

an appropriator since I came to the Senate. I was very fortunate as a brand new Senator, which was many decades ago, to be on the Appropriations Committee. What an honor.

The Appropriations Committee's work is not as it used to be. We have to get back to doing individual appropriations bills.

I say to my Republican friends: Let's do the appropriations bills. Let's get rid of these foolish riders that they stick on appropriations bills. We need to understand that there is a time and place for doing that. There is authorization. Do the bills, authorize stuff, but don't mess up the appropriations process. Next year, we will be happy to support individual appropriations bills that come to the floor. We don't need motions to proceed. We will be happy to move to the bill as long as they get rid of those vexatious riders that have nothing to do with the bill brought before us. The Defense appropriations bill doesn't need something dealing with women's health in the sense of directly attacking Planned Parenthood. We don't need on Commerce, State, Justice something that basically does away with the Environmental Protection Agency. There are many examples that I could use. Let's get to doing appropriations bills the way we used to. I want to do them. We don't need to have a motion to proceed as long as my Republican colleagues get rid of these foolish, ideological amendments that have nothing to do with the bill before us.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, yesterday the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families released a stunning report detailing the sharp increase in the number of Nevada children who have health insurance. At one time, we were the most underinsured State in the country for health insurance.

According to the Georgetown study, the number of Nevada children without health insurance fell by 35 percent in just 1 year. In 2013, 15 percent of children in Nevada lacked health insurance coverage. One year later, that number fell to 9.3 percent.

Reading directly from that report:

States with the sharpest declines in the rate of uninsured children were Nevada, Colorado, West Virginia, Mississippi, and Rhode Island. Nevada's decline was considerably larger than any other State.

A 35-percent increase in the number of insured children in 1 year is remarkable. It means more children have access to the care they need to stay healthy. A number of these children will be able to go to the doctor for the first time in their lives. It is yet further proof that the Affordable Care Act is working in Nevada and across America.

Again, I say to my friends, the Republicans: Let's start working together to improve health care. We want to

work with you. If there is a problem you see with ObamaCare, let's work together. We have been able to make some improvements in this law, and we want to make more improvements. We just need cooperation from our Republican friends.

The spike in the number of insured Nevada children is also due to the foresight of the Governor of the State of Nevada. Brian Sandoval is a Republican. He is a proud Republican who supported the State's Medicaid expansion option. He took on all the naysayers.

Why did Brian Sandoval do this? Is he really one of ours? He did this because he thought it was the right thing to do for the State of Nevada, and it has been proven that, in fact, is true. By expanding Medicaid in Nevada, many, many more parents were able to secure affordable health care for their kids. Quite frankly, Governor Sandoval's courage stands in stark contrast to many of his fellow Republicans.

Governors in a number of States dominated by Republican State legislatures have refused to expand coverage to the needy. These Republicans have blocked expanded coverage despite the fact that it means fewer Americans and their children have access to the health care they need. This means that people are dying as a result of this.

Two States with the highest rates of uninsured children, Alaska and Texas, have rejected Medicare expansion, and others have done the same. There were many Republicans in Nevada who wanted to go the same route. The Republican State legislature within the Nevada congressional delegation opposed all efforts to increase access to health care. They have voted to repeal ObamaCare time and time again, but Governor Sandoval was not swayed by the cynics in his own party. He refused to let politics stand in the way of children's health, and today Nevada's children are better for it.

I repeat, the Affordable Care Act is helping American families, it is helping Nevada families, and it is working especially well in States that are actually using the law as it was intended.

I hope more Republicans will follow Governor Sandoval's examples, thus helping their States and their constituents by expanding access to quality health care. I am an admirer of Governor Sandoval, and that is saying a lot. His opponent in the last election was my son. But I have to say this: In spite of the fact that my son came in second, Brian Sandoval has done an outstanding job as Governor. I admire him and appreciate what he has done. I don't agree with everything he has done. I had some disagreements with what he did in the legislature. None of us are perfect, and he certainly isn't, but I appreciate what he has done for the betterment of the State of Nevada.

LATINA EQUAL PAY DAY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, earlier this year we recognized Equal Pay Day—a day that highlights the disparaging wage gap between women and men in the United States. Equal Pay Day marks the day when women's wages finally catch up with men's wages from the previous year.

On average, American women make about 77 cents for every \$1 that their male colleagues make while doing the very same job. This unjust and immoral reality is even more pronounced for women of color.

Tomorrow is Latina Equal Pay Day, the point at which wages of Latina women in America catch up to men's earnings from the previous year. It is today. They have had to work all of this time to catch up. The fact that a Hispanic woman must work a full year, plus 9 months and 30 days, just to make what her male co-workers make is certainly unacceptable.

In Nevada, Latina women earn 53 cents for every \$1 their fellow male workers make. It is not just a problem in Nevada; it is a problem nationwide. Nationwide they earn 55 cents for every \$1 a man makes for doing the exact same work. All told, the wage gap that Latina women face results in a loss of over \$25,000 a year for these women. That is \$25,000 that could be used to help these women sustain their families.

To make matters worse, the wage gaps that exist between Latina women and their male counterparts disproportionately affect Hispanic families. Why? Because Latina women are more likely to be the primary breadwinners for their families. Thirty percent of all Hispanic families in the United States are headed by a single mother, and 40 percent of married Latina women earn more than 50 percent of their family's income.

As legislators, it is our duty to seek the well-being of all Americans. Democrats don't take that responsibility lightly. We understand that when wages of women do not reflect their hard work, it undermines the strength of families and communities throughout the Nation. That is why we have continually and consistently fought to secure equal pay for equal work.

Five times in 5 years Republicans have stood in the way of equal pay for women. They have stood in the way of equal wages for their own sisters, daughters, and wives. Even Republican women—that is Republican Members of Congress—have refused to address this important issue. The proposal that Republicans have put forward falls short of ensuring real equal pay protections and ignores the realities women face in fighting for fair pay. In so doing, Republicans have proudly placed their stamp of approval on unequal paychecks across America.

The wage gap Latina women endure is a disgrace to this Nation. No woman should make less than a man who does the exact same work. Latina women

deserve the hard-earned wages for which they work. They also deserve elected officials who will advocate on their behalf.

As we recognize Latina Equal Pay Day, I call on Republicans to support a pay equity bill that empowers women to receive equal pay they have so rightly earned, not just because it strengthens families and benefits our country but because it is the right thing to do.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

TRADE ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message to accompany H.R. 1314, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany H.R. 1314, an act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for a right to an administrative appeal relating to adverse determinations of tax-exempt status of certain organizations.

Pending:

McConnell motion to concur in the amendment of the House of Representatives to the amendment of the Senate to the bill.

McConnell motion to concur in the amendment of the House of Representatives to the amendment of the Senate to the bill, with McConnell amendment No. 2750, to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 2751 (to amend amendment No. 2750), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell motion to refer the amendment of the House of Representatives to the amendment of the Senate to the bill, to the Committee on Finance, with instructions, McConnell amendment No. 2752, to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 2753 (to the instructions) amendment No. 2752), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 2754 (to amend amendment No. 2753), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, today we are kicking off a debate on major bipartisan legislation. Chairman HATCH and I are also involved in an important Senate Finance Committee hearing. He will be here a little bit later today.

I ask unanimous consent that our colleague, Senator DURBIN from Illinois, be allowed to speak after I do. I believe that his remarks will also be completed before Chairman HATCH arrives.

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

Mr. WYDEN. I thank the Presiding Officer.

Chairman HATCH and I will be managing this bill, and we want our colleagues to know that we are anxious to give everyone an opportunity to speak out on this extraordinarily important issue. If Senators who wish to speak come down and consult with the Fi-

nance staff—majority and minority—in our respective cloakrooms, we are going to work very hard to accommodate all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

Here, in my view, is what this issue is all about. Fiscal battles in the Congress come and go, but nothing should ever be allowed to threaten America's sterling economic reputation, and this legislation will preserve it. Without this agreement, the Congress is staring at a potential debt default—a debt default that would be literally days away, when the Treasury would lose its authority to borrow in order to make payments.

By now, I think a lot of Senators understand the disastrous consequences of default: housing costs shooting upward, retirement accounts shrinking, jobs disappearing, and consumer confidence dropping. We also understand that no one can get particularly thrilled by the prospect of raising the debt ceiling. Yet it is a job that must be done.

Our country is an economic rock in tumultuous seas, and we certainly have disagreements. Disagreements practically come with every news cycle and election. But what doesn't change is that our country pays its debts and we pay them on time. That is why this legislation is so important.

The bipartisan compromise reduces the threats of a potential government shutdown in December. When this becomes law, the pin, in effect, goes back in the grenade, where it belongs. That is positive news, as we look for some predictability and certainty, and we all hear from our businesses, our employers, and our citizens that this is so important.

Congress ought to look at this compromise, in my view, as a springboard to a full and productive debate over the budget in the upcoming 2 years. The fact is, last-minute deals have become too commonplace and they have left a lot of important policy reforms and policy improvements on the cutting room floor.

For example, with America's West getting hotter and drier each year, our broken system of budgeting for wildfires is in drastic need of improvement. The same goes for many programs and services that are a lifeline for rural America. Fortunately, this legislation lays the groundwork for the Congress to go back to having robust budget debates that can actually solve these challenges.

With my time this morning, I wish to address some specific elements of the bill, starting with what I see as several particularly constructive policies.

First, the legislation staves off the full brunt of the automatic budget cuts known in the corridors of Washington as sequestration. This policy was designed in effect to be painful from the get-go, and it would weaken Medicare, the lifeline for older people, and other domestic programs. It was supposed to be considered so god-awful that it

would vanish 2 years after it began, but it continues to haunt budget debates to this day.

It is important that this legislation eases the burden by \$80 billion over 2 years. That means more opportunities to invest in education, in medical and scientific research, in housing assistance, in public health, and more.

Second, this bipartisan plan is going to prevent a big spike in Medicare costs for millions of older people. Several weeks ago, the news came down that seniors were facing a hike in premiums and deductibles in Medicare Part B, the outpatient portion of Medicare, of potentially more than 50 percent. That would amount to an increase of hundreds of dollars—perhaps more—in a year when Social Security benefits are not expected to grow. From my years as codirector of Oregon's Gray Panthers, I can tell my colleagues that for many seniors living on a fixed income, that would have really hit them like a wrecking ball.

When we got those initial reports, several of my Democratic colleagues and I got together and introduced legislation that would fully shield older people from this huge financial hit. Following our work, the bipartisan compromise before the Senate includes a version of this important fix. It is not as generous as the proposal my colleagues and I introduced. There are questions about how it will affect the landscape a few years down the road. But, make no mistake about it, this approach goes a long, long way toward protecting seniors, particularly the dual eligibles—seniors eligible for Medicare and Medicaid—and this is a very important part of this legislation.

Third, the budget compromise takes an extraordinarily important step to shore up one of our country's most vital safety net programs: the Social Security Disability Insurance Program. Without a fix, what is called SSDI—Social Security disability insurance benefits—that workers have earned would have been slashed by 20 percent, and that 20-percent cut would have hit those affected very quickly.

This proposal is going to follow what has been a frequently used bipartisan approach of shifting funding within the Social Security Program to make sure that those who depend on this program are protected through 2022. I introduced legislation earlier this year, along with 28 of our colleagues, which would have gone further by guaranteeing that the program remain solvent through 2034, but this compromise package strengthens the program for several years, and we will have a chance to come together—hopefully on a bipartisan basis—and go even further.

Fourth, the budget package makes real progress on what is called complying with our tax laws—tax compliance. It is important to note that these are not tax hikes. This is a question of enforcing tax law so that when taxes are owed, they are actually paid.

In the tax compliance area, there are several important proposals that are