

July, and, two, Roberta Jacobson is highly qualified for this position. Her nomination deserves our attention. I do so as a Senator from a border State and as a Senator who believes we have a constitutional duty to advise and consent.

We have a distinguished candidate ready to serve. We have strong support for her on both sides of the aisle. What we need is an up-or-down vote. The *L.A. Times* has called Roberta Jacobson “among the most qualified people ever to be tapped to represent the U.S. in Mexico.”

She has impressive experience, including important work on the Merida Initiative, fighting drug trafficking and organized crime in Mexico. She has served ably as State Department Assistant Secretary for the Western Hemisphere, working to improve relations in our hemisphere and to engage Cuba—opening opportunities for Americans after over 50 years of a failed U.S. policy.

She was approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with bipartisan support. Yet the weeks go by and still we wait.

Our relations with Mexico are critical—affecting our economy, affecting our security. Mexico is working with us to stop those who cross our southern border illegally. Mexico is our third largest trading partner. One million American citizens live in Mexico. It is our top tourist destination, with millions of U.S. visitors every year. My State shares a border with our neighbor to the south. We also share a cultural heritage. The trade that grows every year—hundreds of millions of dollars in goods and services—move between our Nations. Over 36,000 jobs in my State depend on United States-Mexico trade. This increased trade is an engine of economic growth. Exports from New Mexico to Mexico have soared from over \$70 million a year to now \$1.5 billion 15 years later.

In New Mexico we know how important this partnership is. We need a strong ambassador in Mexico City—working on trade, on border security, and on cultural ties between our Nations. We need an ambassador to work with Mexico and other Central American countries to address immigration issues, to help resolve the migrant crisis, to crack down on border violence and drug trafficking. This is clear to both sides of the aisle, especially to those of us from border States. As someone who has worked with Roberta on multiple issues, I know she is the right person for this job.

I especially want to thank my Republican colleague, Senator JEFF FLAKE, for his efforts. He is concerned, as I am, that this cannot wait. As Senator FLAKE said recently:

It's crunch time now. Once you get into next year, it's easier to just put them on hold until the next president assumes office in 2017.

I hope that will not happen. I hope we will listen to Senator FLAKE be-

cause it is crunch time and because we do need to get this done.

What is holding up her nomination? It isn't her qualifications. It isn't concerns about how she would be able to carry out her duties as Ambassador. The problem is rooted in something else—something that should have no bearing on whether she is confirmed: Presidential politics and policy differences with the administration over her work on Cuba.

This year, the world celebrated the reopening of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba. As the Assistant Secretary for the Western Hemisphere, Roberta helped negotiate this shift. We have begun a 21st century relationship with Cuba—one I am convinced will bring freedom and openness. I congratulate the President for leading this historic change.

A few Senators disagree with his Cuba policy, and so they are blocking Roberta Jacobson's confirmation to serve as Ambassador to Mexico.

Unfortunately, this is just one example of how the rules are being twisted and misused. She is one of the many qualified nominees whose confirmations are on hold. Many of them wait because one or two Senators want to make a political point or extract political pain. Not happy with the President? Block his nominee. Not OK with a policy? Keep the seat vacant.

The real aim is the administration. No matter how qualified, the nominee is just an easy target.

Meanwhile, the backlog grows: 19 judges, half a dozen ambassadors, even a top official at the Treasury Department whose job is to go after the finances of terrorists. That position is vacant as well.

We are on track for the lowest number of confirmations in three decades. We now have 30 judicial districts with emergency levels of backlogs. At the beginning of the year, we had 12. Thousands of people are waiting for their day in court because there is no judge to hear the case. Important work for the American people is left undone.

When we fail to do our job, when we fail to give these nominees a vote up or down, our government fails too.

This is not just the President's team. It is our team. It is America's team—working on trade and security, moving our economy forward, seeing that justice is done.

These vital posts should not go unfilled.

I urge my colleagues to allow us to move these nominations forward now.

I do not believe the Constitution gives me the right to block a qualified nominee, no matter who is in the White House. I say that today, and I have said it many times before.

A Republican President may have nominees I disagree with. That is most likely so. But the people elect a President. They give him or her the right to select a team to govern.

Today—right now—the majority leader can call a vote to confirm these

nominees, yet he chooses not to. We changed the Senate rules to allow a majority vote, but that does no good if they remain blocked. That is what is happening in this Congress. The line gets longer and longer of perfectly qualified nominees who are denied a vote and are unable to serve.

So I am not sure who wins here, but I know who loses. The losers are the American people. The losers are the men and women who cannot get a day in court, because there is no judge to hear their case.

The losers are American citizens, businesses, and workers who rely on our embassies and other public servants. The room is empty, and the work is not done—all because one Senator says no, and the majority leader says OK.

Nominees should be judged on their merits, not on feelings about a President someone may not like or a policy someone may not approve. They are public servants in the executive branch, on our courts. They serve the people of this country.

Too often now that service goes begging because one Senator wants to make a point and will gum up the works to do it. That is not governing; it is a temper tantrum.

So I say to my colleagues: Let's get serious. Let's stop these games. Give nominees the consideration they deserve. Give the American people a government that works.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECESS

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 2:15 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:19 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, last year we made a promise to the American people. If we were elected to the majority, we would get Washington working again for American families. Republicans in the Senate have been focused on putting our country on not just another course but a better course. This will allow us to begin rebuilding the trust of hard-working taxpayers who have seen their government become less effective and less accountable.

Over the course of this year, as the Senate got back to work, the American

people got to see something that had been missing from this side of the Capitol over the past 8 years; that is, an open and transparent legislative process. This included Members from both sides of the aisle offering, debating, and ultimately voting on amendments to not just our balanced budget resolution and reconciliation proposal but to a whole host of legislative measures. Leader McCONNELL promised this, it is happening, and bills are passing because people on both sides of the aisle are having an opportunity to represent their constituents, to get votes on amendments.

The previous year we had 15 total votes on amendments. This year we have already had 192 votes on amendments, and the year is not over. So instead of allowing political points and partisan gridlock to take precedence over responsible governing, we are once again doing the people's business, and the Senate Budget Committee played an important role.

We had the first balanced budget in 14 years. Yes, Congress this year approved its first balanced 10-year budget since 2001. Americans who work every day to provide for their families and pay their taxes understand that it is time for the Federal Government to live within its means, just as they do. Hard-working taxpayers know they can't live on borrowed money, and neither can our Federal Government. This balanced budget approved by Congress shows these families that if they can do it, so can we. Our goal is to make our government more efficient, effective, and accountable. If government programs are not delivering results, they should be improved, and if they are not needed they should be eliminated.

A balanced budget would also help America tame its exploding debt, which today totals almost \$19 trillion. Every dollar spent on interest on our debt is another dollar we won't be able to use for government services, for individuals in need or another dollar that won't be available for taxpayers for their own needs. Washington must live within its means, just as every hard-working family does every day, and we have to deliver a more effective and accountable government to the American people that supports them when it must and gets out of the way when it should.

To get our country and economy back on track, Americans must be allowed to spend more time working to grow their businesses or to advance in their jobs instead of worrying about taxes and inefficient and ineffective regulations. We want to empower our job creators to find new opportunities to expand our economy and, most importantly, assure that each and every American has the opportunity to find a good-paying job and a fulfilling career.

This is why the balanced budget also provided for repeal of the President's unprecedented expansion of government intrusion into health care deci-

sions for hard-working families and small businesses. Our goal is to lift the burdens and higher costs ObamaCare has placed on all Americans.

ObamaCare is saddling American households with more than \$1 trillion in new taxes over the next 10 years, and according to the Congressional Budget Office, ObamaCare will cost taxpayers more than \$116 billion a year. For every American, ObamaCare has meant more government, more bureaucracy, and more rules and regulations, along with soaring health costs and less access to care.

The budget reconciliation legislation passed by the Senate will eliminate more than \$1 trillion in tax increases placed on the American people, while saving more than \$400 billion in spending. Most importantly, this bill begins to build a bridge from the President's broken promises to a better health care system for hard-working families across the country.

The Senate Budget Committee is an important resource for facts and information about the congressional budget process and the economy. That is why my committee recently began publishing its budget bulletin again, to provide regular expert articles by committee analysts on the issues before Congress relating to the budget, deficits, debt, and the economy. This year the bulletin has addressed the highway trust fund debate; defense spending, BCA caps, and OCO special funding; reconciliation and the Byrd Rule; budget enforcement and points of order; the appropriations process, which is the spending bills; the debt limit debate; and the 2016 continuing resolution.

Another important part of the committee's work is to increase oversight and transparency surrounding congressional spending. This is why I directed the Congressional Budget Office to release regular reports tracking the budgetary impact of enacted legislation against the fiscal year 2016 balanced budget resolution the Republican Congress approved. I have provided these reports after each recess work period in order to provide a status update on Congress's progress achieving the budget resolution plan.

Regularly providing information such as this will help foster fiscal transparency in the Federal spending process, and over time it will encourage a heightened awareness in the importance of complying with the budget. It will also help ensure that Congress remains focused on fiscal responsibility.

The recent omnibus spending and debt deal clearly illustrates that the Federal budget process is in serious need of reform, which is why the Senate Budget Committee this year has also focused on fixing our broken budget process.

Instilling the Federal budget process with regular action and predictability, active legislative oversight and spending transparency are critical to strengthening our democracy and re-

ducing our Nation's unsustainable spending and debt.

We often talk about the threat America's growing debt poses to our economy and our future, but the growth in Federal regulations also poses a threat to long-term economic growth and job creation. The committee this year has been working to shine a light on these regulations and the burden they have on each and every American. It is critical for lawmakers and hard-working Americans to understand the true cost of regulations that are being issued by the administration. Taming our "regulation nation" will help ensure that the Federal Government works for the people, instead of people working for the government.

These aren't the only things that the Senate accomplished. I was proud to be a part of the Finance Committee's efforts to replace the doc fix so that doctors could be paid properly and Medicare recipients would be able to see doctors, also to enact trade promotion authority legislation, to increase trade that increases dollars to the United States, and also to finance the highway trust fund. I was proud to be a part of the effort of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and I commend my chairman for his work on those bills.

Today I also want to acknowledge Senator COCHRAN's work to lead the Appropriations Committee in reporting all 12 appropriations bills for the first time since 2012. Incidentally, they stayed within the budget on those, and most were bipartisan. It is the first time all 12 appropriations bills have been voted out of committee since 2012. I want to thank Senator MURKOWSKI for her work on energy issues, including the Keystone Pipeline bill, and Senator CORNYN, for his efforts to protect victims of trafficking.

I was also proud to work this year on some issues important to my own State of Wyoming by pushing back on the administration's Clean Power Plan and waters of the United States rule, primarily designed to eliminate the use of coal and drive up the price of electricity in this country, which in essence will cost the average American a lot more for their electricity. Just as importantly, it will send jobs overseas where the energy costs less.

This year Congress also corrected a problem that the 2012 highway bill created for Wyoming, and I commend Senator BARRASSO for his efforts on that. I also want to thank Senators McCAIN and ISAKSON for their work to support our troops and our veterans. I appreciate Senator McCAIN working with me to ensure small businesses have the help they need to compete for Federal contracts.

This isn't an exhaustive list. There are several more things. We passed over 80 bills this year. But these are some of the things we can be proud of. The Senate is under new management,

and these accomplishments and others still to come show hard-working taxpayers that Republicans in the Senate are working to deliver a more effective and accountable government, a government for the people and by the people that supports them when it must and gets out of the way when it should. We have made great progress this year, but there is still more to be done. By working together, we are proving that we can deliver real solutions and real progress that the American people want and deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

TAX BREAK PARITY

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, here is where we are. The Republicans are holding the government spending bill and tax breaks for businesses hostage unless they can attach a rider to these bills to allow Big Oil to export American oil overseas to the highest foreign bidder. Ten days before Christmas, Republicans want to give Big Oil the biggest of all Christmas presents by lifting the crude oil export ban, and they keep saying no to long-term extensions of the wind and solar tax breaks and protections for consumers as part of the deal. Lifting the oil export ban would be a disaster for our economy, our climate, and for our national security. We should have tax break parity.

Let me tell you where we are right now. In America the oil industry gets approximately \$7 to \$8 billion a year in tax breaks. It is interesting because \$7 to \$8 billion is what the wind and solar industry receives each year—pretty even: wind and solar; oil—\$7 to \$8 billion every year in tax breaks.

We keep hearing from the other side: Let's have a level playing field; let's have all of the above. Well, what are they asking for right now?

Here is what they are asking for. The oil tax breaks will continue forever, and the wind and solar tax breaks will phase out over the next 3 to 5 years. This is on top of the windfall which the oil industry receives from the exportation of the oil that otherwise would stay here in the United States. Under that scenario, the losers are going to be U.S. consumers because we will be exporting the oil that is already here in our own ground, so that the oil industry can get a higher price overseas. It will hurt our national security because we still import 5 million barrels per day. Can I say that again? We still import 5 million barrels of oil a day. We still import 25 percent of all our oil. Some of the countries we import that oil from you may have heard of—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Algeria, Nigeria. We are still importing oil, and we are still exporting men and women over to the Middle East to protect those cargo ships of oil, bringing it to the United States. We don't have a surplus of oil in the United States. We have a deficit of 5 million barrels of oil per day. So

that is a dangerous policy. On top of that, I will just say that the whole ethanol subsidy program in the United States is premised upon the fact that we do not have energy independence and we need ethanol to get \$1.3 billion dollars' worth of tax breaks a year—biodiesels.

Well, that whole program starts to get called into question if we are already going to declare energy independence here, even as we still import 5 million barrels a day. Our domestic refiners will be hurt by this unless there are proper protections built in in the Tax Code for those refiners. Otherwise, as that crude oil goes overseas, it is going to call into jeopardy the viability of the oil refineries across the East Coast, Midwest, and West Coast of the United States of America.

On the environment, if Brookings Institution is correct and upwards of 3 million barrels of oil will be exported by the year 2025, that is the equivalent of 150 coal-burning plants of additional pollution going up from our own soil.

Some people question: Well, will that really happen? Let me give you some other numbers. The Energy Information Administration says that the developing world and its expanding economy are going to require 10 million additional barrels of oil by the year 2025. The expanding economy is going to require 20 million barrels of new oil by the year 2035.

What Big Oil in America wants is a piece of that action. They want to be able to export into that market, and they will do so by drilling on American soil, not to reduce our own dependence upon imported oil but to sell it because the price on the global market is higher—much higher than the price they could get in America.

Is that truly a good policy, given what we are seeing about the stability of the Saudi government? Well, just look at the governments all across the Middle East from which we import oil. Is this really a good idea? I don't think so. I think it goes to the heart of our national security.

What happens to the Big Oil industry over the next 20 years is that they pick up about \$500 billion in new tax revenues; that is with a “b,” \$500 billion. They keep their \$7 billion in tax breaks every year over a 20-year period. That is \$140 billion more.

Meanwhile, the solar and wind tax breaks expire; they run out. The rumors are they run out over the wind in 3 years. Well, the young generation is the green generation. They think wind and solar are the future. They don't think fossil fuels are the future.

The whole world, 195 countries, just gathered and signed an agreement to move away from a fossil era to a low-carbon, clean-energy future. So if there was going to be a deal out here, then there should be some equality. If you don't take away the tax breaks from oil and gas, then don't take away the tax breaks for wind and solar—a level playing field, all of the above. Have a

competition so that we can know at the end of the day—which is what I think is going to happen—that renewables are actually the future. It is a tale of two tax breaks: one for Big Oil and one for the renewable industry.

As I stand on the floor, this is still an unanswered question, but I do know this: The Republicans are pledging that if their Presidential candidate wins in 2016, then in 2017 that Presidential candidate is going to take off the books the clean power rules that President Obama has promulgated. They are going to review the fuel economy standards that push us to 54.5 miles per gallon by the year 2025, which is still the largest single reduction of greenhouse gases in one stroke that any country in the world has ever actually announced. They are also saying, obviously this week, that they are going to allow the wind and solar tax breaks to expire. So just as the world meets, we have the announcements about what their goals are on this issue.

I think the world expects more from us, but I actually think the young people of our country expect more from us. They truly think this is the future; this is the revolution: more efficient vehicles, powerplants that have fewer emissions, tax breaks for wind, and solar for fuel cells—the future. It is not having 150 new powerplants of coal equivalents of oil being drilled for in our country without some corresponding, permanent, long-term tax breaks that would offset it. No, it is just the opposite. They are saying: We are coming after the Presidential election for the reductions in greenhouse gases from powerplants. We will take those rules off the books. We are going to review the fuel economy standards. We will take those off the books, and we will make sure there is never again a permanent tax break for wind and solar. That is where we are in the same week that the world just met in Paris to announce the global solution to a global warming problem.

So I say equality; I say keep it the same. If you want to keep oil, if you want to keep natural gas tax breaks, keep them. But don't take away ours; that is, not mine but those who believe in a low-carbon, clean-energy future for our planet. The United States must be the leader. We are the innovation giant. We are the country that the world is looking for in order to find these solutions.

We passed laws that created this cell phone in 1996. Until then it was the size of a brick, and people didn't have one in their pocket. Then, 8 years later, a new cell phone came along. By the way, 600 million people in Africa have them because we innovated; we went first.

We can do the same thing in the energy sector, but there has to be some fair treatment that is put in place, especially when the oil industry receives such an incredible bonanza of those breaks here—\$500 billion in new revenues. From my perspective, it is undermining our national security because