

push forward and not take care of the middle class. I was stunned—I shouldn't say that. That is not appropriate. I was not surprised when the Republican leader laid out his goals for his budget agreement—not a single word about the middle class.

I compliment the negotiators for coming up with something that is really good. It is a 2-year deal that allows more money to be spent for defense and nondefense, and it doesn't affect the deficit in any way. It is a good agreement.

Before we start the backslapping and congratulations, let's make sure that we, first of all, pass the budget agreement. I think we will. I was happy to see the new Speaker-to-be come out for the budget agreement today. He complained about it yesterday, and when he was reminded that it was the same pattern he and Senator MURRAY came up with 2 years ago, I guess he changed his mind. He said now he is in favor of this. I think that is good, that Congressman RYAN said that.

After we pass the budget framework by December 11, we have to make sure the appropriators are able to move forward on legislation that takes into consideration the budget agreement we have. I am certain that can be done, but it is not a given based on all of the finger-pointing by the Republicans.

This is a significant agreement. I repeat: We have relief from the vexatious sequestration. We have dollar-for-dollar help for the middle class as well as defense. There are no destructive riders in this.

When we work together, as we are supposed to do—as the Republican leader just mentioned—on legislation, it works out well.

I would suggest this. We had the House of Representatives yesterday, after years of refusing to move forward on an important piece of legislation—that is, to reestablish the Import-Export Bank. It only came about as a result of courageous Republicans saying: We have had enough of this.

This is one of the most important business-directed initiatives we have here, and it has been held up for years in the House of Representatives. It was because of these courageous Republicans who said: We have had enough of this. And they joined with Democrats to do what is rarely done in the House of Representatives. They signed a discharge petition—getting more than 218 votes—to say: We have had enough of this stalling; we want to move forward. And they did. Yesterday, that passed by a vote of 313 votes. That is a tremendous push.

I hope that over here the Republican leader will move forward on this now. There are stories coming out every day about American companies that are moving their businesses overseas because the Export-Import Bank is gone. It creates 160,000 jobs for people to work in this industry. It is important to our country. Right now, businesses are moving out of the United States be-

cause this legislation never came forward. The Bank had to close. It is basically closed right now.

I hope that we are not going to wait for some package deal with the highway bill. The highway bill should stand or fall on its own merits.

We are pleading with the Republicans to allow us to have a vote on this. We have Republicans who will vote with us. Virtually every Democrat will vote for it. We should get it done this week. Every day it is held up is a bad day for the American business community.

I ask the Chair to announce the business for today.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12 noon, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The assistant Democratic leader.

THE BUDGET

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is possible this week that we will pass a budget agreement for the fiscal year we are currently in. That year started October 1 and runs, of course, until the end of December in the next calendar year. If we do reach that agreement—and I hope we do—it is going to give us some opportunities. One opportunity it will give us is to spare ourselves the possibility of this Congress failing to enact a new budget ceiling to basically guarantee the full faith and credit of the United States of America. We won't face that showdown. Also, the possibility of a government shutdown will be relieved by the passage of this budget agreement.

Those are good, positive things for this institution and for the economy of America, but there are specifics that also need to be noted because this budget agreement gives us a chance to invest in areas of our budget that sadly would have been overlooked if we hadn't reached this agreement.

This morning we had an extraordinary presentation by the National Institutes of Health. Twenty Senators came to hear the presentation about research at the National Institutes of Health and what it means to us. Dr. Francis Collins is the Director and is an extraordinary man. He is a medical doctor who was given the task of mapping the human genome and did it. He did it in an extraordinary way, creating new information and new opportunities.

A doctor from the Mayo Clinic explained what that meant. It meant that we have now reached a point

where we can map the genome of individuals, their DNA, and we can then make decisions on the appropriate prescriptions for illnesses and diseases they face and in doing that, be more effective, save lives. That is what medical research can mean. Each of us will not only have a basic biography in our medical record—when we were born and some of the basic illnesses we have faced—but also our individual map of our DNA, which will instruct doctors when it comes to treatment of cancer, if it should strike us, or some other disease.

It is an amazing leap forward. It is a leap forward that would not be possible without medical research. Yet, in the past 12 years, we have seen a downturn in investment in medical research of more than 20 percent—more than 20 percent. It has meant that a lot of researchers have been discouraged and walked away and said there is no future in medical research. What a loss. They don't make a lot of money—many of them don't. If they don't think we are going to support them with our investment in NIH and medical research, they look in other places.

This morning we considered where we are. At this moment in time, the Senate, under the leadership of Senator BLUNT of Missouri and the Appropriations subcommittee on health and human services, has provided basically a 7-percent increase in the funding for the National Institutes of Health next year. That is a good thing.

I will say quickly that Senator BLUNT cut a lot of other areas in his bill that I think need to have help, but I hope that he will stand tall and tough when it comes to that 7-percent increase as we approach this budget negotiation. The House, conversely, did not give such an increase to NIH, but they increased the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is a companion sister agency that is important for medical research.

We have a chance to come together on a bipartisan basis and come up with a number that gives 5-percent real growth in spending at both the National Institutes of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It will pay us back many times over.

Most Americans say: What are we going to do about the cost of Medicare? Medicare is an important program to over 40 million Americans, and the costs keep going up. There are two facts that we learned about this morning and people should be aware of them: \$1 out of every \$5 spent under our Medicare system is spent on Alzheimer's and dementia. If we could have a means of early detection, prevention, treatment or cure for these horrible diseases, that would dramatically change the lives of millions of Americans and millions of families, and it would dramatically reduce the cost to Medicare and Medicaid.

Medicare spends \$1 out of \$3 for the treatment of people with diabetes. If we put the research into finding a cure

for diabetes and can alleviate the suffering associated with that disease, it not only will help lives across America, but it will save us money in our important health care programs. Investment in medical research by the United States of America has been the pillar for the world when it comes to looking to a better day for the people who live in each country.

This brain initiative, which was described to us this morning by the National Institutes of Health, needs to be funded. It is not adequately funded now. We dedicated some \$350 million to Alzheimer's and brain research. It sounds like a lot of money. It is about one-third of what the researchers need. They have that many opportunities waiting to be funded. Will they all succeed? No, but that is the nature of research, and each one of them will be a good investment which will lead us to the day of prevention, treatment, and a cure when it comes to Alzheimer's.

I hope that we come together on a bipartisan basis when it comes to this budget. In this area of medical research, there is plenty of room for us to work together, and there has already been leadership shown on the other side of the aisle. We are going to help to try to move that forward, both in the Senate and in the House, on a bipartisan basis.

When I meet with people across my State—and I guess many other States—and talk about political issues, there are a lot of folks with some very strongly held opinions on one side or the other, but when it comes to funding medical research, I have found that this is the kind of issue that opens the doors. People of all political stripes agree this is a good investment for the future of America.

UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it hasn't been a very good week or two for the University of Phoenix. The University of Phoenix is the largest for-profit university in the United States. University of Phoenix students cumulatively owe more in student debt than any other institution of higher education in America. The students enroll at this university, which is largely online but has some classroom experience, they sign up for a higher tuition than they would at community colleges or most universities, and when they can't finish and drop out, they still have debt, or when they finish, they may have a diploma that can't find a job.

The University of Phoenix—this private, for-profit company—receives nearly \$3 billion a year in Federal Student Aid funding, but the quality of education from this for-profit school is suspect. The for-profit college and university industry is the most heavily subsidized for-profit business in America. We have seen a lot of warning signs about the University of Phoenix. We've seen how they target the military and veterans.

Paul Rieckhoff of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America said that the University of Phoenix "is constantly reported as the single worst by far" when it comes to for-profit colleges taking advantage of veterans.

Well, it has caught up with them. A few weeks ago the University of Phoenix was placed on probation by the Department of Defense, restricting the company from enrolling new servicemembers who used the Department's tuition assistance or spousal MyCAA programs. The Department found violations by the company, the University of Phoenix, after completing a review prompted by an investigative report from the Center for Investigative Reporting.

The article that started this investigation exposed the University of Phoenix's strategy to flout Department of Defense rules, including an Executive order meant to protect our servicemembers—men and women in uniform and their spouses—from aggressive and unfair recruiting by for-profit colleges. You see, if these for-profit colleges can sign up a member of the military or their spouse, they can bring in the money that is set aside in the Tuition Assistance program for education and training, and so they want to sign up as many members of the military and their families as they can.

The University of Phoenix avoided the rules set down by the Department of Defense by sponsoring events at military bases—not just a few but a lot. In one instance they paid \$25,000 to sponsor a concert for military members and their families. They spent \$25,000 for a concert? The company gave away computers and wrapped the stage in a giant University of Phoenix banner. They used official Department of Defense seals and logos on challenge coins and gave them out to servicemembers in order to show that they had some kind of close relationship with the military.

In other instances found by the Center for Investigative Reporting, the University of Phoenix sponsored resume workshops, which essentially amounted to recruiting members of the military and their family to sign up for this for-profit college. According to the article, the company sponsored hundreds of events, such as rock concerts, Super Bowl parties, father-daughter dances, Easter egg hunts, chocolate festivals, fashion shows, and even brunch with Santa, on military bases.

The University of Phoenix spent \$250,000 to sponsor events over the last 3 years at one place—Fort Campbell, KY. Let's face it, these were recruitment events for the University of Phoenix, and they were paid for, by and large, with taxpayers' dollars. In the name of corporate sponsorship, the University of Phoenix could gain direct access to military bases with a nod and a wink from servicemembers. They told them they cared about the military. They also cared about the fact

that they had potential students who would sign up and spend their TA benefits at the University of Phoenix. It paid off for them. The University of Phoenix is the fourth largest recipient of Department of Defense tuition assistance funds. In fiscal year 2014 the University of Phoenix received more than \$20 million from these benefits. It is not surprising then that the company would be so concerned about the decision by the Department of Defense to put them on probation. It means they will lose access to millions of dollars from these military families, and it was reflected when their stock went down in value.

Since the Department of Defense took action against the company, the University of Phoenix stock value has plummeted nearly 50 percent. In its decision, the Department of Defense also cited concerns related to ongoing investigations of this same University of Phoenix by the Federal Trade Commission and the attorney general of the State of California. In fact, there are two ongoing investigations of the University of Phoenix by the Federal Trade Commission, one is related to deceptive marketing and advertising, and a second is related to safeguarding student and staff personal information.

In addition to the attorney general in California, at least two other States are also investigating the company. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and the Department of Education inspector general also have ongoing investigations at the University of Phoenix.

The Department of Defense is not alone. Many agencies, Federal and State, are investigating this major for-profit university. They do have some friends though, and one of them is the Wall Street Journal.

Last week, on the same day an editorial of a similar tone appeared in the Wall Street Journal, a few of my colleagues in the Senate sent a letter to the Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter, telling him to lay off the University of Phoenix despite the fact that the Department noted the violations were of such frequency and such scope that they were "disconcerting." My colleagues in the Senate think the Department of Defense's decision to protect servicemembers and to put this university under probation was "unfair."

There is no question that the Department of Defense has a duty and a responsibility to protect members of the military and their families from exploitation. They have established rules under the Voluntary Military Education Program, and now my colleagues in the Senate are writing letters to the Department of Defense saying: Look the other way. The letter they sent criticized the Department for its concern over the University of Phoenix's continued participation in Voluntary Military Education Program in light of the multiple ongoing investigations. I think it would be grossly