predicated his time as Pope on an ideal of mercy. His motto, "miserando atque eligendo," which translates to "to be shown mercy and be chosen," to me is extraordinary. I actually believe the Pope and what he is doing resonates not just in a religious sense with the Christian faith but in the American sense with our shared collective values.

I have taken the time to speak on the Senate floor on numerous occasions about our criminal justice system from many perspectives, but on this occasion, I would like to talk about those moral values which do not divide us as a nation but unite us. Those are values deep within the core of our country, part of our heritage, part of our songs, our pledges, and our words.

We know the criminal justice system as it stands right now has many issues. If it was just analyzed on an economic angle, it would be enough to show how this criminal justice system is out of step with who we are as a people. We know that right now we in America are imprisoning more people than anybody else on the globe. We are the "incarceration nation" when it comes to comparing ourselves with other global nations. We are about 5 percent of the global population but 25 percent of the global prison population. One out of every four people on the planet Earth who are incarcerated are in the United States of America. The cost of that, from a fiscal perspective, is incredible.

We spend over a quarter of a trillion dollars every single year on our criminal justice system, a significant cost to American taxpayers. It is estimated that between 1980 and 2004, we would have had 20 percent less poverty in America if not for mass incarceration. Think about that for a second—the costs of poverty on our productivity. We know that only about 9 percent of children who are poor are going to go to college. There are significant costs associated with poverty, both fiscal and moral. The poverty rate would be 20 percent lower if we had incarceration rates at the same levels as our industrial peers.

At a time that our roads and our bridges are crumbling, as we as a nation have seen ourselves having gone from having the best infrastructure on the globe to now being a nation with an infrastructure that is not even ranked in the top 10 globally, at a time that we have seen investment go down as a percentage of our GDP, one thing we have seen go up is our investment in the prison infrastructure.

We know that between 1990 and 2005, a new prison opened in the United States every 10 days. We have seen our prison population on a Federal level go up over the last 30 years about 800 percent. Looking at this from the fiscal perspective, we know we are digging a hole for ourselves—self-inflicted economic wounds that are just unnecessary for a nation of free people. Take for example a report from the Center for Economic and Policy Research.

They concluded that in the year 2008 alone, ex-offender unemployment losses to our economy were the equivalent of 1.5 to 1.7 million workers or \$57 billion to \$65 billion annually. In other words, when our folks come out of prison, as most do, they find it so hard to reintegrate into our economy. They find it hard to start jobs as there are bars to employment, finding it hard to start businesses as there are bars to business licenses. And that loss to our economy is the equivalent of about 1.6 million workers or \$57 billion to \$65 billion annually.

This reality, the fiscal reality alone—before we even talk about our values as a country, before we even talk about our morals—should be enough for us to find greater urgency about the need to reform our criminal justice system, especially because States in America are beginning to show that you can save taxpayer dollars by reducing incarceration levels and empowering people to succeed while simultaneously lowering the crime rate. This alone should be enough to show that we have a broken criminal justice system that violates the ideals of economic prudence and fiscal conservatism. We are digging an economic hole for ourselves.

While the Pope will talk to us with a moral force during his visit, it is also important to understand that as a moral nation, the values we have put forth into the world are being violated by our criminal justice system as well.

This body has been a body that has spoken with clarity on numerous moral issues—from the Civil Rights Act to the Fair Housing Act—but now we are seeing that we are failing to do what is necessary when it comes to living up to those powerful words of equal justice under the law. It is inscribed on the Supreme Court just hundreds of yards from where I am standing right now.

We now know that there is no difference in drug usage and selling rates between African Americans, Whites, and Latinos. Yet our criminal justice system is incarcerating minorities in this country well disproportionate to their numbers in those drug crimes.

Even at a time when we have had our last three Presidents admit to using drugs—the last two admitted to violating the drug laws—we still have a nation in which we are treating certain people differently.

Take, for example, that we now know that African Americans and Whites have no difference for selling and using drugs, but Blacks are about 3.7 times more likely to be arrested for a marijuana related crime. Take, for example, that African Americans and Whites are arrested for the same crimes, and Blacks are given sentences that are about 20 percent longer than Whites for those similar crimes. African Americans are about 21 percent more likely to receive a mandatory minimum than Whites facing similar charges.

This disproportionate experience under the law has created harrowing

results within our Nation. There are more African Americans in jail, prison or under State or Federal supervision today than there were African Americans enslaved in 1850.

Even though African Americans make up 14.7 percent of the population in my State of New Jersey, they make up 61 percent of the total correctional population. One in three African-American men born in 2001 will go to prison during their lifetime. These numbers are astonishing, and in many ways they are being fueled by a criminal justice system that, from arrests to sentencing, is treating African Americans harsher than their White peers. This value of equal justice under the law is not being fulfilled.

Latinos face the same challenges. Native Americans are also grossly over-represented in our criminal justice system, with incarceration rates that are 38 percent higher than the national average. There is no difference in proclivity for drug crimes among people of color, but we have a system that actually punishes those who are of color in different ways. We need to begin, as a Congress and a nation, to find ways to have drug laws that make sense. The explosion of incarcerations in this country was fueled by the war on drugs, and we know that certain communities are facing the harsh impact of that enforcement in ways that other communities are not.

We need to reform our harsh mandatory minimum policies. For too long we have taken away judicial discretion and tied the hands of sentencing experts who can and should weigh other factors when it comes to making sentencing decisions. We need to now avoid what Congress intended—giving these harsh sentences to people who are not drug kingpins or large players but often low-level offenders.

This idea of equal opportunity as well is something that is of value and is deep within our system. Unfortunately, the trends we see in our criminal justice system aren't limited to adults and the treatment under the law, but they are also showing that our kids as well do not always face equal pathways to opportunity. Today we know that the number of children who are born to people who are incarcerated or have an incarcerated parent is growing astonishingly. Right now, 1 in 28 children is growing up with a parent in prison, and 1 in 9 African-American kids, as a result of this mass incarceration disproportionately hitting minority communities, is growing up with a parent behind bars. These kids often struggle more in school, have families who are often poorer, and have limited opportunities of success.

Over half of imprisoned parents were the primary earners for their children prior to their incarceration, and a child with an incarcerated father is more likely to be suspended from school than a peer without an incarcerated father—23 percent compared to 4 percent. These are serious gulfs in opportunity

being created by a broken criminal justice system. The gulfs of opportunity between young people based on race start young and actually only grow with time.

For too many children, zero-tolerance discipline policies in schools across America serve as a gateway into the criminal justice system and a lifetime of devastating collateral consequences. And just as in the American criminal justice system, too many young people of color in America are falling into the trap of that school-to-prison pipeline.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights in March 2014, Black students were suspended at a rate three times greater than White students. On average, 5 percent of White students are suspended compared to 16 percent of Black students. Students who have been suspended or expelled as a part of their school's disciplinary policy are 3 times as likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system within the next year. There is evidence showing that kids of different races face the harshness of those policies in different ways. In other words, minority students are often treated harshly while others see leniency. We need to begin to enact commonsense policies that provide for equal opportunity—those commonsense policies that don't lead to suspension or involvement with police officers when in the past the infraction typically would have been dealt with the school internally. We need to find a system where a child's one mistake does not become a lifetime sentence, where children are empowered to succeed and not fear a retribution that destabilizes their lives.

We also know that it is important that we begin to think: Are we a nation of second chances? Are we a nation where words such as redemption and mercy have meaning? Are we a nation that can live up to these ideals where just because you fall down and stumble and make a mistake, you cannot be someone who can still stand up again and make your way?

We know that every single year approximately 600,000 Americans finish their prison sentences after paying their debt to society and reenter their communities. They often find themselves unable to work, to vote, to get back to school or to get a loan. The collateral consequences are extraordinary.

The American Bar Association has identified over 46,000 collateral consequences that impact people with criminal records. About 60 to 70 percent of them are employment-related. In other words, even though we are saying to people who have paid their debt that they now need to get back to work, we are actually putting up bars which prevent them from doing so. They are finding it hard to get a job, get a business license, get a loan, or get a Pell grant, and if they fall and stumble, they often find it hard to even

get food stamps or get the social safety net that often keeps people from abject desperation. These realities place too many roadblocks in the way of people coming home.

During Pope Francis's visits to prisons, he is said to have asked himself: Why did God allow that I should not be here? But for the grace of God.

In advance of his visit, I believe we should be asking ourselves: What do these ideals of mercy and redemption mean to us—this idea that when we see people who are broken by society, we should understand that we should be investing in their success? It actually not only makes moral sense to do so, but it makes sense to do so because we will reap the economic benefit.

If you take, for example, Americans who are suffering from addiction, we now know that \$1 invested in people with addiction to get treatment produces a benefit in reducing interactions with the police and incarceration by \$4 to \$7. Yet the overwhelming majority of people with drug addictions do not get treatment. Not only is that fiscally unsound, but that makes no sense in the ideals of our morals as a nation, that we should help people who are broken by disease.

This is the point we have come to as a nation, where we know that doing the morally right thing actually helps to save the dollars of our taxpayers so that we can keep that in our own pockets or invest them in areas that we so desperately need.

Take, for example, a simple thing that companies around this country, such as Bed Bath & Beyond and Starbucks, are doing but we don't do in the Federal Government—this commonsense idea that those who have paid their debt will be given a level playing field and a fair shot to get a job to prove that they are worthy of work. Some people call this Ban the Box, something that 18 States have done. But here in the Federal Government, we still make people—right at the point of application—check the box and say that they have been formally incarcerated, which means, for many Americans, that it gives them 50 to 60 percent less chance of even getting an interview or getting an opportunity to demonstrate their worth and make their case.

We know that simple things such as moving that time of disclosure of a previous criminal conviction to later in the process could elevate the chances of getting more people to work. And when they get to work, they begin to be there for their families, their kids, our economy, and they become productive, as opposed to what we have now, which over time is a recidivism rate—the rate at which people go back to prison—that is upwards of 75 percent, costing us again billions of dollars as taxpayers.

This system is broken. It makes no economic sense, but more importantly, it violates our ideals as a nation of equal justice under the law, the ideal of

having a second chance in our country, and the ideal of equal opportunity for all.

We must now embrace the urgency of the moment. To have a wasteful system that is broken, that further harms and injures people with illnesses—whether it be mental health disorder or an addiction—that aggravates them with practices such as putting children in solitary confinement—all of these things violate our principals as a nation, and it is time for us to join together and embrace change.

I feel honored that right now in this country there is an emerging bipartisan and nonpartisan coalition around criminal justice reform. We see people from all across the political perspective approaching it from different perspectives—from Christian Evangelicals to fiscal conservatives to civil libertarians to civil rights activists—all beginning to say the system is morally bankrupt. It is bankrupting States and our Nation. It is a violation of who we are as a country, and it just makes no sense.

It was James Baldwin who once said:

There is never time in the future in which we will work out our salvation. The challenge is in the moment; the time is always now.

With this visit from the Pope and his further spotlighting our criminal justice system, let us find that moral urgency in our Nation. Let us find the grit that we have shown in the past for overcoming injustice. Let us join together and begin with even more urgency to do the hard work of correcting the ills within our criminal justice system, of fixing what is broken, and making right in America that which we hold so dear—that we are a nation indeed with liberty and justice for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I know my friend, the distinguished Senator from Vermont, has been waiting, and so I will be very quick with the statement that I am going to give.

REMEMBERING JIM SANTINI

Mr. President, today Nevada lost a historic figure. This morning former U.S. Congressman Jim Santini of Nevada passed away. He was a remarkably good person—a tremendous person who understood Nevada so well.

He was a native Nevadan, born in Reno. He came from a real heritage that caused him to love his State of Nevada. His grandfather, Walter E. Clark, was the longest serving president at the University of Nevada. His uncle is a famous writer—a really celebrated author—Walter Van Tillburg Clark. It has been a long time, but what a great writer. His most famous work was “The Ox-Bow Incident.” I read it again a few years ago. It was made into a movie, which I watched again. It was considered by most to be the most—actually, the first modern Western novel.

So Jim Santini breathed what Nevada was all about. He knew the State extremely well. He graduated from the University of Nevada—the same school where his grandfather was the president. He became close friends with former Senator Richard Bryan of Nevada, a two-term Governor and a striking figure in his own right. They were inseparable friends. They were in college together. They went to the same law school—Hastings Law School in San Francisco.

Jim graduated from law school in 1962. He immediately decided he would serve his country, and for 3 years he served in the U.S. Army. His service to his State and country spans many decades.

His good friend Richard Bryan convinced him that he should move from Reno. The growth in the State was in the southern part of the State, the Las Vegas area. Jim—in some respects reluctantly—moved from his roots to southern Nevada, where he excelled. He worked as a deputy district attorney. After the first public defender in the State of Nevada decided to run for public office, he was replaced—that is Richard Bryan, the first public defender in Clark County—he was replaced with his good friend Jim Santini, who became a public defender.

It was a short time thereafter that he was elected justice of the peace of Las Vegas. During this period of time, the role of the justice of the peace changed. It became more of a judicial officer rather than someone who became fabulously wealthy by marrying hundreds and hundreds of people. That is the way it used to be. He did a very good job as justice of the peace. He was so impressive that the Governor of the State of Nevada, Mike O’Callaghan, appointed him to serve as a Nevada district court judge representing Clark County.

In 1972 Jim ran for Nevada’s at-large congressional seat. From 1864, when Nevada became a State, until 1982, Nevada only had one Congressman, one Member of Congress, and it was an at-large seat. And when Jim ran for that in 1972, he ran against Republican incumbent David Towell, who just 2 years before was in a race with Congressman Walter S. Baring, who served in Congress for some 22 years representing Nevada’s at-large congressional seat and who was defeated in the primary. But David Towell came from nowhere and beat the Democrat in that case. Santini came right back, and David Towell was a one-term Congressman.

Jim represented the State of Nevada in Congress very honorably for four terms. He was well respected, well regarded, and very popular in the State of Nevada. However, in 1982 Jim decided to run for the Senate, and he was not successful. In 1986 he ran for the Senate again. I was his opponent. It was a relatively close race, but when that race was over, it was over. I knew Jim before he and I became opponents.

We worked together on many different projects. We never had a cross word. To this day we never had a cross word.

Jim became a counsel—a lawyer—and a lobbyist for America’s tourism and travel industry. He worked to bring tourists to the United States and to the State of Nevada, and he did it very admirably and very well.

Jim Santini had a wonderful wife, Ann Santini. She has quite a career in her own right. She is the director of international affairs for the LDS Church here in Washington, DC. They have four children: Lisa, Lori, Mark, and J.D. They have 11 grandchildren.

Before leaving Jim Santini, we have to speak about his uniqueness. Here is a man who had—there may be someone who has a better arrowhead collection than Jim Santini; I just don’t know who it would be. He spent many decades—a lot of the time in Nevada but around the country—collecting arrowheads. He had a great collection of arrowheads. He also collected Indian baskets, and in Nevada we had probably the most famous basket weaver in the history of the country, a woman by the name of Dat So La Lee. She is really a very famous woman. Many of her baskets are worth over \$1 million. She made baskets this big—woven, of course, by hand—and baskets this large. Jim collected baskets. I don’t know how many he wound up having of Dat So La Lee’s, but I am sure he had some.

It is with a great deal of sadness that I report to my friends in Nevada and the friends Jim had here in Washington that Jim passed away this morning. I said that earlier. I will miss him. He and I exchanged letters right after the first of the year, right after I got hurt, injured my eye. He always was a kind, gracious man, and I will miss him very much, as will everyone in Nevada and his friends here in Washington.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

PAPAL VISIT

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I am delighted that Pope Francis will be addressing a joint session of Congress on Thursday.

The Pope has played, in my view, an extraordinary role since he assumed his position in speaking out with courage and brilliance about some of the most important issues facing our world. From the moment he was elected, he immediately let it be known that he would be a different kind of Pope, a different kind of religious leader. In choosing his Papal name—Francis—he said:

Francis of Assisi. For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation.

What I want to do in a short period of time is read some of the very profound and important statements Pope Francis has made over the last several years. They are incisive, they are courageous, and they speak to a world in trouble that needs the kind of leadership that he is providing.

Let me quote from a number of the statements he has made.
Quote:

While the income of a minority is increasing exponentially, that of the majority is crumbling. This imbalance results from ideologies which uphold the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation, and thus deny the right of control to States, which are themselves charged with providing for the common good.

Obviously, he is not talking about the United States; he is talking about the global economy. But certainly in our country, when he talks about the income of the minority increasing exponentially and that of the majority crumbling, he is, of course, right. We have right now in our country the top one-tenth of 1 percent owning almost as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent. We have about 58 percent of all new income being created now going to the top 1 percent. In the last several years, we have seen the 14 wealthiest people in America increase their wealth by \$156 billion, and that increase in wealth is more wealth than is owned by the bottom 40 percent of the American people.

As the Pope points out, this is not by any means just an American issue; this is a global issue. We are moving toward a period where very shortly the top 1 percent of the people on the planet will own more wealth than the bottom 99 percent. To me, that is immoral, that is wrong, that is unsustainable, and I am glad the Pope has raised that issue.

He talks about another issue which is even more profound. It is one thing to talk about income and wealth inequality, and it is another thing to talk about poverty.

Here, he says:

We have created new idols. The worship of the golden calf of old has found a new and heartless image in the cult of money and the dictatorship of an economy which is faceless and lacking any truly humane goal.

“The worship of the golden calf of old has found a new and heartless image in the cult of money.” What does that mean? Well, I take it to mean that we are living in a society which turns its back on people who work hard, decent people, people who are good parents, but yet we worship those people who for whatever reason—sometimes honestly and with creativity, sometimes dishonestly and illegally—have become millionaires and billionaires. Those are the people we worship. The more money they make, the more they get worshipped. I think the Pope is right in saying that is not something we should be doing.

In another statement, which is certainly relevant for a lot of the discussions we have here on the floor of the Senate, he said:

In this context, some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naive trust in the goodness of

those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system.

What is he talking about? He is talking about a lot of what has gone on here in this country for many decades. There is a theory, which the Pope is right in saying has never been confirmed by the facts—quite the contrary—that if we give huge tax breaks to billionaires and large corporations, somehow that money will trickle down to the middle class and working class. Well, that theory has not proved to be true. Under trickle-down economics, the rich get richer and virtually everybody else gets poorer. I think the Pope is quite right in making that point.

Let me again quote the Pope. This is what he said:

Man is not in charge today, money is in charge. Money rules.

Money rules. Well, 5 years ago the U.S. Supreme Court by a 5-to-4 decision passed the disastrous Citizens United decision which basically said to the wealthiest people in this country: You already own much of the economy; now we are going to give you the opportunity to buy the United States Government. And that is exactly what they are now attempting to do. Money rules. You have one family—the Koch brothers—who will spend \$900 million in this election cycle to elect candidates who will protect the wealthy and powerful. That is more money than will be spent by either the Democratic or Republican Party. When one family is spending more money than either of the two major political parties, I think it is an example of what the Pope is talking about when he says “money rules.”

Money does rule, and that is why, in my view, we have to overturn Citizens United and move to the public funding of elections—so the wealthy and the powerful will not be able to buy elections.

He also said something very interesting about the media. This is what he said:

These things become the norm: that some homeless people die of cold on the streets is not news. In contrast, a ten point drop on the stock markets of some cities is a tragedy.

Well, what is news? Is he right? We talk about the stock market going up, the stock market going up. It is big news. The 45 million Americans living in poverty—I don't hear much discussion about that. There are thousands of people dying every single year because they don't have health insurance and can't get to a doctor when they need to. That ain't big news—not big news at all. I think it is an interesting point about what constitutes news, and I think the Pope makes a very good point in that regard.

Let me give another quote:

It is a well-known fact that current levels of production are sufficient, yet millions of people are still suffering and dying of starvation. This, dear friends, is truly scandalous.

I think what the Pope is talking about is that in a world where we have

enormous productive capability—in industrial, agricultural—we have a situation where children die of diseases that are preventable all over the world, where people go hungry all over the world. Yet, as he says, our current levels of production are sufficient. We are producing enough to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide what people need, and yet we have an economy which works day after day to make billionaires richer and turns its back on desperate people all over the world.

Let me end with this quote:

Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape.

That is certainly true in the United States. It is certainly truer all over the world. We are living in a world of the survival of the fittest. If you are poor, if you are unemployed, if you are hungry, government turns its back on you. But if you are rich, if you are powerful, if you can make campaign contributions of hundreds of millions of dollars, we love you, we welcome you, and we need you more and more.

I think during this week where we welcome the Pope to Washington, DC, I would hope that some of my colleagues would examine the very profound lessons he is teaching people all over this world.

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

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

(The remarks of Mr. WICKER pertaining to the introduction of S. 2067 are printed in today's RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BARASSO). The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, I rise to speak about a very important issue. It is a fundamental constitutional issue for this body and part of our duty in the Senate and the Congress; that is, to ensure next week the funding for the government which expires at the end of the month. With only 1 week until the current government funding runs out, it is our responsibility to work together to make sure that the government keeps running, that we do not disrupt people's lives, that we do not end up spending more money because we shut the government down to reopen it, and that we provide certainty with all of the challenges we face at home and, of course, the threats we face abroad.

An issue has come up that is a very important issue, and that is an organization called Planned Parenthood and holding Planned Parenthood accountable in the wake of deeply disturbing videos that discuss the appalling practice of harvesting the organs and body parts of unborn babies.

Like Americans across all political spectrums, I was just sick—sick to see the contents of recent videos that have been disclosed that show a callous disregard by officials at Planned Parenthood for the dignity of human life. These videos have shocked the conscience of people across our country because this organization does receive taxpayer funding. I understand why we have had an important debate in this body about redirecting this funding because of Planned Parenthood's actions and fully investigating what was revealed in these disturbing videos that show the practice of the harvesting of organs and body parts of unborn babies.

So I support the efforts of the Judiciary Committee to investigate these disturbing videos. I also do not believe it is appropriate that taxpayer funds should be used to fund a private organization that performs hundreds of thousands of abortions each year and that engages in the horrific practices that were shown in these videos.

That is why last month I joined a bipartisan majority of Senators in voting to redirect Federal funding from Planned Parenthood to community health centers that provide women's health services, including mammograms, cancer screenings, and contraceptives. In New Hampshire there are more than 30 community health centers, compared to 5 Planned Parenthood clinics.

But when we had this debate and vote on the Senate floor, we received only 53 votes in favor of redirecting this money from Planned Parenthood to community health centers which provide women's health services, falling well short of the 60-vote threshold required to advance this legislation in the Senate. Yet despite already having had a vote on this, which failed the 60-vote threshold in the Senate, there are some that are pushing to attach this issue to the funding of the government, even though when we had the vote here, we did not have the votes to get it passed in the Senate, and even though the President himself has explicitly said he would veto any bill that prohibits funding for Planned Parenthood or redirects that funding to community health centers.

In fact, the President is so dug in on funding for Planned Parenthood that he is prepared to let the government shut down over it. And those who are pushing the strategy, saying we should go forward with it anyway—they have not explained how we would obtain 67 votes in the Senate.

When we had the vote on it, we only got 53, not even enough to advance the legislation in the Senate, which requires 60. The President certainly knows that we do not have 67 votes in the Senate to override his veto. Nevertheless, those who are pushing the strategy to attach this to the government funding bill—this issue of redirecting the funding—also know that there are not 60 votes in the Senate, never mind 67 to override a Presi-

dential veto. So the result is that if we passed the bill, even if we could get the 60 votes, the President is sure to veto it, and the 67 votes are not there to override his veto.

In the end, we are heading for an imminent government shutdown if this is not resolved. Everyone who looks at this issue knows the reality of where the votes lie. In fact, those on my side of the aisle who have been pushing the strategy of pass the bill, send it to the President for his veto, I have asked them the question: Let's assume we get the 60 votes to do that; first of all, how do we get those 60 votes? I have not received an answer to that question. Then I have asked the next question: Even if we could get those 60 votes to pass it out of the Senate and to send this to the President's desk with a government funding bill that redirects the money to Planned Parenthood over his opposition and he vetoes it, where do the 67 votes come from? I have not received an answer to that.

So I am here on the floor today to say: I am tired of the political games. I am tired of the President's game on this, that he is so dug in on this issue that he would be willing to let the government shut down. I am tired of the people on my side of the aisle who are pushing this strategy even though they know they do not have the votes to have it pass the Senate, and they certainly don't have the votes to override a Presidential veto, so, therefore, they cannot answer the question: What is the end game for success here, even if you feel as passionately about these issues as we all do?

So here we are again with the political posturing on both sides. I don't want to play this game anymore. I think it is too important that we not relive the movie of where we were in 2013 when the government shut down because I asked the very same question then, when the issue was defunding ObamaCare. I asked the question: How does this end? How does it end successfully to defund ObamaCare? How does it end without shutting down the government? I never received an answer then, and I have not received an answer now from those who are pushing this strategy.

We saw the movie in 2013. I do not think we should relive that movie. Let's remember what happened. When you shut the government down and you reopen it, it actually costs us more money. So if you care about the fiscal state of the country, let's not waste money shutting down the government with no results. You think about the economy and the disruption in people's lives. I remember my constituents calling me on the phone, because I was answering my phones. I remember people who saved for years for a family vacation to our national parks and could not participate in that family vacation and lost the money they had sunk into it for years in their savings for their big family vacation because people were pushing to keep the government

shut down, even though they had no strategy for achieving a result on it.

I remember the uncertainty and the hardship for working families and our military. Even though we keep our national security piece open during a government shutdown, there is so much uncertainty about whom that covers and whom it doesn't. When we look at the threats we are facing around the world right now, we do not need uncertainty when it comes to those who keep us safe at home on the law enforcement end, on our intel, on our military, and all the civilian workforce that supports them and makes sure they can do their job every single day.

The bottom line is, in 2013 we did not get a result, the funding for ObamaCare continued, the government was shut down, it cost us more money and disruption. We never got an answer then for how that would end successfully. Here we find ourselves again, the same group of people pushing the same strategy on the Planned Parenthood issue, saying we should shut the government down again, even though they cannot answer the question: How do we get to 60 votes? How do we get to 67 votes so that you can actually achieve a result here? I think the answer is that they don't know the answer, because we all know where the votes are. It is not going to happen.

So I am here on the floor because I feel strongly. I agree with the National Right to Life on this. In a recent op-ed, the National Right to Life rightly points out that pursuing this shutdown strategy could actually undermine efforts to hold Planned Parenthood accountable, primarily by shifting public attention in the political blame game that would result inevitably from the shutdown. The National Right to Life also cited a study by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, which found that the majority of Federal funds flowing to Planned Parenthood would not even be temporarily interrupted if the government shut down because the funds flow from mandatory spending programs like Medicaid rather than the congressional funding process, which is the discretionary spending piece impacted by what we will vote on regarding the continuing resolution.

Again, this was the same issue that actually came up in 2013 when it came to the tactics of trying to defund ObamaCare without a strategy for success. Right now we are playing a game of chicken. It is a dangerous game. We already know as we stand here where the votes are and what it takes to keep the government open. Yet, as I understand it, we are going to be taking another vote on Thursday so we can show the proponents of those who are again seeking to attach the Planned Parenthood redirecting-of-funding issue to the government funding bill that, guess what, we already know the answer to this. We don't have the votes. We are not going to get to 60 in the Senate, never mind the 67 it would take to override a Presidential veto.

So we all know what it is going to take to keep the government open. I think we should have that vote now, instead of continuing to have the political show votes that show the people where we know the votes already are on this issue. That means a clean funding bill now, so that we are not wasting time, so that we are not bringing ourselves closer to the brink of a shutdown.

So in good conscience, while I fully support redirecting the money from Planned Parenthood to community health centers who serve women, I cannot in good conscience participate again in this process, one that would ensure we come closer to the brink of a shutdown, when I have not heard a strategy for success.

I think the American people are owed an answer to the question: What is your strategy of success if you are threatening to shut down the government? I would ask the same of President Obama: If this is such an important issue to you that you are willing also to participate in this exercise of threatening a shutdown, is it that important to you given that the money can be redirected to community health centers that provide services to women?

That said, it is time to quit the games on both sides of the aisle. I came here to solve problems. That means we need to address this issue now. We should have the vote on the clean funding bill now. We should make sure we keep the government running, given the challenges we are facing at home and abroad, so that we do not have shutdown 2 and relive the movie we saw in 2013, and that was not a good one for the country.

I hope we will take the vote right now instead of continuing to play political games on both sides of the aisle while the clock ticks down. This is a very important issue for our country, and I am prepared right now to vote for a bill that will keep the government funded.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. AYOTTE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

OIL EXPORT BAN

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, last week a bipartisan majority of Senators—Members of this body—voted to try to stop President Obama's dangerous and desperate deal with Iran—that is right, dangerous and desperate.

The President wants to give Iran relief from the economic sanctions the world imposed. I believe President Obama traded away these sanctions too readily and he got too little in return. These sanctions included limits on the

sale of Iranian oil. According to one estimate, Iran could soon begin to export as many as 1 million additional barrels of oil each and every day. I know the money Iran makes from these sales will go to shoring up its economy, and it will go to building up Iran's military. Some of it will undoubtedly go to supporting global terrorists. That is what President Obama traded away. Iran will be allowed to sell its oil anywhere in the world, yet American oil producers are largely prohibited from selling American oil anywhere in the world. Apparently, that is exactly the way the White House wants to keep things.

There is legislation working its way through Congress right now to lift the ban on American crude oil exports. The Obama administration has said it doesn't support the bill. There is bipartisan support of the bill but not this White House—oh no. They think Congress shouldn't even get to decide. They think it should be up to Washington bureaucrats in the Obama administration to make the decisions. The administration thinks they are the only ones who should be allowed to decide whether the oil export ban gets lifted.

It was the Obama administration that let Iran off the hook by signing such a terrible deal. It is the Obama administration that now wants to lift the sanctions and give Iran access to more than \$100 billion. Should the Obama administration be the one to decide whether Iran gets to sell its oil without American competition? Is that what the President wants? Why is the Obama administration so interested in making sure Iran's economy gets back on its feet faster?

The President ought to be focused on helping America's economy, not Iran's economy. Right now American producers export about 500,000 barrels of oil a day. Where does it go? It goes to Canada. Iran is exporting about 1 million barrels a day. But once President Obama lifts the sanctions, that number is going to jump to almost 2 million barrels a day—2 million barrels a day. So President Obama favors a situation where Iran will be allowed to export four times as much oil as America does—four times as much. That is what the President is in favor of. And Senate Democrats who voted to help the President lift the sanctions want the same thing. That is what they say, 4 to 1—Iran over the United States.

Republicans want something very different. If the export ban is lifted, U.S. energy producers could export another 1.6 million barrels a day. Our daily oil exports would jump from half a million barrels to about 2 million barrels. That is what we want, to lift the sanctions. At the same time, Republicans voted to keep the sanctions in place against Iran. So under Republican plans, America would be exporting twice as much oil as Iran.

The Democrats vote four for Iran, one for the United States, and Repub-

licans voted two for the United States, one for Iran. That is the difference between what Washington Democrats want and what Senate Republicans want.

The Brookings Institution looked at this in September of 2014. They came out with a report. They looked at a variety of different scenarios for how much oil America might export. They found that for every scenario they looked at, "there are positive gains for U.S. households," with the United States being able to export more crude oil. The Government Accountability Office said the same thing last year. It said that "removing export restrictions is expected to increase the size of the economy"—that is the U.S. economy—"with implications for employment, investment, public revenue and trade."

Those are key for America.

These studies and others predict that adding American crude oil to global supplies could ultimately reduce gasoline prices right here at home. By how much, you ask? Well, one study estimated it would save American consumers a combined average of almost \$6 billion per year. This study found the savings would help increase the U.S. economy by about \$38 billion by 2020. New oil exports could support an additional 300,000 jobs by 2020.

These are huge benefits for the American economy, for American families—all because we free up American energy and we allow it to compete in the world's markets.

There would also be benefits for America's foreign policy. More oil would reduce prices worldwide. That means the other countries that export a lot of oil won't be able to make as much money off of their own oil sales. They would have to compete with us. This includes Iran. It includes countries such as Russia and Venezuela that use the wealth from their energy sales to pilot their own economies and not for the good.

New oil exports would undercut the ability of those countries to do things that are not in America's best interest. It would also help American allies around the world. Poland gets 96 percent of its oil from Russia. When they are negotiating to buy more oil, they would love—love—the opportunity and the option of American oil as an alternative. Belgium gets 60 percent of its oil from Russia and Saudi Arabia. Japan gets 75 percent of its oil from Russia and the Middle East. All of these countries and many more around the world could benefit from U.S. oil being sold on the world market.

Of course, another country that would really be helped is Israel. President Obama's reckless deal with Iran has put Israel in a much more dangerous situation. Even the White House seems to recognize this. The Obama administration says that it plans to offer Israel more military aid—aid to be used to bolster Israel's defenses against Iran. But the administration should not stop at military aid; it should also

offer Israel the opportunity to import American oil. Israel has trouble buying oil from many of its neighboring countries because they do not recognize the State of Israel. That leaves places such as Russia and Iraqi Kurdistan as its largest suppliers of crude oil.

If the Israelis had the opportunity to buy from American oil producers instead, that would be a big help in making sure their oil supply is stable and secure. It would also help repair some of the significant damage the President's Iran deal did to the relations between our two countries.

This should be an easy call. Ending the ban on U.S. oil exports would be good for American families, good for our national security, and good for our allies. The Obama administration should change course now. The Obama administration should work with Congress to end this ban on American energy exports as quickly as possible.

This past Saturday marked 7 years since a Canadian company filed its application to build the Keystone KL Pipeline—7 years. It has been buried in the bureaucratic limbo of the State Department ever since. That pipeline would provide American jobs just as more oil exports would. Americans should not have to wait another 7 years for Washington to lift the oil export ban and unleash the power of American energy.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND NONPROFIT ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I rise today to talk about a critical issue that I think the Pope's arrival today in Washington really highlights, and I am hopeful we will be addressing it in this Chamber.

I wanted to join Senator WHITEHOUSE yesterday. He has been an unwavering voice on the need for Congress to take legislative action to address climate change. He hit a milestone in May of this year by giving his 100th speech on the floor calling on his colleagues to act on climate change. He has also brought together a group of Senators to form a climate action task force, and I am proud to be a member of the group.

I believe we need a strong energy agenda for America, one that recognizes the challenges of climate change and that empowers people to be part of the solution.

The Pope has called climate change "one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day." He has gained international attention for his commitment to protecting our world and serving those in need. Thursday, when we have the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to hear from the Pope as he addresses Congress, I anticipate he will call on all Americans to come together to tackle many challenges, but among them is climate change.

During my time in the Senate, we have made some progress on this issue.

In 2008 we took action to raise gas mileage standards for cars for the first time in decades. We have also made energy efficiency improvements for consumer goods and have maintained tax credits for energy-efficient products and renewable sources. We passed farm bills in 2008 and again in 2014 with a large number of conservation, environment, and energy groups strongly supporting them. As a member of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, I have ensured that the energy title promoted investment in the next generation of biofuels crops, which are important renewable sources of energy. Earlier this year, we passed the Energy Efficiency Improvement Act of 2015, bipartisan legislation sponsored by Senators PORTMAN and SHAHEEN. It included the Water Heater Efficiency Act, which I worked on with Senator HOEVEN. This bipartisan measure enabled rural electric co-ops to optimize their energy management through continued use of energy-efficient water heaters. It also included measures to encourage energy efficiency practices in office spaces. These achievements are thanks to a combination of many factors. It continues to be the case that we need bipartisanship to move sound energy policy forward. And while we have taken some action, there is so much more to be done.

This summer, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee passed a bipartisan, comprehensive energy bill. I commend Chairwoman MURKOWSKI for her tireless efforts and Senator CANTWELL for her introduction today of the Energy bill—a bill I am a sponsor of—which sets a bar on comprehensive energy policy reform that would aggressively move our country forward in addressing climate change. Both of these pieces of legislation include the bill I have with Senator HOEVEN, the Nonprofit Energy Efficiency Act, which would allow the nonprofit community to save energy and money through a retrofit program.

During my time in the Senate, I have worked to find innovative solutions that move us forward. One example is this bill. Our bill empowers the nonprofit and faith communities to make energy efficiency improvements. It would help both our environment and our local communities by ensuring nonprofit organizations can benefit from policies that promote greater energy savings and efficiencies.

Whether feeding the hungry, helping the sick, or mentoring youth, my State's nearly 7,000 nonprofit organizations work hard every day to make a difference in people's lives. Nonprofit organizations are at the heart of our country and serve millions of Americans every day. Houses of worship, hospitals, schools, youth centers, and other not-for-profit entities provide critical services and assistance to communities across the country, but like businesses they must count their pennies and operate on a budget. Right now, nonprofit organizations—which,

by the way, are often in very old buildings, including churches, synagogues, mosques—cannot benefit from any of the energy efficiency programs available to regular businesses because these programs are provided in the form of tax credits, and because nonprofits are tax exempt they can't get these credits. That often leaves nonprofits with a difficult choice. They can either invest in energy efficiency projects or they can dedicate their very scarce resources to providing valuable resources to the community, but we know investing in energy efficiency improvements today can lead to savings over time that go beyond the cost of the initial investment. So our nonprofits find themselves asking this question: Should we help fewer people for a year or two in order to replace our heating system and then use the long-term savings to serve our community well into the future? That is not a choice they should have to make.

Our bill provides \$10 million each year for the next 5 years to create a pilot program at the U.S. Department of Energy that would help local nonprofit organizations make their buildings more energy efficient. The grants would promote energy efficiency in savings by helping to upgrade and retrofit old buildings as well as installing renewable energy generators and heaters. We worked to ensure that the grants will achieve a significant amount of energy savings and are done in a cost-effective manner. The grants would require a 50-percent match so that there is complete buy-in from nonprofits. This will be especially valuable to the many nonprofit organizations that work from older, less energy-efficient buildings.

We are taking a fiscally responsible approach. Our amendment is fully offset. We have support from both sides of the aisle with not just Senator HOEVEN and myself but Senators STABENOW, RISCH, SCHATZ, BLUNT, MKULSKI, WHITEHOUSE, and UDALL. I am proud to say we have the support of many religious organizations and nonprofits, including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that has been a leading supporter of our efforts. They say the bill would enable them to reduce their operating costs, lessen impact on their environment, and bolster America's energy independence.

The bill is now part of both the Energy Policy Modernization Act that recently passed in a bipartisan manner out of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and it is also part of the bill Senator CANTWELL introduced this morning. Although Senators may differ on the specific details of these two energy plans, I believe we can find broad agreement that energy efficiency must be a part of any energy plan. Energy efficiency is an issue we should be able to find common ground on. It is good for the economy, good for consumers, and good for the environment.

I urge my fellow Senators to work together to keep taking real steps forward on meaningful energy legislation that does something about climate change.

As we prepare to welcome Pope Francis to this Congress, it is time to pass legislation that will help nonprofits continue to serve our communities and conserve our natural resources for generations to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I rise to reiterate the importance of providing necessary resources to our men and women in uniform.

We are rapidly approaching the end of the fiscal year, and there are many major issues awaiting thoughtful consideration and action by Congress. There is one item on our to-do list that should have already been checked off; that is, fully funding our national security. That is why I am very disappointed that once again efforts to advance the Department of Defense Appropriations Act were halted today by my friends on the other side of the aisle.

Congress's first priority is, and should be, the defense of our Nation. We should not be hindered by political games in meeting that core duty that we have. The world is a dangerous place. It is not getting any safer. We cannot afford to be complacent about these threats. Our Nation faces challenges from nation states and asymmetric threats. These threats span the globe.

In Asia, Chinese behavior in the South China Sea threatens the long-standing freedom of navigation and our ability to operate on the high seas. Continuing China's pattern of increasing antagonism, a senior Chinese admiral recently declared that the entire South China Sea belongs to China. China's increasing military power, bullying of its neighbors, expansionist policies, and rejection of international norms threatens to upend the stability of that region. Simply put, China's behavior has dramatic consequences for the interests of the United States and our allies. The Asia-Pacific region will continue to grow in importance to the global economy. The ability of our military to operate freely in the Pacific is a key component to our national defense strategy and our economic security. We must vote to provide the necessary resources to address this challenge.

Additionally, the violence in Syria and Iraq continues to grow. This instability has created a vacuum in which terrorist groups like ISIL continue to operate. Its actions threaten the security of the United States and its allies in the region as well as basic human rights and religious freedom.

These challenges are far from the only threats that are facing our Nation. We still have thousands of servicemembers deployed in Afghanistan.

What is more, regional conflicts in Yemen and Libya jeopardize U.S. interests. The same is true of the growing number of terrorist groups from the Sinai Peninsula to West Africa.

Congress must ensure that our Nation's military has the necessary resources to protect the United States and to meet our commitments to our allies. As the character of these threats changes between the conventional, the unconventional, and the unknown, failure to appropriate defense resources is a threat in itself to our defense strategy.

As a Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I have heard our Nation's highest military officers repeatedly testify on a wide array of threats to our national security. For example, in his testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee on July 29, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter highlighted the threat that is posed by Iran. Beyond its nuclear program, Iran's support for proxies like Hezbollah and the Assad regime, its hostility toward our ally Israel, and its contribution to the ongoing violence in Yemen—they all present very serious threats to the interests of the United States.

Additionally, referring to the nuclear deal President Obama has signed with Iran, Secretary Carter said the deal places "no limitations on what the Department of Defense can and will do to pursue our defense strategy in the region"—"no limitations on what the Department of Defense can and will do."

For the Department of Defense to operate robustly and swiftly and without limitation requires funding of its people, programs, equipment, supplies, and research and development. Yet with an array of dangers facing our Nation, the Commander in Chief of our military has stated he will veto defense spending unless it is accompanied by an increase in nondefense spending.

To be clear, this appropriations bill would provide the President with the funding he asked for in his budget request. A strong bipartisan majority in this body has already voted that we must provide our military men and women with the resources they need to protect this country. In June of this year, the Senate voted 71 to 25 and said we must authorize spending at a level similar to what is contained in the Defense appropriations bill, but when it comes to actually appropriating the necessary resources by stepping up and voting to supply our military servicemembers with the resources they need to accomplish the missions they are given, the minority party objects because they contend that nondefense spending is insufficient.

I fundamentally disagree with this view. All government spending is not created equal. Resources that support our soldiers should not be held up for any reason—least of all in an attempt to increase spending on various objectives that are championed by the EPA or the IRS.

For the first time in 6 years, the Senate Appropriations Committee has sent all 12 appropriations bills to the floor. That is a positive step. That is a good thing, but unfortunately, despite their support in committee, my friends on the other side of the aisle have blocked them on this floor.

So now we find ourselves once again at the brink. Once again, we are veering toward a crisis. We can and we must do better to responsibly govern. That starts with providing for our common defense.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, today Pope Francis arrives in Washington. In 2 days, he will be speaking to a joint meeting of Congress, where he will undoubtedly remind us all to remember what he has termed "the most abandoned."

It was Pope Francis who said: "I invite all of the institutions of the world, the Church, each of us, as one single human family, to give a voice to all of those who suffer silently from hunger, so that this voice becomes a roar which can shake the world."

He continued and said: "This campaign [to end hunger] is an invitation to all of us . . . to stop thinking that our daily actions do not have an impact on the lives of those who suffer from hunger firsthand."

It turns out that the Pope's message on addressing hunger is more timely than we could have imagined. In a moment, I will explain why. It has to do with the government shutdown. Certainly we know from 2 years ago that a government shutdown hurts every family in America, it hurts small businesses across America, it sets the economy back, it creates all sorts of obstructions and frustrations, and it is a self-inflicted wound on America. Yet my colleagues across the aisle are contending that is exactly where they want to head, another showdown over social issues. We have been down this road before. It is a needless self-inflicted wound. We shouldn't be planning to go there.

But here is why the Pope's words on hunger are particularly timely:

Two years ago when we had a government shutdown, it did not impact the program known as SNAP or food stamps—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or food stamps, as we often refer to it. That is because we still had funds left from the stimulus program to be able to make sure hungry Americans did have the ability to receive the credits on their electronic food stamp card and to purchase groceries for their families. But we are in a different position this time around.

Last Friday the U.S. Department of Agriculture notified the Appropriations Committee that because the stimulus funds that existed 2 years ago are not there any longer, that come October 1, if we shut this government down, then we are also going to be

shutting down food stamps—that is shutting down food stamps for 45 million Americans.

In my home State of Oregon, there are about one out of five Oregonians who depend on food stamps to hold hunger at bay. We are certainly talking about an incredible number of children among that number, so across the country, millions of children, millions more Americans—45 million Americans. Yet here we are saying that it is all right to shut down food stamps and leave millions of Americans with the prospect of going hungry.

It causes me to reflect on Robert Kennedy's effort to take on hunger. He was known back in 1967 to have visited children in Mississippi, and he said the following:

I have seen children in the Delta area of Mississippi with distended stomachs, whose faces are covered with sores from starvation, and we haven't developed a policy so we can get enough food so that they can live, so that their children, so that their lives are not destroyed. I don't think that's acceptable in the United States of America and I think we need a change.

That is what Robert Kennedy said to our Nation. His advocacy had an impact in two particular areas, and that is that we proceeded to put a lot more resources into fighting hunger and we rewrote the food stamp regulations to provide greater access for those at the lowest income levels. The Food Stamp Program—or as it is now called, SNAP—has become the largest, most effective program in the United States in the fight against hunger.

Again, the USDA contacted us Friday of last week and said it looks like they will have to shut down this program if there is a government shutdown. This did not happen 2 years ago, so this is new information. They said they are going to work through the weekend to see if they can find any way with an existing law to prevent this from happening. As of this morning, they had been unable to find any legal pathway to extend the Food Stamp Program should we be in a government shutdown.

In our country, the poverty threshold for a family of four is about \$24,000. For a family of four, that translates to about \$6,000 a person. More than half of those who receive food stamps live in families who are below 50 percent of that threshold or roughly \$3,000 per year per individual in the family.

In my home State of Oregon, SNAP provides food benefits for about 800,000 residents or, as I mentioned, one in five Oregonians. This will have a widespread impact on hundreds of thousands of individuals in my home State and for my colleagues, hundreds of thousands of individuals in their States—45 million across the country. The USDA tells us that the timing for the recharging of the food stamp cards varies. Not everyone will be affected on October 1, but all of those 45 million would be affected in the month of October. The majority of the SNAP recipients in Oregon and nationwide are vul-

nerable populations. They are children. They are the disabled. They are the elderly. Can we not come together in a responsible fashion to prevent sending millions of Americans into a crisis over available food, millions of children across our country in a crisis because they do not have food because of our inability to act responsibly?

The words Robert Kennedy used were that this should not happen in America. Let me repeat that certainly I believe this should not happen in America. I cannot conceive of any moral argument that would justify leaving our children, our disabled, our elderly hungry because a few people in this body want to make a political point over a social issue. That is unacceptable.

I do a lot of townhalls back home in Oregon, one in every county every year. I hear from folks who are worried over a lot of issues. They are certainly worried about finding a good job. They are certainly worried about the cost of sending their children to college. They are certainly worried about cuts to Head Start programs and the quality of their public schools. They are worried about the possibility of a secure retirement. And now, because of the threats of partisan point-making here in the body of the Senate, they are going to have to worry about whether they can put dinner on the table and feed their children. That is wrong.

The American people are sick and tired of Congress manufacturing crises like this. Let's move beyond this brinkmanship and this hostage politics. Let's avert this shutdown. Let's carry out the responsibilities to the people of the United States of America.

Pope Francis said in that initial quote I noted that he invited all of the institutions of the world to give voice to all those who suffer silently from hunger. Little did he imagine that on the day he arrived here in Washington, DC, this institution—the U.S. Senate—would be involved not only in not helping those who are hungry but plotting and planning a shutdown of the government that will put millions of Americans into a food crisis. Let's change that. Let's come together. Let's address a responsible plan for carrying the full funding of our government forward.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. PERDUE. Madam President, I want to thank the majority leader for bringing the Defense appropriations bill to the floor for a vote and remind everyone that the Senate Appropriations Committee has put forward 12 appropriations bills that adhere to the Republican budget and that reflect the priorities of the American people.

You have heard all year that we need to get back to regular order, and that means we need to bring up and debate each of these 12 bills individually. It is clear after two votes that the Democratic obstructionism through the Defense appropriations bill will prevent us from funding our service men and

women. My colleagues across the aisle are voting against supplying the military with the tools to stop ISIS. They are voting against the much needed upgrades to our missile defense program. They are voting against increasing missile defense support to Israel. They are voting against restoring readiness to our military.

The demands on our military are great. The threats we face today as a nation are numerous, complex, and may be the most dangerous in my lifetime. Those who also volunteer to defend our great Nation against these threats rely on us to meet these obligations as Senators.

Congress is responsible for ensuring that American service men and women have the tools they need to do their jobs and remain safe. But today my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have done our Nation a great disservice. By failing to bring up the Defense appropriations bill, Democrats aren't letting us do our job. That is dangerous.

We need to return to regular order and vote on these appropriations bills so that the priorities of the American people can once and for all be restored.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

INSPECTOR GENERAL VACANCY AT THE VA

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee—headed by Chairman JOHNSON and Ranking Member CARPER—had a very important hearing where we heard from whistleblowers from the VA, and then afterwards we heard from VA officials and representatives from the inspector general's office. The issue of how we treat those who have served the country is so critical to who we are as a nation. Yet, over the last year, we have learned of shocking failures at the Department of Veterans Affairs, and today's testimony, unfortunately, was no different in terms of how whistleblowers were retaliated against at the Department of Veterans Affairs. Instead of a culture that encourages people to come forward when things go wrong, people who come forward when things go wrong are treated badly and also face consequences as far as their employment, and that is wrong.

Over the last year, we have seen shocking failures, including veterans being denied care after being placed on secret wait lists, experiencing extended delays in benefits, and endless wait times for repeals, reviews, or action on claims.

Recently, we also learned that as of last year, the VA had 867,000 pending

health care enrollment records. That is almost 1 million records without a final determination status—some from decades ago. Nearly one-third of the veterans who had applied to the VA for care have now been reported as having died. Additionally, the VA staff has deleted 10,000 transaction records, but the reasons are undocumented. These failures are outrageous, and that word is used a lot around here, but this truly does define what is happening in our VA—outrageous.

Our veterans, who have served and sacrificed so much for our country, deserve the very best care and support we can give them. The VA has fallen short time and time again in meeting that goal.

The bipartisan VA reform bill, enacted last summer, represents an important step in increasing accountability and mismanagement at the department, and also giving our veterans the choice of care in their communities rather than waiting in line. That is very important to my State, New Hampshire, where, unfortunately, we don't have a full-service veterans hospital. There is so much more work to be done on that front; however, we continue to hear about reports of bureaucratic delays and failures at the VA, such as overprescribing opiates, bonuses paid to employees involved in serious misconduct, enrollment record mayhem, and inflated claims of VA employees being held accountable and fired. Unfortunately, we still can't get a number, even after all the wait-list scandals where veterans literally died while waiting for care.

I have a few recent headlines about the VA. In the Chicago Tribune, January 9, "Veterans: VA hospital nicknamed 'Candy Land' because painkillers given out freely."

Arizona Republic, February 13, "Whistle-blowers: VA still endangering suicidal vets."

Washington Post, March 9, "Veteran Affairs manager pokes fun at mental health issues with photo of elf begging for Xanax."

Associated Press, April 9, "Veterans hospital wait times haven't improved."

Stars and Stripes, April 13, "Whistle-blowers say retaliation unabated year into VA scandal."

The Washington Post on May 14, "Veterans Affairs improperly spent \$6 billion annually, senior official says."

In light of all of the issues that have been raised with our VA, can you imagine that we are in a place where there is no permanent inspector general who has been appointed by the President to serve in that important watchdog position for the Veterans' Administration after all of the issues I just cited in this Chamber? There are many more issues that I didn't even have on this list.

The inspector general position at the Veterans' Administration has been vacant since December of 2013. That is 631 days—631 days that the President has failed to appoint someone to ensure

that there is critical oversight and transparency at the Veterans' Administration. In fact, we have just had acting individuals in that position. We have not had a permanent watchdog in that position. In light of everything we have been through, we have had 631 days without adequate accountability; 631 days without permanent oversight leadership; 631 days without a permanent watchdog to investigate scandals that have tarnished the promises we made to our veterans which they earned by defending our great Nation; 631 days without the President even submitting a nomination to fill this empty position. That is unacceptable.

We need the President to step up and appoint an inspector general to be the watchdog for the Veterans' Administration so they can have a continuity of leadership. There is no more important oversight issue right now.

I have written the President, along with Members on both sides of the aisle. We have repeatedly called on the President to make a nomination for this inspector general position, and we know that—through the process—names of individuals who are qualified to serve in this position have actually been submitted to the President's desk. Both sides of the aisle in this body agree on this issue. Our desire—on a bipartisan basis—is to make sure that those who have defended, served, and answered the call of duty for our Nation receive the very best care for what they have done to defend our freedom. Yet, after all the scandals and all the issues and challenges that our veterans face, can you imagine leaving this particular position open for 631 days?

I am, again, in this Chamber going to call on the President, and I know that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, whom I have worked with on this issue, agree that it is time for the President of the United States to nominate a qualified individual—he has had many names submitted to him—to serve in this critical watchdog position as the permanent inspector general for the VA with the full authority to conduct the investigations that need to be conducted on issues that have been raised repeatedly about the Veterans' Administration.

What is clear from the testimony we heard today at the homeland security committee hearing is that we have so much more work to do to ensure accountability at the Veterans' Administration and to ensure that our veterans get the very best of what they deserve and have earned by defending our Nation.

What is clear is that the IG council has done its job and nominated individuals for the President to consider for this inspector general position.

I am now calling on the President: Mr. President, please nominate a qualified individual to be a permanent VA inspector general in order to protect our veterans.

Mr. President, 631 days is already way too long, and our veterans should

not have to wait a day longer to have this position filled. This important agency needs a watchdog that is there to serve them.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

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

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

PUERTO RICO

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today deeply concerned about the growing economic crisis in Puerto Rico, which threatens to destabilize the island, and that we must step in and help our fellow American citizens—but sometimes we forget that the 3.5 million people who live in Puerto Rico are American citizens—before a financial crisis becomes a calamity.

I again urge, as I recently did in a letter to Secretary Lew, along with seven Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, that the Department of the Treasury move beyond simply providing technical assistance and take a full-throated leadership role to resolve this crisis immediately as we have done in previous financial crises. If we do not act, the result could be a financial disorder that will, at the end of the day, be much more expensive, much more chaotic, and will, in both the long and short term, cost Puerto Rico and the United States.

The fact is that a potential solution rests in the hands of the administration, with Treasury and with HHS. As we said in the letter to Secretary Lew, the world is watching Puerto Rico, and we must ensure that the United States does everything in its power to take strong, bold, and substantive action that stabilizes the situation and protects the 3.5 million American citizens on the island and their families. Technical assistance and advice from Treasury is all well and good, but, in my view, it is just not enough.

Treasury needs to take an active role, and Congress needs to approve the pending debt restructuring legislation I introduced with Senators BLUMENTHAL, SCHUMER, and other Senate colleagues that would allow the government of Puerto Rico to authorize its public utilities to rework their debts under chapter 9. That is in the best interests of both Puerto Rico and the mainland.

The fact of the matter is Puerto Rico would actually be running a surplus—a surplus—if it did not have to make debt payments. Allowing government-owned corporations to restructure their debts using a sound legal process would give the island breathing room to make necessary reforms and would not cost U.S. taxpayers a dime. This could go a long way to promote the fairest and most efficient outcome.

The idea has been endorsed by the editorial boards of the Wall Street

Journal, the Washington Post, Bloomberg View, the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Boston Globe, and others. The bill is also supported by the nonpartisan National Bankruptcy Conference and numerous bankruptcy lawyers and judges.

Additionally, it is clear that the island's health care system is adding additional pressure to the overall financial situation, accounting for 20 percent of the island's economy and responsible for a third of its overall debt burden. Sixty percent of Puerto Ricans living on the island are enrolled in Medicare or Medicaid. And because of the disparity in how these two health programs are funded relative to the 50 States, the financial crisis is only exacerbated.

To help alleviate some of this pressure on the health care system, I have introduced the Improving the Treatment of U.S. Territories Under Federal Health Programs Act of 2015 with Senators SCHUMER, NELSON, GILLIBRAND, and BLUMENTHAL. This legislation provides several policies that will ensure Puerto Rico providers, both hospitals and physicians, are treated more equally to the States under the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

Just as importantly, this legislation ensures that beneficiaries on the island are treated equally too. As citizens of the United States, it is imperative that Puerto Ricans be afforded the same access to care, coverage, and health benefits as everyone else.

While I believe this legislation will go a long way toward addressing the island's systemic health care issues, there are several steps that HHS can take immediately and without the need for congressional action. They can change payment calculations under Medicare Advantage and Medicare's inpatient hospital rules to more accurately reflect the costs and demographics on the island. By making necessary adjustments to certain key payment formulas, HHS could make the practice of medicine a financially viable option in Puerto Rico and stem the tide of physicians leaving the island for the U.S. mainland and ensure that our fellow Americans living on the island are able to receive the care they need and deserve. I urge not only Treasury Secretary Lew but HHS Secretary Burwell to do all they can to provide financial and health care-related relief to Puerto Rico to help curb the island's financial crisis.

Now, Governor Garcia Padilla's Working Group for the Fiscal and Economic Recovery of Puerto Rico has also recently released a 5-year plan earlier this month. While I don't agree with everything included in the plan, it shows a determined and legitimate effort to confront the economic crisis facing the island. Unfortunately, the current debt structure and legal restraints threaten the effectiveness of these proposed reforms. Without providing some flexibility and room to maneuver, all the difficult choices in

the world won't be able to resolve the crisis.

I wish to make it, however, absolutely clear: I am not—I am not—calling for a Federal bailout of Puerto Rico. But there is still much we can and should do to restore solvency to the island that is home to 3.5 million Americans. Our bond with these Americans who live on the island has always been strong. Our relationship with Puerto Rico is long and deep and extensive. With more than 5 million Puerto Ricans residing in the United States—more than in Puerto Rico itself—we are inextricably tied.

Now, I should not need to remind this body that from the infancy of our Nation, the people of Puerto Rico have been there for us. Now we need to be there for them. Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States in 1898 after the Spanish-American war. Less than two decades later, in 1917, Congress passed the Jones Act, granting American citizenship to residents of the island.

But even long before they were granted U.S. citizenship, Puerto Ricans have had a long and proud history of fighting on the side of America. As far back as 1777, Puerto Rican ports were used by U.S. ships, enabling them to run British blockades and keep commerce flowing, which was so crucial to the war effort. It was Puerto Rican soldiers who took up arms in the U.S. Civil War, defending Washington, DC, from attack and fought in the Battle of Fredericksburg. In World War I, almost 20,000 Puerto Ricans were drafted into the U.S. Armed Forces. Let's not forget about the 65th Infantry Regiment, known as the Borinqueneers, the segregated military unit composed almost entirely of soldiers from Puerto Rico that played a prominent and crucial role in World War I, World War II, and the Korean war, one of the most highly decorated regiments known in military history.

I am proud to say I have worked with Senator BLUMENTHAL and others to make sure that the heroic Borinqueneers, the only Active-Duty segregated Latino military unit in the history of the United States and the last segregated unit to be deactivated, received well-deserved and long-overdue national recognition when we passed a bill last year awarding these courageous patriots with the Congressional Gold Medal—the highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions to the United States.

It is very easy to point our fingers at our brothers and sisters on the island and fault Puerto Rico for carrying more than \$70 billion in debt. But I challenge my Senate colleagues to work with me on finding solutions, to step up to our responsibility at the Federal level by seeking opportunities for Congress and the administration to correct some of the inequities that have contributed to this crisis. I am talking about the unequal Medicare and Medicaid funding that I referenced

earlier, the exclusion of Puerto Rico from the Supplemental Security Income program that aids the most vulnerable Americans, the exclusion of Puerto Rico from the child tax credit and earned income tax credit, which encourages low-income individuals to seek employment, and, as previously mentioned, the exclusion of Puerto Rico from chapter 9 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code.

Now, more than ever, we need to be asking in Washington what steps can be taken to manage this crisis. Unequal treatment at the Federal level is, whether we want to own up to it or not, a contributing factor to the current economic crisis. The lack of Federal support has encouraged heavy borrowing by the Puerto Rican government of many, many administrations going back. We must do our part, both in Congress and the administration, to address this crisis, and we must act now, with urgency.

I think the point is clear. As I said, we have a special, historic, unshakeable bond with Puerto Rico, and now is the time to strengthen that bond. The time has come to prevent the worsening fiscal crisis in Puerto Rico. The time has come to help Puerto Rico, and we can do so simply by giving them the wherewithal to help themselves through the Bankruptcy Code, as we would any other similar entity, to have the wherewithal to have an orderly restructuring and to get their economic future back in shape.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, we are on the eve of yet another government shutdown, yet another manufactured crisis. Two years ago it was over defunding the Affordable Care Act. Today Republicans introduced a continuing resolution that holds our country hostage over funding for Planned Parenthood.

The 2013 shutdown of a couple years ago cost billions of dollars in economic losses. We heard many stories of hardships caused by the shutdown, including small business owners who were suffering because our national parks closed, public safety workers protecting our country without pay, and Federal contractors left holding the bag for personnel and program costs. We cannot do this to our working families for the second time in 3 years. We cannot do this to our country.

Instead of funding the government, my colleagues across the aisle are using threats of a shutdown to attack Planned Parenthood without any hard

evidence of wrongdoing by Planned Parenthood. Threatening to shut down the government over an organization that annually provides 400,000 cervical cancer screenings, 500,000 breast exams, and 4.5 million tests and treatments for sexually transmitted diseases is completely uncalled for.

Arguments that there are other providers that can fill the important and critical role of Planned Parenthood are not persuasive. According to the Guttmacher Institute, Planned Parenthood serves more contraceptive clients each year than any other similar provider, including federally qualified health centers. In more than 300 counties across the country, safety net providers such as Planned Parenthood are the providers of choice for nearly half of women. Furthermore, Planned Parenthood is the sole safety net provider in nearly 100 of these counties.

Planned Parenthood services cannot be easily replaced. In an attempt to defund Planned Parenthood, one State submitted a list of providers they said could replace Planned Parenthood's critical women's health care services. This list that the State provided included dentists, ophthalmologists, radiologists, and nursing homes. Think about that. Providers are not widgets.

After a Federal judge called their bluff, the State cut their list from over 2,000 providers to just 29 providers who actually are able to provide primary care services to women. Those 29 providers could not possibly absorb the thousands of patients Planned Parenthood served in that State. Planned Parenthood has long been in the crosshairs of the anti-choice movement.

This recent attack on Planned Parenthood is based on heavily edited videos by radical fringe groups. I refer my colleagues to a letter from Planned Parenthood's Cecile Richards to House and Senate leadership dated August 27, 2015.

Instead of improving the lives of women by passing legislation raising the minimum wage, closing the gender pay gap or ensuring paid leave for all workers, my colleagues across the aisle continue to narrowly focus on ways to further marginalize women. Instead of introducing continuing resolutions that contain these kinds of poison pills, such as defunding Planned Parenthood, we must pass clean legislation that keeps our government funded, that provides needed and critical services to the people of this country. I ask my colleagues to join with me.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF KATHRYN K. MATTHEW TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, Calendar No. 298, Kathryn Matthew; that the Senate vote without intervening action or debate on the nomination; that following the disposition of the nomination, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no interviewing action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Kathryn K. Matthew, of South Carolina, to be Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services for a term of four years.

The Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Kathryn K. Matthew, of South Carolina, to be Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services for a term of four years?

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. 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.

REMEMBERING TROOPER JOSEPH CAMERON PONDER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to a Kentucky State Police trooper who was tragically lost in the line of duty. Trooper Joseph Cameron Ponder, of Rineyville, was shot and killed while pursuing a suspect on September 13. He was 31 years old.

Cameron Ponder was proud to be a Kentucky State trooper. "He was eager and he absolutely loved his job," is how a State police spokesman described him. He was also new to the job, having just graduated in January of this year

from the Kentucky State Police Training Academy. He was stationed at the State police post in Mayfield.

Before becoming a Kentucky State trooper, Cameron served in the U.S. Navy. He enlisted in September 2007, when he was 23 years old, and became a Navy diver. Over the next 6 years he was stationed in places as varied as Great Lakes, IL; Coronado, CA; Panama City, FL; and San Diego, CA.

During his Navy service he received several awards, medals and decorations, including the Combat Action Ribbon, the Good Conduct Medal, the Navy Expeditionary Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Expert Rifle Marksmanship Ribbon and the Expert Pistol Marksmanship Ribbon.

Cameron was discharged from the Navy in July 2013. He was a member of the Church of Christ in Elizabethtown, KY. He was also a dedicated hunter and fisherman who enjoyed the outdoors.

Sadly, Trooper Ponder is the second trooper from the Mayfield post to be killed in the line of duty this year. In June, Trooper Eric K. Chrisman was killed in a vehicle crash. He also had served with the Kentucky State Police for under a year.

Members of Trooper Ponder's family who are suffering from this loss include his father, Joseph Ponder; his mother, Brenda Tiffany, and her husband Allan; his fiancée, Chrystal Coleman; his sister, Kelly Ponder; his brothers, Damon Tiffany and Travis Tiffany; his grandmother, Erika Shook; his niece, Mahlea Starks; and many other family members and friends.

I am proud to share Trooper Ponder's story with my colleagues here in the United States Senate. We're thinking of his family today as well as his fellow officers of the Kentucky State Police. We are praying for the loved ones he has left behind who are feeling this devastating loss.

We are honored by Trooper Ponder's service and his extraordinary sacrifice on behalf of his fellow Kentuckians. I hold the deepest admiration and respect for Trooper Ponder and for every brave police officer across the Bluegrass State. Law enforcement is both an honorable profession and a dangerous one, and Kentucky is grateful they have made a sacred pledge to protect and defend our communities and our lives.

TRIBUTE TO GENERAL MARTIN E. DEMPSEY

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today I recognize and pay tribute to GEN Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for his lifetime of service to our country. His retirement marks more than 41 years of selfless devotion to our military and our Nation. A leader of exceptional character and consequence, his humility, courage, and expertise will be sorely missed.