

not work like its champions promised either. As a result, we have seen increasing numbers of insurers pull out of the ObamaCare marketplace altogether.

Just last week, we learned that the Nation's largest health insurer will join the list, withdrawing from all but a "handful of States" next year, including Kentucky. What this means is that Americans in my home State and across much of the Nation are likely to face even fewer health insurance options. According to one analysis, if this insurer withdrew from the exchange market altogether, nearly 2 million marketplace enrollees would be left with only 2 insurers, while more than 1 million more would be left with only 1.

Fewer choices could also mean even higher premium costs. As one expert put it, either insurers will drop out or insurers will raise premiums. This only adds to the many Kentuckians who have already seen their premiums spike under ObamaCare, like the retired police officer whose premium increased to nearly \$5,000 a year, which he "simply cannot afford" or the Kentuckian whose rate tripled, leaving him uninsured and leaving him to pay a fine at the end of the year.

Not surprisingly, the insurance industry's chief spokesperson—who is a former top Obama administration official, by the way—is bracing the public for even more premium increases in the year to come. The administration's answer? More money from taxpayers. Whether they call it a risk corridor or a premium subsidy or a reinsurance mechanism, the source is still the same, the American taxpayer.

So the bottom line is this: Americans continue to be unfairly hurt by a health care law that was forced on them through backroom deals and is literally littered with broken promises. Too many have seen their premiums and deductibles skyrocket. Too many have suffered from tax increases and lost coverage. Now too many are set to face even fewer choices and significant price hikes in the year to come.

Middle-class families have endured the broken promises and failures of ObamaCare for far too long. It is past time for Democrats to own up to the many disappointments of this law and help us move toward better health care policies for our country.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following leader remarks, the time until 12 noon be equally divided between the two managers or their designees.

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### OBAMACARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is too bad my Republican friends continue to attack ObamaCare. It is working. The ranks of the uninsured are as low as they have ever been. More people are getting access to health care, and they are healthier. More people are healthier because they can go see a doctor or go to a hospital when they need to.

The Republicans need to get over it and accept the fact that ObamaCare is here to stay. If they are so concerned about it—they have no plan of their own—maybe they could give us some ideas as to how it should be changed. We hear nothing other than criticism of a program that is doing so much to change America forever.

#### WISHING CAPITOL POLICE OFFICER PAT MILLHAM A SPEEDY RECOVERY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I want to take just a minute to talk about the tragedy that struck the Capitol Police yesterday. At 5 a.m., United States Capitol Police Officer Pat Millham was working out in the gym. He suffered a massive heart attack. Those who were present in the gym at the time rushed to his aid. They used a defibrillator three times before his heart started beating again. He was then flown to a nearby hospital and had surgery late last night.

He was revived. That is very good. He is a 28-year veteran of the Capitol Police. He has served in a variety of very important positions: a member of the criminal investigations unit, academy instructor, and he even worked on the hostage negotiation team.

He is an outstanding police officer by all accounts. The Department has recognized his performance and honored Officer Millham with the Service Medal and Commendation Award. He is well-liked by all of his colleagues and has a great sense of humor. He is currently a member of the Department's mountain bike patrol that we see around here. There are not a lot of mountains, but there are a lot of hills around this Capitol complex.

He is in very good shape. That is what you have to be to be a patrol officer on a bicycle. That is what makes what happened yesterday so shocking. I cannot imagine what a difficult time it has been for Pat and his wife Heidi and their two children at college, Skylar and Savannah. Heidi recently retired from the United States Capitol Police.

I hope they know the entire Senate and House family wishes Officer Millham a speedy recovery, and I express my personal appreciation and admiration to all of the Capitol Police for all they do and all the personnel who make the Capitol Police jobs functional. We look forward to having Officer Millham back at full health very quickly.

Mr. President, where are we on what is happening on the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

#### ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2028, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2028) making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Alexander/Feinstein amendment No. 3801, in the nature of a substitute.

Alexander amendment No. 3804 (to amend-ment No. 3801), to modify provisions relating to Nuclear Regulatory Commission fees.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Under the previous order, the time until 12 noon will be equally divided between the two managers or their designees.

#### NATIONAL PRESCRIPTION DRUG TAKE-BACK DAY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we have recently been talking quite a bit—because, frankly, unless we talk about it people won't know what happened—about how productive we have been over the last year and a half in advancing legislation that benefits the American people, which is, of course, the reason why they sent us here.

I say we have been talking about it, because if we don't talk about it, maybe they will never learn, and even if we talked about it, some of them may never believe it. But the fact of the matter is that we need to talk about what we are doing here for the people we represent.

Of course, nothing happens in the Senate or in Congress or in Washington unless it is done on a bipartisan basis. But leadership matters. Leadership matters.

We have seen with the new Republican majority in the 114th Congress, under Senator MCCONNELL and Speaker RYAN now, that we have been able to pass some important legislation. This includes legislation to combat the epidemic of opioid abuse throughout our Nation. We passed an important piece of legislation called the Comprehensive

Addiction and Recovery Act to deal with it.

But I want to talk about another aspect of the prescription drug problem or issue and reflect on some bipartisan legislation we passed 6 years ago—obviously, with people on both sides of the aisle and in both Chambers—when we came together to tackle another issue related to prescription drugs. This had to do with the fact that many prescription drugs are filled. They will sit in medicine cabinets and perhaps be subject to pilfering by people for whom they were not prescribed or be disposed of in a way that is bad for the environment. We found that the growing use of prescription drugs for nonmedical uses is particularly a problem among teenagers. When people take drugs for recreational or other purposes that have not been prescribed for them, unfortunately the consequences can be fatal.

We noticed that some State and local law enforcement agencies have had success with drug take-back programs. The programs allowed people to turn in their leftover prescription drugs, limiting the chances that these drugs would get into the hands of someone who doesn't need them or that they would hurt them.

I remember in Austin, TX, shortly after we passed this legislation in 2010, going to one of the locations where the take-back program was in use, and people were bringing garbage sacks full of prescription drugs they had in their home. In some instances, they had a relative who had been ill and passed away. They had all of these prescription drugs that were sitting there, and they didn't know what to do with them. Do you flush them down the toilet? Do you put them in the garbage can? What do you do? Fortunately, we provided a mechanism for people to deal with these unneeded drugs.

We focused our efforts on making it easier for Federal agencies to take and dispose of some of the most dangerous drugs, including opioids, and finding a way to encourage more communities to do the same.

The legislation we passed in 2010 was the Secure and Responsible Drug Disposal Act, and it gave law enforcement officials the flexibility they need to be able to build these programs. Like most legislation nobody has ever heard of, it passed Congress unanimously. But just because we didn't fight like cats and dogs doesn't mean it is not worthwhile. I am thankful that this week we will be able to highlight the importance of legislation like this to address our Nation's prescription drug epidemic.

Today, folks on Capitol Hill can hand in any unused prescription medication they have as part of Federal take-back day. That is today. On Saturday, we will get a chance to see this in action across the country through the National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day. Take-back days not only highlight the problem of prescription drug abuse, they help local communities

take control of the problem by rallying the community to turn in drugs that are either unwanted or expired and to make sure they are safely disposed of.

I look forward to going back home to Texas for national take-back day this weekend, where I will have a chance to join local law enforcement and city leaders in Dallas and Austin and Walgreens pharmacy—all working together to help highlight this important initiative. I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same.

#### UNITED STATES-MEXICO RELATIONSHIP

Mr. President, separately, I want to talk for a moment about another matter of importance, and that is the importance of our Nation's relationship with our neighbor to the south. Coming from Texas, which has 1,200 miles of common border with Mexico, I often observe that this is a relationship from which we cannot get a divorce. We are bound together as countries, contiguous countries, and frankly our well-being depends in part on how well Mexico is doing. We know that Mexico, like the United States, has its own unique challenges.

As the largest exporting State in the country, Texas exported \$95 billion worth of goods to Mexico just last year—\$95 billion to Mexico just last year. In fact, Mexico is our largest export market, and it is the second largest export market of the United States. The truth is, Mexico and its economy are very important to our economy and how we do as a country.

In today's globalized world, we must continue to support our economic partnership with Mexico and find ways to build on it and certainly not do anything to undermine it. That is why I prioritized efforts such as the Cross-Border Trade and Enhancement Act, legislation I have introduced with my colleague in the House, a Democrat by the name of HENRY CUELLAR. I worked with him a lot on border-related and especially trade-related issues. This bill would help reduce wait times and upgrade infrastructure at our border ports of entry.

I bet most people don't realize that the single largest land port of entry into the United States is Laredo, TX. If you come with me to Laredo sometime, you will see semis and tractor-trailers stacked up literally for hours trying to get across the International Bridge, engaging in the kind of trade that helps support American jobs and helps our economy.

It is important that we move goods and people more efficiently, safely, and legally, and grow our trading relationships with partners like Mexico. The fact is, 6 million American jobs depend on binational trade with Mexico—things we send there and things they send here. A lot of the jobs that used to go to China because they could produce things in a manufacturing process that was cheaper because of lower wages and the like—because of the benefit of the proximity of Mexico, many of the maquiladoras and other manufacturing

facilities in Mexico are integral to North American manufacturing.

Our relationship with Mexico, as complicated as it can sometimes be, goes well beyond impressive trade statistics. Mexico is a key partner for the United States as we work to keep our country safe and to help them deal with the challenges they have from a law enforcement standpoint.

Mexico is critical to our joint goals of countering and interdicting illegal substances entering the United States from across the border. We know the supply is huge, and unfortunately the demand in the United States is huge, and our Mexican friends always remind us of that. Every time we are critical of them, they say: Well, if it weren't for the demand in the United States, the supply wouldn't be there. They have a point.

We have also worked with Mexico in trying to stem the tide of illegal immigration. I know most people may not quite accept that, but the fact is, Mexico has stepped up and dealt with immigration across its southern border from countries such as in Central America—some of the most challenging environments in this hemisphere. We have seen that manifested in the tens of thousands of unaccompanied children who come from Central America, across Mexico, and into the United States, ending up on our doorstep. But Mexico has worked with us to try to stem that flow of illegal immigration from Central America.

We have worked together to try to help make sure our border is not an easy target for terrorists and other bad actors seeking entry to our country.

There is no doubt that these shared challenges are just that—challenging. But what should be crystal clear to all of us is that we can't address them without working with Mexico. We can't ignore it. As I said earlier, we can't get a divorce. We have to work this out because our futures are joined together in many important respects. That is why I say that the success of the United States depends in part on Mexico's success, and we should diligently look for ways to grow that partnership for the good of both countries. One practical way we can do that is by confirming a U.S. Ambassador to represent us in Mexico City.

Roberta Jacobson was nominated last summer, and I believe she is qualified to represent us in this key relationship. Our bilateral relationship is simply too important to the people of Texas and to the people of the United States to leave this position unfilled. We have to get somebody representing the United States in Mexico City to advocate on behalf of the United States for all of the reasons I mentioned earlier—trade, security, immigration. Otherwise, I don't think we are going to be able to make the kind of progress we all would like to see, and we certainly can't afford to let our relationship with Mexico go stagnant. That is one of the risks of not having an ambassador there.

I was really glad to hear my friend, the junior Senator from Florida, call the U.S.-Mexico relationship one of the most important ones we have. He said that yesterday on the floor. I share his optimism that this impasse over the confirmation of Ms. Jacobson can be resolved soon. I certainly think it is time we come together to move her nomination forward. Here in the waning days of the Obama administration, it is very important that we have this important ambassadorship filled for all of the reasons I mentioned earlier.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time in quorum calls until 12 noon be evenly divided between the two parties.

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

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

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

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, in a few minutes we will be voting on whether to end debate on the Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill. Most of what we have to say about it at this point is very good news. This is the first appropriations bill of the year. It is the earliest date an appropriations bill has been acted on in the Senate since 1974. If it goes through in the regular order, it will be the first Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill that has done so since 2009. More than 80 Senators have contributed policy suggestions and amendments to the bill on both sides of the aisle. In addition to that, we have dealt with 17 amendments on the floor. Now we are ready to end debate and move in our process toward a final solution on the bill.

I believe this bill was put on the floor because Senator FEINSTEIN and I have a good history of working together, and the expectation was that we would find a way to do that. Let me say the problem—and I will leave time for Senator FEINSTEIN or the Democratic leader or perhaps Senator COTTON or others who may want to say something.

An issue has arisen over an amendment offered by Senator COTTON. He did that after the administration made an announcement over the weekend that it would be purchasing heavy

water from Iran. Heavy water by itself is not much. It is just water. It is in drums. It doesn't hurt anybody. It is not dangerous. It is distilled water, and it is used primarily for two reasons: one, for scientific instruments—we use it for fiber optics and other scientific reasons—and it can be used to make plutonium. So it was a part of the agreement between the United States and Iran.

Senator COTTON—and I will characterize his amendment with his permission—sought to do two things. One was to say you couldn't use any appropriated funds for the fiscal year 2017—the one we are working on now—to buy more heavy water from Iran. The second thing he sought was to do something about Iran's business of selling heavy water. What would the implications be about that for our own national security? Remember, this is a decision by the U.S. Department of Energy that was announced over the weekend without any notification to the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee or to the Intelligence Committee or to the Armed Services Committee. So you have a U.S. Senator who is on the ball, and he says: OK, this is an issue I would like to do something about.

Our friends on the other side have raised an objection, especially Senator FEINSTEIN, for whom I have the greatest respect. So today, in talking with the Democratic leaders, I asked: May I talk with Senator COTTON and see if he will modify his amendment in a way that might be acceptable so that we can go on with the appropriations process and not blow it up?

It was blown up last year because we put controversial water language in the bill, and instead of bringing it to the floor and voting on it and letting the President veto it and then bringing it back, the Democrat majority decided we just wouldn't bring the bill to the floor.

This year I talked to the Democratic leaders. They wrote Senator MCCONNELL a letter, and we all agreed to try to have an appropriations process. What they said to me was, no controversial riders in committee. So I went through my whole committee with Senator FEINSTEIN, and we persuaded many Senators to leave their controversial amendments off the bill in committee, and we said to them: You can bring them up on the floor when they have 60 votes. If you can get 60 votes, you can put it in the bill, and if the President of the United States doesn't like it, he can veto it. Then it takes 67 votes to override it.

Here we are, early in the process in April, moving ahead, and all of a sudden I understand that the Democratic minority is going to block us from going forward because they don't like the Cotton amendment.

Let me say this, Mr. President, and I will stop my remarks. I think Senator COTTON has acted responsibly. He acted as soon as he knew about the Depart-

ment of Energy's decision. He has listened to the objections that were raised by the other side. He has amended his own bill. He has offered for it to be adopted by voice vote. He has offered for it to be voted on at 60 votes.

As I said, he has modified it. He has completely taken out the part that could limit American businesses from getting licenses to buy heavy water from Iran. That is to be discussed at a later time. He has left in only the part that says you can't use fiscal year 2017 money to buy heavy water from Iran. But the Department can use prior year appropriated money, and it can use revolving fund money. It can buy all the heavy water Iran has if this President or the next President wants to. I think that is a very reasonable step, and I would ask the Democratic leader and the whip and Senator FEINSTEIN, all of whom I work with very well and for whom I have great respect, if they are determined to block the bill at noon. But let's keep talking about this because I think it is the basic constitutional framework of our U.S. Senate to do our job on appropriations, and Senators should be allowed to offer germane amendments.

When confronted with an objection on the other side, if they say "well, 60 votes" or "voice vote" or "I will modify my amendment," that ought to be respected, and we should go ahead. Then if the President at the end still feels he wants to veto the bill, that is the way our process works. He vetoes it.

If we don't do this, we are going to end up with an omnibus bill. Senators won't have a chance to participate in it, and then the President will have to veto it in an omnibus bill at the end of the year. That is not the kind of process that earns the respect of the American people.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have the deepest respect, without any question, for the Senator from Tennessee, who is my friend, and, of course, Senator FEINSTEIN is already legendary as a figure in Democratic politics and politics of this country. But I have some reservation, for lack of a better description, about my friend, the senior Senator from Tennessee talking about the appropriations process.

I was on the Appropriations Committee from the first day I came to the Senate, and I loved my service on the Appropriations Committee. For the last 8 years under President Obama, the Republicans have done everything they could—I am trying to find a pleasant word—to mess up the appropriations process—everything.

For those who understand the Senate, everyone should know we didn't ask that there be cloture on a motion to proceed. We are as cooperative as we can be on everything we have done during the time we have been in the minority, which is more than a year now.

I would suggest to my friend that cloture will not be invoked on this bill

in 2 or 3 minutes. If there is some proposal that the Republicans want to come back with that is reasonable and doesn't have a poison pill in it, fine; we are willing to move forward on this. For someone to give me the statement "Well, you know, it is germane"—the world is germane on this bill. I did this bill for 15 years. I did it. I know what is in this bill. Just about everything is germane. They have all kinds of defense stuff, energy and water—it is a big, big important bill, and this amendment by the Senator from Arkansas is nothing more than an effort to sidetrack the work we are doing here.

The Republicans are in the majority. I hope that it doesn't last that long, but that is where we are. It is up to them to move this process forward. We have tried our best to cooperate.

I suggest to my friend from Tennessee to see what happens and come back with something this afternoon. We have said on many occasions over the last 24 hours, we will vote right now on final passage of the bill—as it stood before this amendment was offered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 2 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, as the Senator from Tennessee has said, the administration announced that they were purchasing heavy water from Iran on Friday night. On the first legislative day back on Monday, I proposed an amendment which is germane to the bill and thereby entitled to a simple majority threshold vote.

I have offered to give a voice vote to the Democrats so they don't have a record vote. I have offered to put it at a 60-vote threshold because there are 60 Senators who do not believe that the U.S. taxpayers should be subsidizing Iran's heavy water industry.

This morning, as Senator ALEXANDER said, I offered to revise my amendment, yet here we are. The Democrats are going to vote no on cloture, objecting to an amendment that is not pending and is not included in this legislation.

I, too, do not want to see the appropriations process end. I want to pass this bill. I want to move on to the next appropriations bill, and I am committed to continue working in good faith with the Senator from Tennessee and the Senator from California to try to reach some solution, whether on this bill or any other, that we can move forward on in an orderly fashion and pass all of our appropriations bills, as well as ensure that the U.S. taxpayer is not subsidizing a critical component of Iran's nuclear industry, which, I may add, we are not required to do under the nuclear agreement with Iran.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. May I speak for a few minutes prior to the cloture vote?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, we have the Democratic leader on the floor and the chairman of the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee. I want him, particularly, to know how very much it has meant to me to work with him to try to reverse the deterioration of order of this body.

That deterioration of order was the inability to pass an appropriations bill on its own and go back to what is called regular order. I have watched the Appropriations Committee lose prestige over the years. I have watched something happen that never happened in the early years. Members would vote for a bill in committee. They would come out, and they would sustain it on the floor.

So the Appropriations Committee gained, I think, a prestige and an honor in this body. I think it has been very wounded. So the ability of Senator ALEXANDER, my chairman, and myself to try to restore that order by sitting down and working out problems—and seeing that he gives, I give, we put together a bill, and we believe that bill can get through this body and that we can conference that bill successfully—is a really big deal to change the nature of this body, and we can show that we can get our job done.

Well, into this climate, which is so amicable and so positive, comes an amendment. I go to the White House. I pick up the phone. I call the Chief of Staff. I say: This is an amendment. It may affect the Iran deal. I would like to know what the administration's position is. The word back is that the administration will veto this bill if these words are in it.

So I began to learn a little bit about heavy water—what it is and what it is not—and how this all came about. So I understand the administration's problem with it, because it destroys something they are trying to do with the Iran agreement; that is, to show Iran a legal pathway with which it can proceed to go into the family of nations in a moderate way.

Iran happens to have a foreign minister whom I have known for at least 15 years. I know he believes in this Iranian agreement. I know he wanted to take Iran in another direction. I know it because he proposed an earlier plan when he was Ambassador to the United Nations.

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

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I ask unanimous consent for such time as I may consume. I will be short.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I have no objection if I can have the same.

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

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. So, to make a long story short, this body discussed the

joint agreement. We agreed that the President should go ahead and implement this agreement. Now, there are difficult problems because Iran is emerging and wanting to come into the family of nations in a positive way. They have to get this heavy water out. The heavy water is out. It is sitting in a store room in Oman.

Iran desires to sell it, just as India sells heavy water. Canada has sold heavy water to us. That heavy water is used for peaceful purposes, as the chairman said, for fiber optics, for medical research. Our National Labs are interested in it, and there are many companies that would use it to improve fiber optics and that kind of thing.

So it is a way of removing proliferation from the country. This is suddenly on our Energy and Water bill. I believe we have the votes to not enter into cloture at this time. I guess what I want to say is my very deep regret to my chairman. I don't want it to end this way. I want us to continue to work together. I truly believe that there is more in the interests of this country that we can do appropriations bills in regular order, with concurrence on both sides of the aisle, than the value of this amendment.

This amendment has raised hackles all over. So why can't it be left for another day? Why does it need to be on an appropriations bill? Why can't we have the ability to do one bill in this body that does not have a poison pill on it, to set an example for future bills? This was the bill—Senator ALEXANDER and I both know that—that was supposed to do that. Why can't a Member see this? Maybe he is a new Member. Maybe he does not understand what the years have been like.

Why can't he wait for another time? I have been here 24 years. I have waited for another time plenty of times, because someone said: Your amendment won't go well with the bill. Don't do it now. We may help you later.

I did it. Why destroy our chances? Because that is exactly what is happening.

So I just want Chairman ALEXANDER to know how very sad I am that we are at this point. I believe it is not necessary to be at this point. I believe we could show that we could do it. I would say that if cloture is not granted, we stand ready to continue to work to try to get a bill. But I would so appreciate it if a new Member could recognize this and say: Oh, I wanted to do this. It is my right to do it.

All of that I admit, but what you are doing is going to disturb our effort to produce a series of appropriations bills without poison pill riders.

I will predict that there will be more on other bills. Our effort, which the majority leader began with the Democratic leader—was to be able to put together a process where we could produce bills.

Please, think about that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I will make brief concluding remarks and then we can vote. We are not debating the Iran agreement here today. This is the Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill of the Appropriations Committee. We are not even debating the Cotton amendment. It is not even part of the bill. Senator COTTON has filed an amendment that could be part of the bill if the Senate decides to adopt it in our debate after we adopt cloture. He has done that.

Just to repeat, over the weekend, the U.S. Department of Energy, without any consultation with anybody in the Senate that I know about—without the Intelligence, Armed Services, or Foreign Relations Committees—decided it was going to buy heavy water from Iran. The Senator from Arkansas introduced an amendment on the subject.

My understanding of the way the Senate is supposed to work is that we save the controversial amendments for the floor. If you can get 60 votes, you pass them. Then, as Senators, if the issue is an important issue about which we disagree, we vote on it and we accept the vote. Sometimes we win, and sometimes we lose.

We also listen to each other. So if the other side says this is an especially difficult issue for us, we try to accommodate that. So the Senator from Arkansas has said that he will take 60 votes, although he is entitled to 51. He can force a 51-vote vote on this issue if he chose to do that, under parliamentary rules.

He said: I will take a voice vote. He does not have to do that. Then this morning he said: I will modify my amendment. I will eliminate all of the part about licenses. That is the second sentence of this very simple amendment. We will reserve that for discussion by the Armed Services, Foreign Relations, and other committees. So all that his amendment says is that you can't use money from this fiscal year to buy heavy water from Iran—except that the Department of Energy has potentially millions of dollars it could use from other years to do that, and it has a revolving fund it could use.

In effect, if this President or the next President wanted to continue to buy heavy water from Iran, it could do so. So I think the Senator from Arkansas is entirely within his rights, whether he has been here 2 years or 20 years. I think he is entitled to come up and ask for a vote. I think he has bent over backwards in offering three or four different ways to accommodate the concerns of the others.

I think it would be a real shame if we came up with yet one more reason not to have an appropriations bill after we have done all of this work, 80 Senators have made their contributions, and we have adopted 17 amendments.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Senate amendment No. 3801 to Calendar No. 96, H.R. 2028, an act making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Lamar Alexander, Jerry Moran, John Boozman, Steve Daines, Richard Burr, Roy Blunt, Orrin G. Hatch, John Hoeven, John Thune, Thad Cochran, Roger F. Wicker, Mark Kirk, John McCain, Lindsey Graham, Johnny Isakson, Pat Roberts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on amendment No. 3801, offered by the Senator from Tennessee, Mr. ALEXANDER, as amended, to H.R. 2028, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SESSIONS), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 46, as follows:

#### [Rollcall Vote No. 64 Leg.]

#### YEAS—50

Alexander	Enzi	Moran
Ayotte	Ernst	Murkowski
Barrasso	Flake	Paul
Blunt	Gardner	Perdue
Boozman	Graham	Portman
Burr	Grassley	Risch
Capito	Hatch	Roberts
Cassidy	Heitkamp	Rounds
Coats	Hoeven	Rubio
Cochran	Inhofe	Scott
Collins	Isakson	Shelby
Corker	Johnson	Sullivan
Cornyn	Kirk	Thune
Cotton	Lankford	Tillis
Crapo	Manchin	Vitter
Daines	McCain	Wicker
Donnelly	Menendez	

#### NAYS—46

Baldwin	Heinrich	Peters
Bennet	Heller	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Reid
Booker	Kaine	Sasse
Boxer	King	Schatz
Brown	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cantwell	Leahy	Shaheen
Cardin	Lee	Stabenow
Carper	Markey	Tester
Casey	McCaskill	Udall
Cooms	McConnell	Warner
Durbin	Merkley	Warren
Feinstein	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Fischer	Murphy	Wyden
Franken	Murray	
Gillibrand	Nelson	

#### NOT VOTING—4

Cruz	Sessions
Sanders	Toomey

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 46.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The majority leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I enter a motion to reconsider the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is entered.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I think we have come up with yet another definition of obstruction today. Our Democratic friends are going to prevent the passage of an energy and water appropriations bill because of an amendment that is not yet pending to the bill in yet a new way to blow up the appropriations process.

Our Democratic colleagues were great at dysfunction when they were in the majority, and they are pretty good at it when they are in the minority. No matter what the issue—no matter what the issue—there is some new and creative way to try and throw a monkey wrench into the gears.

I heard over and over and over again that there was broad support on both sides of the aisle for getting the appropriations process moving again. The Senator from Arkansas has been extraordinarily reasonable. He has offered to modify his amendment. He has offered to consider it in some other context. Our chairman, Senator ALEXANDER, has been working on this for 24 hours. It ought not to be this hard to pass an energy and water appropriations bill that would be good for the country and that most of us support.

So I just moved to reconsider my vote, and we need to continue to talk about this because this is a ridiculous place for the Senate to be—ridiculous. We are all adults. We have all been elected by the people of our various States to come and act responsibly.

We are not going to give up on this bill, and when we finish this bill, we will go to a couple more appropriations bills. I think we have a collective responsibility in the Senate—Democrats and Republicans—to work our way past this snag and figure out the way forward, so we will have time to do that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I would like to say a word in response from the Democratic side.

First, I cannot think of two colleagues I admire more than Senator ALEXANDER and Senator FEINSTEIN. They are honorable people. It has been a pleasure to work with them and even to consider issues where we opposed one another because I knew it would be done in a professional and courteous way. They have spent more hours than I can calculate constructing one of the most important appropriations bills—the Energy and Water appropriations bill.

This bill was brought to the floor first by Senator McCONNELL for good reason. We wanted to set a template, a model, for finishing the appropriations process, and I respect that. I have been honored to serve on the House Committee on Appropriations and now on the Senate Appropriations Committee, and I think it is a very important assignment. It has been many years since we have done our work in the way it was supposed to be done.

Without a budget resolution, we took the budget agreement, moved forward with the bills. There were countless opportunities for the minority, the Democrats, to slow down this process, to make it more difficult, to make it more complicated, and to demand votes and delays of 30 hours after 30 hours. We did not do that because we were trying to be positive and constructive.

I will not reflect on our experience in the majority, but I would say in response to the Republican leader, they broke the record in terms of filibusters on the floor of the Senate when the Republicans were in the minority. We don't want to go back to that era and we don't want to "get even." That isn't what this is about.

There were basically two or three things guiding us in the process that I thought everyone signed up for, and I believe they did. One of them was balance between defense and nondefense spending overall; second, that each one of the bills hits a number that can be explained and rationalized based on the budget agreement; and third, the contentious issue of poison pills. These are subjects that are so controversial that if they are included in a bill, it becomes impossible to either pass it on the floor or expect the President to sign it.

So we thought, if we are going to exercise our opportunity with an appropriations process that works, those three things have to apply. I give credit to both Senator ALEXANDER and Senator FEINSTEIN for producing a bill in subcommittee that met those tests and didn't include any great controversial items, going through full committee with exactly the same outcome, and bringing it to the floor.

We were this close to the finish line—this close to the finish line—when yesterday the Senator from Arkansas, as is his right to do, offered an amendment. That amendment was offered around noon yesterday and the whole conversation changed. It was an amendment related to the Department of Energy, yes, but it was an amendment of great controversy because it was an amendment related to the President's agreement with Iran to stop them from the development of nuclear weapons.

Everyone knows what that was about. Every Republican opposed the President's agreement and four of ours on the Democratic side. It was a highly controversial and volatile subject for many months and continues to be on

the Presidential trail. To bring this amendment into the bill at the last moment, as it was, is to invite a debate and a controversy which was not in the bill up to that point.

Now, was it the right of the Senator from Arkansas to do it? Yes. But I would just say that my experience in appropriations is, you would say to your colleague who had the right to offer an amendment: Let me just say in advance, this is going to slow down—it may even stop this bill. After all the work we have put into it, please don't offer that amendment, and if you do, I will have to oppose it.

Those are the basics for kind of going forward on a bipartisan basis to bring this bill to a conclusion.

We just had a procedural vote, and a few Republicans joined us, but the overwhelming majority of Democrats said we can't move forward on the bill until we resolve this basic question: If Senators will be allowed to offer amendments on the floor that are relevant to the bill and are controversial, we invite poison pills up to the very last moment when a bill can be considered.

There has to be a better way. We have to prove to America that we can get things done in its best interests. That means some Senators cannot offer every amendment they would like to offer. That is just part of the restraint which we ask of Members who are consciously trying to help us be constructive in the Senate.

I hope we can get back on track. The conversations are civil, as they should be between honorable people who are trying to work this out, and they need to continue. The underlying bill is very important. It is important to my State and to many other States. But let's finish this bill in the right way, in a bipartisan fashion, in a calm fashion, not in a confrontational fashion. We can do that. I am sorry we can't do it this morning. I hope we will all work together to achieve that goal as quickly as possible.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I would like to compliment my colleague from Illinois. He hit the nail on the head. I will be brief.

The Republican leader said this is a new level of obstruction. I don't know if it is a new level of obstruction; he has been pretty good at it over the years. But certainly, if we wanted to obstruct these bills, we wouldn't have let the motion to proceed go forward. We would have done 17 other things that were done time and time again in the past.

The way to stop this, I would say to the Republican leader, is very simple: Either prevail on Senator COTTON not to offer his amendment—no one is doing that. He has a right to do it. But in the old days, as Senator DURBIN said, the way the appropriations process worked, the chair of the sub-

committee would say: Don't offer your amendment because it will be defeated and we will help defeat it because it will blow up the bill. Plain and simple. That is still an option.

We didn't offer the Cotton amendment. We could have offered our version of Cotton amendments to blow up this bill. We did not. Whether or not that was his intent—and I will not doubt the sincerity of my friend from Arkansas. But it was offered by the other side, and the onus is on the other side to fix this. The way to fix it is one of two: Either prevail on the Senator from Arkansas to pursue his goal here—that is certainly his right, but don't do it using the appropriations process as a hostage to move forward on his bill—or tell him that if he offers the bill, Republicans will vote against it as well. Then we can move forward.

That was how it used to work. When I was a junior Member and I wanted to offer amendments, some of them controversial, I would go to our chair or ranking member—depending on whether we were in the majority or minority—and say: I want to offer this amendment. The chair would consult with the other side, and they would come back and say: We, the majority/minority, cannot support this amendment. Then I wouldn't offer it. It would lose. That is the way the process used to work.

I don't begrudge any individual—the centrifugal forces in our politics have pulled things apart, so it is much harder for Members on both sides of the aisle to do it. But let's not turn that around. The obstruction and the failure to deal with obstruction is not coming from this side, it is coming from the other side, and they have an onus to fix it.

One more point before my good friend—and I love him—from Tennessee comes forward. Whatever we did, the President said he was going to veto this. So the idea that this bill would go forward and we would spend all this time on it and then have the President veto it—that doesn't accomplish the goals that I know my good friends, the chair of the subcommittee and the ranking member of the subcommittee, want to pursue. The onus is on us to do it before we get to that.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I appreciate the comments of Senator SCHUMER, Senator DURBIN, and Senator FEINSTEIN, for whom I have great respect.

The people who can figure this out are on the floor, and we ought to be able to, is the bottom line. I suspect a big part of the problem is timing. The administration apparently decided to do this over the weekend. We are in the middle of this bill. Senator COTTON would say that he moved as quickly as he could. And there is no question that this is an issue which raises lots of temperatures on both sides of the aisle. There is no doubt about that.



We have to have a balance. Senators have a right to take important issues and present them in an appropriate way here in the Senate. In just this bill, there are several times when I was one of only one or two or three Republicans who voted for amendments just so we could get the amendments through and we could keep the bill going. I know how that works, and I intend to keep doing it.

But I would say to my Democratic friends: I hope we can put our minds together and think of some way to allow Senator COTTON to make his point, to achieve what is an important objective and do it in a way that, A, is acceptable to the Democratic side, and B, doesn't have the problems that are associated with the timing. This came up on us all of a sudden. There are several reasons for that which we don't need to go into, but let's see if we can't work it out. I would certainly like to do that. I would like for Senator FEINSTEIN and myself to be able to set a good example for the rest of the Senate and get our bill through.

The only other thing I would say that is a little different from what the Senators from New York and Illinois said is that I don't really agree that if the President threatens a veto, we should stop our work. I think we would only be here about half a day a week. It is fine for the President to veto a bill if he feels he needs to, and he can send it right back. We consider that and we consider that it takes 67 to override it, and what often happens is we take something out or change some provision and send it back to him. So just because the President says he will veto a bill I don't think means the Senate should stop its work.

Mr. SCHUMER. Will my colleague yield?

Mr. ALEXANDER. Of course.

Mr. SCHUMER. I understand that every time the President says "veto," we shouldn't freeze in our tracks, but it would be a lot better if we could avoid that situation because we want this bill to pass and be signed into law.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I agree with the Senator from New York.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Madam President, I will not weigh in on this issue, but I might later. I am here for a different purpose. I did serve previously in the Senate several years ago, and this is my second time back. My experience with the amendment process was a pleasant one then. Any Senator at any time could offer an amendment to any bill, and it would be discussed and debated and voted on, and we accepted the fact that it was either a yea or a nay. It was part of a process that sometimes started here, sometimes started in the House, but it is a process that goes through many iterations.

So to determine that something at one step in the process takes the bill down ignores the fact that this bill will go over to the House of Representa-

tives; they will debate it, and they will add things and subtract things; and then we will go to a conference to resolve the differences even before it gets to the President's desk.

Unfortunately, what has happened here is that on anything the President of the United States doesn't like, he simply says: I am going to veto it, so drop it.

So I agree with the Senator from Tennessee, Mr. ALEXANDER, in saying that if that is the process and the way this Senate is going to operate, we might as well just close the place down. We can maybe show up just to show people that we showed up for work. But we are not going to accomplish anything on this floor if that is the case.

The responsibility falls not just on us to do the job we were elected to do but also falls on the President to not try to torpedo a bill—there are multiple dimensions—because one amendment gets passed with the will of the Senate, including bipartisan support, but the President doesn't like it and therefore shuts the whole thing down.

#### WASTEFUL SPENDING

Madam President, I am here for the 40th-something week to talk about the waste of the week, and I will do that now. The other issue is being very ably handled by Senator ALEXANDER, who is a veteran here and knows how to work through these conundrums.

With a Federal debt that is over \$19 trillion and growing, it is fitting to take a long look at every penny the Federal Government appropriates to ensure that hard-earned taxpayer dollars are not wasted. I have been down here week after week with examples of waste.

Today, for my 41st edition of "Waste of the Week," I would like to bring attention to an app the Transportation Security Administration paid IBM more than \$47,000 to develop. "App" is a new word in our lexicon. We all carry around these new devices with which we can push a bunch of buttons and, by certain applications, access or do things that make life easier: monitor traffic on the road, getting the latest ballgame scores, checking on the weather. I have a whole bunch of apps on here.

I heard about an app that had been developed for the Transportation Security Administration called a randomizer app, and it does just two things. Very simply, it points an arrow to the right or to the left. Now, we might say, why would anybody need an app—a device—that randomizes an arrow to the right or an arrow to the left? Well, let's take a look at this picture here.

This is obviously a TSA agent. We have all been through this. This is a line at the airport. Those of us who go home every weekend—I go back to Indiana on Thursday night or Friday—are very familiar with these lines because we have to go through the security process.

This is a TSA agent using this app. As we can see, it is a screen and it has a big arrow.

When you walk through Reagan National Airport to go home every week—as I know the Presiding Officer does to go back to Iowa—there are several lanes you can go down. Almost always there is a transportation security agent or someone associated with the process standing at the beginning of the lines and, with an arrow, saying "Take this one" or "Take that one." Well, I don't know about the details, but for some reason, they didn't want that to be an individual decision, so they called up IBM and said: We need to develop an app that will allow us to have a screen that has an arrow pointing to the left or to the right. And it needs to be random; it can't be controlled by this person.

For whatever reason, it needs to be random. OK. Maybe there is a rational reason TSA needs to do that for security purposes, and without divulging what that is or knowing what that is, I won't get into that, but obviously it doesn't take a lot of money to develop a screen that has an arrow to the left, an arrow to the right, and a little bit of software running in the background randomizing so that you can't figure out whether it is going to be left or right. It does it all by itself.

I wondered, how much would this cost? So we did a little research. What we found is that this is such a simple application that it can be developed by a developer of apps within a 10-minute period of time.

So taxpayers paid \$47,000 to build an app that had an arrow pointing one way or the other. Now, \$47,000 is minuscule compared to what we waste around here, and I have a chart here that shows well over \$160 billion of waste, fraud, and abuse tallied up during my 40 visits to the Senate floor to talk about the various ways the government wastes taxpayer dollars. But this one baffles me because something which is so simple and which takes 10 minutes to produce costs \$47,000—well above the average income for the average worker in Indiana and in many cases significantly more than the TSA agent who is holding it is paid annually for the work they do.

So here we are once again. People might ask: Well, could we have done this in an easier way? Well, how about flipping a coin? That is random. Tails, go in this lane; heads, you are in this lane. How about drawing from a hat? The TSA person standing at the line can have a hat with a whole bunch of slips of paper in it that say "left" and "right." Go ahead, put your hand in, and pull it out.

What does it say?

Left.

That is over there.

What does it say?

Right.

That is over here.

Maybe we can do what I do with my grandkids. I put my fists behind my

back, and I will have one or two fingers extended. They all get excited and so forth. The brother is elbowing his little sister so she won't win, and the third child is crying, maybe, because they are not letting her play.

So I say: OK, Charlie, is it a one or a two?

Two.

Charlie: Yay, I won.

His sister starts crying.

No, no. You are going to get your chance.

All right, Maggie, you pick a one or a two.

Anyway, we may go through each. I have 10 grandkids, so this takes a long time when we have family reunions.

Any one of those processes could be used, and I don't think it would cost \$47,000. It wouldn't be \$4.70. It is just something we could do.

I used to serve as the lead Republican on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security. I know how difficult it is for the Homeland Security Subcommittee to fund the critical elements they need to fund and the programs they need to fund in order to keep us secure. Every penny counts, and every dollar counts in this regard.

This type of egregious waste has got to stop. Perhaps it is time for TSA to precheck—we are all familiar with precheck, another thing we have to go through—these programs before we fund them. As we continue to determine funding levels for various government programs and agencies, we must remember projects such as TSA's randomizer app. This is yet another example of why minimizing waste, fraud, and abuse will go a long way to restore trust in government decisions as to how our tax money is spent.

I just realized I missed out on naming one of my grandchildren who I play this with, and that is Avery—the sister of Charlie—who wants to make sure that she is in the game also. I will not go through the other seven. I will save those for another time.

Let me note that we add more money—ever more money and examples of taxpayer waste. We are up to \$162,277,955,817. This is big money. It is nothing to laugh about. This is a small example. We have had examples in the billions of dollars. We owe it to the taxpayer. We owe it to the hard-earned tax dollars that are earned by hard-working taxpayers to be as efficient and effective with the spending of their money as we possibly can. Once again, this is the waste of the week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

#### FIGHTING WILDFIRES

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, according to the Forest Service—and we checked with them this morning—there is right now an 11,000-acre fire burning in the Shenandoah National Park in Virginia. This is just April, not the time when one normally thinks you are going to have fires when the fire season is on. But there is a fire

burning in the Shenandoah National Park in Virginia that has already cost more than \$3 million. This is the second largest fire in Shenandoah National Park history.

I have come to the floor this afternoon to once again make the case for the Senate, on a bipartisan basis—Democrats and Republicans—to come together to fix this dysfunctional system of fighting fire in America. I am going to describe it, but let me talk first a little bit about the consequences.

In the American West, we used to talk about the seasons in a way that Americans had done for decades and decades: harvesting crops in the fall, skiing in the winter, fishing during the spring salmon runs, and camping in the summers. We fought fire during the wildfire season. But when Americans in the West talk about the seasons now, they are talking about the seasons of yesteryear. That is because the wildfire season raging across our forests and special places is no longer limited to a single time of the year.

Fighting fires has become a continuous battle virtually year-round throughout the country. That is why this fire burning in the Shenandoah National Park ought to be a wake-up call once again to everyone to understand how important it is to fix this broken system of fighting fire, because the funding system for doing so is leading to dysfunction throughout the Forest Service and contributing to the breakdown of the national forest management that is needed to prevent catastrophic wildfires in the first place.

According to the Forest Service, 1.4 million acres have already burned across America this year. That is more than twice the 10-year average for this time of year. These numbers show, in my view, how important it is that urgent action be taken to fix the way we fund wildfire fighting operations. This is something that Senator CRAPO and I have been working on for some time.

With the support of scores of organizations, well over 200, a significant number of bipartisan Senators and a significant number of bipartisan House Members have all joined in this effort, because it is not just the West that has been impacted. Forest Service work in States that manage timber sales, stream restoration, trail maintenance, and recreation get shortchanged when money has been diverted to fighting wildfires.

I was particularly struck last year when we had the good fortune of having the senior Senator from New York, Mr. SCHUMER, join as a cosponsor of our legislation. The reason he did so is because this absolutely dysfunctional system of fighting fires has resulted in important priorities for New York State not being in a position to secure the funding they need. That is because the rising costs of fighting fires keeps raiding all these other programs in the Forest Service that are needed to help prevent fires down the road.

The raids take place two different ways. Certainly, in my part of the world, we are very troubled by the fact that you have prevention getting short shrift. Then it gets really hot and dry. We have lots of thunderstorms in our part of the world, and all of a sudden we have an inferno on our hands. Then what happens is the agencies end up borrowing from the prevention fund to put the fire out, and the problem gets worse because you have repeatedly shorted the prevention program.

This is what is called fire borrowing, and it happens not just in the West. That is why the senior Senator from New York wanted to be a cosponsor of our legislation, because programs that were important in New York State, thousands and thousands of miles away from the forests of eastern and central Oregon—those were a problem for programs he cared about and to secure their funding as a result of this dysfunctional system, just like it has been for people in the West.

It is time for the Congress to find a solution to ensure that, one, wildfires can be fought; and, two, to control the cost of fighting these wildfires by better preparing our forests and making them healthier.

I am very pleased that the chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the committee I had the honor of chairing in the past, Senator MURKOWSKI, and Ranking Member CANTWELL are committed to working on this issue, and I wanted to once again reaffirm my commitment. I know Senator CRAPO shares this view to work with them to find a solution to wildfire funding that can pass in this Congress.

I certainly have some ideas, and I am very interested in welcoming my colleagues' ideas and I have been for some time.

For example, last year in the summer, it was pretty clear that it was going to be a tough fire season. What I and others essentially sought to do was to find a way to get our colleagues working together to try to find some common ground and get this resolved. We couldn't quite get it done. We are now going to be at this day in and day out, week in and week out. Senator CRAPO and I will be working with our colleagues and their staff on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and on the Budget Committee and with Members from the other body to find a solution that works for all sides of the issue.

We saw last summer that this was going to be a problem. A big group of us got together and said we have to get it resolved. We couldn't quite thread the needle. This time we have to make sure that gets done. There are not a lot of certainties in life, but the fire season is one of them, and the Congress simply cannot let this problem continue.

I wanted to come to the floor, particularly today, to take note of the fact that the fire in the Shenandoah



area ought to be a wake-up call to everybody. If they are having one of the biggest fires they have ever had this early in April, that is a signal of what is to come. It has been the story of summer after summer. Now we are learning, as I indicated earlier—and it appears it is not just in the West—that we are thinking about the seasons and talking about the seasons of yesteryear because now it is fire season all year round.

My colleague is here.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). The Senator from Oregon.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, the most important words in the crafting of our Constitution are the first three words: "We the People." With those three words, the Founders described what the government of our new Nation was all about.

As President Lincoln later summarized, it is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. In fact, even in the crafting of the Constitution, the Founders put special emphasis upon those three words, putting them in supersized font before all the details that were to follow.

Periodically, I will come to the floor to talk about issues that are closely related to the "we the people" vision of our Constitution and our responsibilities under the Constitution. This week, I rise to address the responsibility of the Senate and its advice and consent role under the Constitution.

The President's duty is to nominate a Supreme Court nominee when there is a vacancy. That responsibility is written very clearly into the Constitution. It says that "he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint . . . Judges of the supreme Court" in article II, section 2 of our beloved Constitution.

The Senate then has the responsibility to provide advice and consent, as required, and over time it has been understood that we need to vet the nominee, determine whether the nominee is fit to serve in the post he or she will serve in, which is particularly important in the Supreme Court. That is how this esteemed Chamber, our beloved Senate, has operated for more than 200 years.

In fact, we need to go back now and understand how this design was created. I have come to the floor before and read from Hamilton's *Federalist* Paper 76 that summarizes a conversation that was taking place over the nomination process. Some folks—in crafting the Constitution—thought that responsibility should be solely with what they referred to as "the assembly," which is this body, the Senate. The reason they argued that is, it would be a balance to the power of the President in the executive branch if the assembly, the legislative branch, were to make the appointments. However, they then realized that those ap-

pointments would probably never get done because there would likely be a lot of horse trading and the most qualified person probably wouldn't be nominated. Instead, it would most likely be the friend of one Senator traded for the friend of another Senator, and that didn't make sense. They said: No, it would make more sense to invest the responsibility for the quality of the individual in a single individual. As the expression goes, the buck stops here. It stops at the President's desk. The President would have the responsibility to nominate individuals to serve in the executive and judicial branches and will bear the public responsibility for the credibility and quality of those nominations, but in that conversation, they also thought that was too much power for the President to have. What if the President starts to appoint friends or those with little experience or those of unfit moral character? There needs to be some kind of check, so in that regard then came the role of the Senate to give advice and consent. In order to do that, the nomination would go before this body for debate and then this body would vote on that nominee.

The words that were the key words Hamilton used in describing the responsibility was to determine whether the individual was "of unfit character"—fit character, unfit character. Did that nominee have the qualifications necessary for the job and the personal characteristics required to fulfill the job effectively?

Well, here we are and President Obama has fulfilled his responsibility under the Constitution. He has nominated Judge Merrick Garland. We now have our responsibility in the Senate to vet this nominee, examine Judge Garland's record, examine any aspect of his writings or his previous court decisions, and determine whether Judge Garland is a fit character or unfit character. That is our responsibility in the Constitution.

A number of my colleagues across the aisle—my Republican colleagues—have said: We don't want to fulfill our responsibility under the Constitution. We are just going to ignore the responsibility that has been vested in the Senate of the United States. They are in the majority, and a nomination can't go to a committee for a hearing and determine whether an individual is of fit character or unfit character without the majority making it happen. The nomination can't come to the floor without a majority vote in committee so it can then be put forward for our consideration. Unfortunately, the job strike of the majority party in the Senate—failing to fulfill its responsibility under our Constitution—is now imposed on this entire body.

If we were within the usual timeline, we would be holding a hearing on Judge Garland this week. Since 1975, the average time from nomination to committee hearing has been about 42 days, but instead the leadership has

said: We are not going to honor our responsibility. I find that deeply disturbing. Each and every one of us stood before this body and took an oath to fulfill our responsibilities under this Constitution, and that is what we should be doing right now.

I say to my colleagues: Do your job. After a bit of reflection on the importance of how our government functions, one would think there would be a bit of reflection upon what we owe to maintain the integrity of our institutions and that this decision to go on a job strike would have been reversed.

I have talked to colleagues who are, quite frankly, somewhat embarrassed because they have been asked to toe the line, and they don't feel it is right that they should be, in fact, failing to fulfill their responsibility, but there is a lot of pressure on them. We need to set aside political pressure when it comes to the integrity of our institutions.

Since the 1980s, every person appointed to the Supreme Court has been given a prompt hearing and a vote within 100 days of their nomination. This chart shows three different phases as to the vacancies. Sometimes those vacancies have been longer or shorter in terms of before a nomination occurs. The red bar shows the start of the nomination process and the green bar shows the time before a vote is taken, which is the period of consideration. In every case, the red and green bar together are 100 days or less. This dates all the way back to Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

It has now been 100 days. How many days are there between now and when the next President takes office? What is the math? Well, there are 268 days. So for anyone who comes to this floor and says there isn't time, that individual is making a case with no foundation because the record shows that from the time the nomination was made until a vote, time and time again—under Democrats or under Republicans—it has been less than 100 days. Yet we have more than 260 days left before the next President takes office.

There are other folks who have come to the floor of this Chamber and have invented this new principle called the job strike during the last year that a President is in office. They act as if there is something in the Constitution which gives this Senate permission not to do its job during the last year a President is in office. Well, I encourage my friends to pull out and read the Constitution, find that clause, and bring it to the floor because it does not exist. The Constitution anticipates that each of us will fulfill our responsibilities throughout the entire length we serve until we exit office, that a President will serve and work through all 4 years of his or her term, that a Senator will serve and work through all 6 years of his or her term. There is no vacation in the Constitution for the last year. There is no special permission to fail to do your constitutional

responsibility in the last year of a term. That simply doesn't exist.

Many Supreme Court Justices have been confirmed in the final year of a Presidency, and so for those who come to this floor and argue that there is some historical precedent, that precedent doesn't exist either. Republican and Democratic Presidents have issued nominations regardless of the party in control of the Senate and the Senate, regardless of the party of the President, has done its job in case after case after case throughout time. Until this moment, the Senate has vetted the nominees, individual Senators have met with the nominee, the nominee's record has been exposed, thereby giving the public the opportunity to give us their input, and we would have voted in committee and on this floor.

(Mr. BARRASSO assumed the Chair.) If we look to the recent past, Justice Kennedy was confirmed in the last year of President Reagan's final term. By the way, the Senate was controlled by Democrats. The Democratic leadership didn't say: We are going to go on a job strike and not vet the candidate and not hold a vote and not fulfill our responsibility. No, they honored their responsibility under the Constitution and so should every Senator today.

This is a black mark on the record of the Senate. Think about what it will lead to. For example, let's say the job strike we are engaged in is purely for political reasons in an effort to pack the Court with more conservative Justices. Let's say it succeeds in delaying a nomination until the next Presidency, and the next President nominates someone on the far edges and way out of the mainstream, then what does each party do? Do they say: Well, the other party worked to pack the Court and refused to do their job, and, now, because the consequences would be so destructive and so partisan to the Court, we will refuse to do our job but only because of what preceded it? That is not a conversation we should ever have. That is not a dialogue we should ever have in this Chamber of action to politicize the Court, pack the Court, followed by reaction to try to blunt the impact of the initial action, followed by reaction, back and forth. This will deeply undermine the integrity of the Supreme Court of the United States. Let me tell you, the Court is already in trouble. The activist Court decisions of the far right, trying to write legislation through Court decisions to change the fundamental understandings of how our Nation operates, have already deeply politicized the Court.

Citizens United turned the fundamental premise written into our Constitution on its head. Our Constitution was written all about, "We the People." Jefferson talked about the mother principle; that we could only claim to be a republic to the degree that the decisions reflected the will of the people and that in order for that to happen, citizens had to have an equal voice. His vision was one of the town's

square, where there was no cost to participate. Everyone had a chance to stand and have their say.

Lincoln talked about the equal voice principle for citizens. The fundamental premise in a republic is to express the will of the people. People have to have the ability to participate in roughly equal proportion, but now the town square is for sale. It is the television, the Internet, the Web sites, the radio, and our Court has decided it is OK for the very rich to buy it up and destroy the equal voice principle that our Founders so cherished.

This activist Court on the far right has decided to undermine those important first three words of the Constitution: "We the People." This has produced a great cynicism in America because once this massive concentration of money buys up the town square, buys up the airwaves, influences elections, it is no longer "We the People," it is "we the powerful" and "we the privileged." Wouldn't it be wonderful not to have had the Supreme Court decisions that have undermined the integrity of our Supreme Court, but we have them and now the majority in this body wants to further damage the Supreme Court, further politicize the Supreme Court, and that is a huge mistake. We should go in the other direction. We should invest in the integrity of the Supreme Court. That doesn't mean a nominee gets automatically passed through this body because we have a job under the Constitution. We have a responsibility to vet the nominee. We have the responsibility, as Hamilton said, to judge if the nominee is unfit or fit. But how can you have that judgment if we do not hold hearings? How can you have that judgment if the committee does not vote? How can you have that judgment if there is not a debate on the floor of the Senate? How can you have that judgment if there is not a vote on this floor?

So I say to my colleagues: End your job strike that is so out of sync with the tradition of the Senate. End your job strike that is so damaging to the Supreme Court's integrity. End your job strike that is so damaging to the "we the people" principles of our Nation. Do your job. Do your job. Hold the hearing. Meet with the nominee. Exercise your vote. Do your job.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### NOMINATION OF MERRICK GARLAND

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the nomination of Merrick Garland to the United States Supreme Court and to urge my colleagues to grant timely consideration to the President's nominee.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting Chief Judge Garland, as have many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. I encourage all Senators to meet the nominee because I suspect that they will find, as I did, that the rumors are true; he is an exceptionally qualified nominee.

Since joining the DC Circuit, Chief Judge Garland has been recognized as one of the best appellate judges in the Nation. His reputation for working with colleagues to identify areas of agreement and to craft strong consensus decisions is well earned.

After meeting Judge Garland and discussing the way that he approaches his role as a judge and as a chief judge, I am pleased to agree with my colleague and friend Senator HATCH, who described Judge Garland in 1997 in this way:

I believe Mr. Garland is a fine nominee. . . . I know of his integrity. I know of his legal ability. I know of his honesty. I know of his acumen. And he belongs on the court.

Senator HATCH is right. He was talking about, of course, the DC Circuit—the second court in the Nation, really.

Before Judge Garland was nominated, the White House reached out to me and to many of my colleagues, especially those on the Judiciary Committee, to ask the type of nominee whom I hoped President Obama would put forward or whether I had any particular names in mind. I didn't. My only recommendation was that the President nominate someone whose intellect, experience, and demeanor would be apparent during a hearing and would cause the American people who watched the confirmation hearing to say: I want nine of those on the Supreme Court. This is what I told the White House.

Now that I have met Judge Garland, I will set about the task of reviewing Judge Garland's full record and all of his opinions. I will set that aside, but the American people deserve to meet him and decide for themselves whether he is qualified to sit on the highest Court in the land. The American people deserve a hearing.

In my view, confirmation hearings also serve a broader purpose. Hearings aren't just an opportunity for the public to get to know the nominee and discover how he or she views important issues; open, public hearings provide an opportunity for the American people to learn about the Supreme Court's jurisprudence and to demystify the Court's role in our democracy. Hearings also allow our constituents to see and judge for themselves how and whether their government is working, whether we are doing our jobs.

Before any of us knew whom the President would nominate, Senate Republicans wasted no time in refusing to fill the vacancy until after the election. The majority leader said that "this vacancy should not be filled until we have a new President." The Republican members of the Judiciary Committee gathered behind closed doors

and vowed to deny the eventual nominee a hearing. Many Republicans refused to even meet with the nominee. They said it didn't matter who the President nominated. This was about principle.

This type of obstruction marks a historic dereliction of the Senate's constitutional duty. Since 1916—for the past 100 years—the Senate Judiciary Committee has fulfilled that duty by holding hearings. Nonetheless, Senate Republicans stood firm in their opposition.

But within a day of Judge Garland's nomination being announced, some Republicans began to change their tune. Once they discovered that the President had nominated a consensus candidate—a judge who had earned the praise of so many Republican Senators during the course of his career—their calculus began to change.

Now my Republican friends are tying themselves in knots trying to explain to the American people how they plan to move forward. Quite a few Republican Senators broke ranks and agreed to meet Judge Garland privately while nonetheless maintaining that the Senate should not grant the nominee an open, public hearing. It would seem that some of my colleagues believe they—not the public and not their constituents—deserve the opportunity to meet and to question the nominee.

A few Republicans said that they would consider Judge Garland and even vote to confirm him in the lameduck session—but only if Democrats win the White House. That is a very odd sense of what the principle is here. I guess the thinking behind that is the Republicans are afraid that should the election not go in the direction they prefer, then the people shouldn't decide. They should decide unless they decide the wrong thing. That is the odd principle that I have heard in the Judiciary Committee when we have had business meetings, where members come in and make a statement and then leave. I hear a lot of contradictory stuff. Obviously, the theory is that should a Democrat be elected to the White House, they might eventually face a nominee who hasn't earned quite as much bipartisan praise, so then we will do Garland. That is absurd. That has nothing to do with principle. This has nothing to do with principle, and it never did. This is about politics.

The Supreme Court is too important, too central to our system of democracy to let it fall victim to partisan politics. It has been just over 1 month since President Obama nominated Judge Garland to fill the vacancy caused by the death of a Justice. During that month, the effect of allowing a vacancy to persist has been made clear. The eight-member Court has deadlocked twice, handing down two 4-to-4 decisions. Permitting a seat on the Supreme Court bench to remain vacant means that, in some cases, the Court is not able to fulfill its core function of resolving the splits among the courts

of appeals and serve as a final arbiter of our laws. The Court isn't able to do its job.

I think we have to go through our history and look at when Justice Marshall was appointed in the last weeks, I believe, of that administration.

I hope my Republican colleagues are finally coming to the understanding that they have an obligation to fill this vacancy. Members of the Senate and of the Judiciary Committee in particular have an obligation to do our jobs, to get to work.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### DEFEND TRADE SECRETS BILL

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, this afternoon the House of Representatives is poised to pass the Defend Trade Secrets Act, bringing this critical proposal one step closer to becoming law. Over the past few months, Senator COONS and I have witnessed a groundswell of support for our bill, which will strengthen the ability of American companies to defend their most valuable information from theft.

Businesses, both large and small, and lawmakers, both Republican and Democrat, have rallied around our legislation, providing the impetus we need to pass this key intellectual property bill. Passage of the Defend Trade Secrets Act marks not only a watershed moment for the intellectual property community, it also represents a victory for the American people.

To appreciate the significance of this legislation, we must first understand the importance of trade secrets in American industry. Trade secrets are the lifeblood of our economy. In simple terms, trade secrets are the groundbreaking ideas that give businesses a competitive advantage. They range from unique production and manufacturing processes to food recipes and software codes.

This critical form of intellectual property is not only invaluable to individual business owners, it is also directly responsible for creating millions of jobs in our country. But a lack of Federal legal protection leaves trade secrets vulnerable to theft and oversight that cost the economy billions of dollars each year.

Two years ago, Senator COONS and I set out to fix this problem together. From the very beginning, we sought the input of business owners and job creators so that we could better understand the obstacles facing American industry and chart a path forward for reform. The Defend Trade Secrets Act is the culmination of our work.

Under current law, companies have few legal options to recover their losses

when trade secrets are stolen. For example, if a disgruntled employee steals a Utah company's confidential information and leaks it to a competitor in another State, attorneys must navigate a complex labyrinth of State laws just to bring suit. This cumbersome process can take weeks, which is an eternity in a trade secrets case. During this time, the likelihood that valuable intellectual property falls into the wrong hands increases every day, as does the potential for permanent damage to the company.

Our bill solves this problem by creating a uniform Federal law that businesses can turn to when their trade secrets are stolen. This Federal standard keeps companies from getting bogged down in State laws by allowing business owners to take their case directly to a Federal court. Essentially, our legislation removes an unnecessary and time-consuming layer of bureaucracy, buying businesses precious time to recover stolen information. By providing America's businesses with the ability to protect their most valuable information in Federal courts, they will be better equipped to safeguard trade secrets and increase their competitiveness.

The President has expressed strong support for our legislation, which he intends to sign into law shortly after it passes the House.

The Defend Trade Secrets Act is not only a win for the intellectual property and business communities, it is also an example of what Congress can accomplish when we put party politics aside and find common ground. Indeed, it is always easy to make things look hard, but it is impossible to make things look easy.

Today's House passage of the Defend Trade Secrets Act truly embodies countless hours of negotiations and hard work. I wish to recognize those who made passage of this bill a reality, including Chairman BOB GOODLATTE, Representative DOUG COLLINS, and Representative JERROLD NADLER. They were indispensable in shepherding this legislation through the House.

I also wish to thank Senators GRASSLEY, LEAHY, GRAHAM, FEINSTEIN, FLAKE, WHITEHOUSE, and many others for their contributions to this bill. Likewise, I thank my dear friend Senator COONS for joining me in co-authoring this bill. He has been an invaluable partner throughout this process.

Enacting meaningful public policy in the midst of a toxic Presidential campaign is no small accomplishment. With the imminent passage of the Defend Trade Secrets Act, our Nation has cause for celebration.

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.

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

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

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

#### COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I actually come to the Senate floor to talk about the urgent need to help make college more affordable for American families.

Earlier this year, I launched a comment form on my Web site encouraging people to share their struggles to afford college and how their student debt is affecting them. Since then, I have heard from so many students and families from my home State of Washington and across the country. By sharing these stories, I hope we can all come together to work on ways to bring down college costs and make sure students can graduate from college without the crushing burden of student debt.

I recently heard from a young woman named Katy. She is a junior studying psychology at Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA. Katy said she always knew that attending college was going to be financially difficult, although it never occurred to her to let that stand in her way. Because her parents were not in a position to help her out financially, and because she couldn't afford to make regular tuition payments, she has had to take on a large amount of student loans, and she wasn't able to live with her parents, so she has also had to plan and pay for room and board for all 4 years.

Now, here is a typical workweek for Katy. Katy works 12 hours a week as part of the Gonzaga Student Body Association. At least 2 nights a week, and usually on weekends, she makes hundreds of calls on behalf of the Gonzaga Telefund. On most weekend nights, she is not out with her friends and family. Instead, she is babysitting for some extra cash to put toward her textbooks. On top of all that, she is also a math tutor, which, until recently, was a paid position before the department's budget was cut, but she has kept tutoring anyway as her way to give back. That is just who she is. Of course, that is all on top of being a full-time student as well.

Let me be clear. Katy is very glad to be investing in herself and her future. She knows it is tough work and she appreciates that, but she, like millions of other students, is just looking for a little relief. In her own words, she admits "it's a constant stressor thinking of how to pay for life while at college, and how I'm going to pay for all of this after I graduate."

Students like Katy aren't alone. Across the country, the yearly cost of tuition and room and board at a public 4-year institution is 5½ times what it was in the early 1980s, and to afford those skyrocketing pricetags, people are turning to student loans to cover

the cost. Today, Americans across the country hold a total of \$1.3 trillion in outstanding student loan debt.

In my home State of Washington, the average college student owes more than \$24,000 in student debt. Think about what that debt means for our students. These students are doing everything right. They are investing in their futures. Many of them are the first in their families to go to college, but when it is time to look for that first job, just starting out, they are already in the red.

I have been so glad to work with other Senate Democrats on legislation actually called "In the Red" that would help students like Katy. Our bill would give students the chance to attend community college tuition-free. It would make sure the amount of Pell grants keeps up with the rising cost of college, and it would let borrowers refinance their student debt to today's lower rates. Our bill is fully paid for by closing corporate tax loopholes that only serve to benefit the biggest corporations and the wealthiest few.

This issue for me is personal. When I was young, my dad was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Within a few short years, he couldn't work any longer. Without warning, my family had fallen on hard times. I have six brothers and sisters, and thankfully all of us were able to go to college with help from what is now called Pell grants, and my mom was able to get the skills she needed to get a job. She had been a stay-at-home mom. She needed to go to work, and she got that job through a worker training program at Lake Washington Vocational School with government help.

Even through those hard times, our family never lost hope that with a good education, we would be able to find our footing and earn our way to a stable, middle-class life. This country has never turned its back on my family, and today we can't turn our backs on the millions of families just like mine who need a path forward to afford college and pay back their student debt.

I hope we can pass this bill and pave the way for lower college costs and less student debt. I hope we can work together to give students and families some much needed relief. Let's make sure they know we will never let up and that we will always have their backs.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

#### VENEZUELA

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I wish to speak about two separate topics. The first is Venezuela.

Venezuela is a country in our hemisphere in total crisis, total chaos, and that is because of a number of things: failed leadership, failed economic policies, a complete societal breakdown, human rights abuses, and now a de facto political coupe that has plagued the country for about 15 years. This all started with Hugo Chavez and has now

continued with Nicolas Maduro, his successor.

Let's talk about the first cause of the disaster that has now befallen the people of Venezuela—failed leadership. For over 15 years now, Venezuela has been ruled by two strongmen who have mismanaged the country with an iron fist, have squandered its vast wealth and natural resources, they have imprisoned political opponents, they have corrupted all of the country's political institutions to ignore the will of the people and to entrench their power.

By the way, this failed leadership has only gotten worse because the successor to Hugo Chavez is a completely incompetent person. On top of the fact he is a strongman, he is incompetent. He does not know what he is doing. The result is this very wealthy country, with a highly educated population, is being led by someone who, quite frankly, isn't qualified to lead anything, much less a nation of the stature of Venezuela.

The second cause is failed economic policies. Venezuela suffers from shortages across the board. For example, there are shortages of medicine and medical equipment, which means—and this is not an exaggeration—people are literally dying because their doctors cannot prescribe drugs that aren't available, and the hospitals and the clinics don't have the equipment needed to conduct surgeries. When you speak to medical professionals in Venezuela, they will tell you there are simple medications that could save the life of an individual, but they can't do anything about it. I had someone tell me today they asked a doctor: What do you do when one of your patients is about to die? And he said: Nothing. We comfort them as they die. We don't have basic medicines to deliver to them.

Unlike the case of Cuba, by the way, where they are saying it is because of the embargo by the United States—which of course is ridiculous and is another topic for another day—there is no embargo on Venezuela. There are no sanctions on Venezuela and its people. So as a result, there is no explanation for this.

The supermarkets are bare. The shelves are completely bare. People there cannot buy food or even basics such as toilet paper, toothpaste, toothbrushes—anything.

In addition to the government's political censorship effort, its economic policies also help censor in the sense that there are shortages of paper that independent newspapers need to print their editions. So here is another Machiavellian move the government has made. There is a shortage of paper, and so they make sure the independent press has no access to paper. If you don't have paper, you can't print a newspaper.

Things are so bad in Venezuela, economists earlier this month compared Venezuela to Mugabe's Zimbabwe of 15 years ago. The reason that is an

unbelievable comparison is because, as I said earlier, Venezuela has one of the largest, if not the largest, oil reserves in the world; they have a highly educated population; they have a well-established business class of professionals; and last year their economy shrank by 5.7 percent, and this year it will shrink by another 8 percent. This is a country that now has rolling blackouts—an energy-rich country that has rolling blackouts. It has gotten so bad that today their so-called President, the incompetent Nicolas Maduro, announced that government employees are only going to work 2 days a week, Mondays and Tuesdays. Government offices will be open only 2 days a week because they aren't turning on the lights. This is the state of one of the richest countries in the world and one of the richest countries in our hemisphere.

They have had a total societal breakdown. Economic misery begets desperation, and we are seeing that reflected in the lawlessness that plagues Venezuela. Crime rates are among the highest in the hemisphere, particularly the murder rate. It stems from the top, at the highest levels of leadership. When an incompetent thug is running a country—someone whose government intimidates opponents by using what they call *colectivos*, which are nothing more than street gangs, to ride around on motorcycles, causing all kinds of mayhem, shooting and attacking people—it only contributes to the lawlessness. Caracas, Venezuela, which is a beautiful city, is one of the most dangerous places in the world, comparable with war zones in terms of the murder rate. It is basically every man and woman for himself and herself in Venezuela.

They have atrocious human rights abuses. Since the government's crackdown on demonstrators and political opponents began in February of 2014, dozens of innocents have been killed, thousands have been beaten and targeted for intimidation, and hundreds have been jailed, including Leopoldo Lopez, who has been a political prisoner now for more than 2 years.

We need to demand the release of all 115 political prisoners in Venezuela and respect their rights and those of their families. I heard another horrifying story today. Most political prisoners are men. When their wives go visit them in prison, their wives are strip searched by male guards as an ultimate act of humiliating them. This is the situation in Venezuela.

Last, but not least, we have a *de facto* political coup by the Maduro regime. This country faces a real political and constitutional crisis. Maduro has stacked the country's supreme court with his loyalists, and the supreme court is basically nullifying every law the Congress there passes.

The opposition won the election in the last cycle. By the way, they won because the discontent with the government is so massive that they

couldn't steal the election. It was so big that not even they could steal the election from them, so they sat this new Congress. He has stacked the supreme court, and the supreme court is literally nullifying law after law—doing it not for judicial reasons but for blatantly political ones.

Maduro basically ignores the law. The congressional branch there will pass a law with a veto-proof majority, and he just ignores it. Imagine passing a law out of the House, out of the Senate, and sending it to the President. He can't veto it, and so he just ignores it or refuses to do it.

That is the situation in our own hemisphere. The result is an incredible disaster—of deep interest to us, by the way, because of all the uncertainty it is causing in the region. So what can we do about it? First of all, it is in our national interest. The current situation is happening in our own hemisphere. It threatens to destabilize the region. It creates more pressure on our neighbors and our strategic allies, such as Colombia, where Venezuelans have been fleeing to. This creates migratory pressures on the United States. The lawlessness is fueling organized crime, including drug cartels, which senior government officials in Venezuela have established links to, which impacts our entire region.

For these reasons and more, the United States has an interest in making sure Venezuela does not spiral further out of control.

The first thing we should do is we should be active at the Organization of American States as it considers the situation in Venezuela, and they should ask that voting members recognize the humanitarian and political crisis in Venezuela.

The United States should ask our allies in the region, countries that receive an extensive amount of aid from this country—Haiti, Colombia, the Central American nations, our neighbors up north in Canada, among others—to support this effort. Right now we are about to give hundreds of millions of dollars to countries in Central America, in the Northern Triangle, the Alliance for Prosperity. I think that is a good idea, but we should ask them to support what I hope we will try to do at the OAS. The same with Haiti. We have poured millions of dollars into Haiti's reconstruction. We should use that as leverage to ask them to support something happening at the OAS.

What has happened in Venezuela is nothing short of a coup d'état, a *de facto* coup, and the Organization of American States—if it has any reason to exist anymore, it should be to defend democracy in the region. It is the reason we have an Organization of American States. We will soon find out whether that organization is even worth continuing to exist if it cannot pronounce itself collectively on the outright violation of democracy in a nation that purports to be a democratic republic.

Sanctions. We have to impose sanctions on human rights violators—not sanctions on the people of Venezuela, not sanctions on the government, on human rights violators, many of whom steal money from the Venezuelan people and invest it in the United States.

On the front page of the Miami Herald yesterday was a story that one of the individuals linked to the petroleum industry with the Government in Venezuela, a billionaire—and you become a millionaire with these links by basically stealing the money—is the secret developer behind a major development in Miami, FL, in my hometown, in my home State. Travel to Florida, come down there, and let me know—any of my colleagues—and I will show you where these people live, and I will show you the money they have stolen from the Venezuelan people, and they are living the high life on weekends in Miami. You will see them everywhere. That is why we imposed sanctions on them. There will be an effort here, I hope, in the next day or so to extend those sanctions for another 3 years.

Finally, I hope the United States uses our megaphone to highlight the corruption in the institutions of the Government of Venezuela. That should not be tolerated.

There is also a humanitarian component to this. We should help make sure the Venezuelan Government is not stealing or otherwise standing in the way of the Venezuelan people getting the medicines and food they need.

For far too long, the issues in this hemisphere have been ignored by administrations in both parties, by this administration. We can no longer ignore this. I hope we give Venezuela and the Western Hemisphere the attention and the priority they merit. It is in our national interests to do so.

#### PUERTO RICO

Mr. President, I want to briefly discuss the issue of Puerto Rico and the debt crisis Puerto Rico is facing. The island faces a major deadline coming up. A \$422 million debt payment is due on May 1, which is this Sunday. If this deadline isn't met, it is going to cause some serious problems, and not just for the people of Puerto Rico—who, let's not forget, are American citizens—but also for millions of others throughout the United States. Today I will focus on one example of an American community that would be very negatively impacted, and that is the city of Jacksonville in my home State of Florida.

Jacksonville is a port city, so its residents, businesses, and families depend in large part on trade. A recent article in the Florida Times-Union detailed exactly how close the relationship is between Puerto Rico and the shipping industry in Jacksonville.

In 2009, as much as 75 percent of the goods coming in and out of Puerto Rico flowed through the ports in Jacksonville, which brought about \$1 billion worth of economic impact to the city. In just the past year, between October and March, JAXPORT has seen a 32-

percent increase in cargo tonnage from the island. But this trend is likely to reverse if fiscal conditions in San Juan do not improve soon.

If Puerto Rico misses its payment on May 1 and its debt crisis further escalates, its economy is going to stagnate even more than it already has, and the harm is going to be passed on to any community like Jacksonville that has a significant economic stake in the island's well-being. We have already seen a massive exodus of professionals and others from Puerto Rico because of a lack of economic growth. They will likely continue leaving and heading to Florida and other places on the mainland, which will further cripple the island's economy and reduce the demand for trade.

So what can we do about all this? Some have suggested that Washington can deliver a silver bullet solution to help Puerto Rico out of its debt. This simply isn't true. The reality is that nothing Washington does will be effective until Puerto Rico and its government leaders turn away from decades of failed policies. Their tax rate continues to be too high, government regulations are stifling, and they are spending more than they take in. I don't care if you are an island, government, business, or family—if you spend more than you take in and you do it for long enough, you are going to have a debt problem. That is what is happening here in Washington, and that is what is happening in Puerto Rico. Anytime your economy isn't growing, you are going to have a further problem, and no restructuring is going to solve that until they restructure the way they spend money. Bankruptcy protection isn't going to solve it, either, at least not without serious fiscal reforms from San Juan. Otherwise, if we grant bankruptcy protection, Puerto Rico will simply go bankrupt again not far down the road.

That does not mean Washington should do nothing. All of us need to realize that this is an American crisis. It is taking place in an American territory. It impacts the people of Puerto Rico, who are American citizens. The impact will not be contained on the island; it will spread to cities like Jacksonville and other communities throughout the mainland United States.

So we need to take the irresponsible leadership in Puerto Rico seriously. We need to urge them to get their affairs in order. But we should also look closely at what we can do here in the Senate, which may mean taking up some of the ideas currently being worked on by House leadership. We can also help Puerto Rico by doing the same things necessary to help the rest of the American economy. This means passing pro-growth policies at the Federal level, including tax and regulatory reform. It means we need to stop spending more money than we take in.

In closing, the leadership in San Juan must view the deadline this Sun-

day as a wake-up call. They must show their willingness to get their fiscal house in order. If they don't, our options in Washington will be very limited and won't have support from taxpayers.

But I think this is a wake-up call for us. The notion that somehow this issue with Puerto Rico will figure itself out is not true. The notion that somehow this issue with Puerto Rico is not that important, that we can put it to the side because it is not a State, is not true. Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States. Its people are U.S. citizens. Its people, by the way, on a per capita basis serve in the Armed Forces of the United States at levels as high or higher than any ethnic or geographic group in the country.

The people of Puerto Rico deserve our voice, and they deserve our action. I commend leaders in the House for trying to do something responsible on this. I understand the majority leader has said that once the House acts, the Senate will look at it very carefully. I know we have leaders here doing that as well. I urge that work to continue. We cannot ignore this crisis, and neither can the leaders in San Juan. I hope we can find a solution sooner than later for what Puerto Rico is facing with its fiscal crisis, which this Sunday we are going to be reading about when they miss their debt payment.

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

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

NATO

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, we haven't discussed foreign policy issues on the floor for a while. It is not because all is quiet on the eastern front. It is not. As we know, what is happening in the Middle East and in Europe—the migration issue, Syria, across Northern Africa—is that there are major issues that are ongoing and that affect the United States in a number of ways, not only economically but strategically, and leave us vulnerable to threats to “take down America” in one way or another.

Obviously, we are in the middle of a heated campaign, which hopefully will be resolved in terms of our nominees in a short amount of time. But we do have to recognize the next President, whoever that President might be, is going to be facing some extraordinary challenges relative to foreign policy and national security issues. Making America great again—whatever it is that defines phrase—a new leader will have to deal with a number of very difficult challenges.

This past Monday, President Obama delivered a speech in Germany in which

he discussed the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO. He said that NATO must be prepared to carry out its traditional missions while at the same time meeting the newly emerging threats to the alliance.

That was revealing to me and, frankly, welcoming because we have not heard anything from the President along those lines in my memory, but his recognition and his statement in that regard defines where we are; that is, we need to be prepared to carry out traditional missions through NATO while at the same time meeting the newly emerging threats to the alliance. We see these newly emerging threats to the alliance we are in almost every day.

The President also noted that Europe has been complacent about its own defense and called on our allies to do more. I welcome this renewed attention to NATO. It also gives us the opportunity to respond to those who believe NATO has outlived its usefulness, is too expensive, and should be done away with. Such a view needs a rebuttal.

It is not necessary nor correct to claim that NATO has no problems or its role has not changed or its future is clear. NATO does face challenges and has—in defining its mission, securing its resources, and providing the leadership that the world requires. But to deny that alliance's obvious value is, in my opinion, a major mistake. Such a judgment surely cannot be based on any real understanding of what NATO is or what it has accomplished, much less of what it can become and, candidly, what it must become, given the level of crisis and conflict so present in Europe, the Middle East, and in Africa.

I have been a strong supporter of the alliance and the transatlantic security relationship throughout my public life. NATO's proud past and enduring importance were a constant presence during my service as a U.S. Senator and as U.S. Ambassador to Germany for 4 years following 9/11. Since returning to the Senate, the alliance has remained a keen interest to me.

Contrary to the notion that NATO has served its purpose and is no longer needed or is no longer a viable organization, NATO has survived and thrived for half a century because it has proven itself to be an adaptable, flexible, and effective organization.

I think many of us know the alliance began all the way back in 1949 with the principle motive of protecting Western Europe from the threat of Soviet aggression. But many forget that the founding document, the Washington treaty of 1949, does not mention the Soviet Union. Instead, its founding treaty laid out the core values of the West, which values the alliance was designed to protect.

I want to state that again. What was trying to be accomplished through this alliance of NATO, all the way back to 1949, was a values-based organization that enabled the alliance and gave the



alliance those values which the alliance was designed to protect. It is exactly because the alliance was and remains values-based that it has been able to adapt to a changing strategic environment with newly defined missions and membership. The vital and permanent need to protect our shared values survived the collapse of the Soviet Union and the threat it represented and has enabled the alliance to define and confront the major threats and modern threats that we face today.

As NATO adapted to the post-Soviet world, the clearest proof of its foundation as a community of values was the process of enlargement. At the beginning of that process, few in the administration or Congress saw NATO enlargement as having very much to do with actually enhancing the military capabilities of the alliance. When the first countries were proposed for membership via the Partnership for Peace program, it was not only because of the military contributions those newly democratic nations could bring; rather, the most explicit motivation for extending the prospect of membership to the countries of what we then called Eastern Europe was to persuade them to make the political and economic changes that would make them worthy and complimentary allies. We were trying to cement in the democratic revolutions that occurred in these former Soviet-controlled states and make those changes permanent.

We were extending NATO's democratic values—along with its security umbrella—and we required prospective members to accept them and institutionalize those democratic values. That process continues today. NATO was and remains a political instrument of enormous persuasive power with historic consequences.

But are shared values enough to maintain the vitality and the relevance of a military alliance? For those new member countries themselves, the appeal of alliance membership was the vast military capabilities of the club they were about to join. They sought actual enhanced security in a still dangerous world, not just a political partnership of values.

Now, in the wake of renewed Russian aggression, most especially in Ukraine and its illegal annexation of Crimea, the objective military capabilities of the alliance have become even more relevant. This renewed threat resulted in NATO, in effect, hitting the pause button on redefining NATO's post-Soviet missions. For many alliance members on Russia's periphery, it was "NATO—Back to the Future."

Russian behavior has once again provoked profound anxiety among our allies on Russia's periphery, especially the Baltic states, Poland, and Romania. In response, NATO has taken on new missions intended to reassure our allies, discourage Putin's aggressive designs, and renew NATO's urgent relevance. All of this has a heritage for

NATO's founding in the Soviet era, but it also is a new and, in many ways, more complicated response. While Russia is not the enemy it once was, it certainly is no friend to the NATO nations. It is perhaps a necessary partner in some places, but it is a dangerous obstacle in others.

In restating and reinforcing NATO's role in opposing Russian aggression, NATO needs to be creative and firm, active and present. It cannot be done on the cheap. This renewed mission emphasizes again the persistent issue of lagging resources. It has long been a problem that the great majority of NATO membership countries do not meet the alliance standard of the 2 percent of their GDP, gross domestic product, for defense.

Although it is true that robust defense of the transatlantic region does require a greater commitment of resources than most European countries have been willing to accept in the past, it is not true that U.S. taxpayers have simply been required to make up the difference.

The Department of Defense says that the direct U.S. contribution to NATO is about \$500 million a year, the largest share of NATO's budget, clearly, but not out of line with our comparative gross domestic product—compared to other European nations. It is true that NATO relies on the national assets of its members for operations, and in that regard, our portion is the largest. But our portion reflects our spending for the entire military, which has global responsibilities. In other words, if there were no NATO, those military expenditures presumably would be the same, if not larger, since our allies are contributors to our collective security as well.

In any case, the growing anxiety about Russian behavior seems to be generating some real progress on this resources front. Secretary General Stoltenberg said this week that five NATO members now meet the 2-percent requirement, while it was only two countries just a few years ago. Further, defense spending has increased in real terms in 16 of the 28 countries since 2014. Clearly, it is a wake-up call for NATO. What has happened on their borders, the periphery of Russia, has awakened NATO to the belief that it needs to strengthen our military, strengthen NATO's resources, and for those countries to live up to their obligations in providing the necessary resources.

Nevertheless, and having said this, we cannot be relaxed about meeting the resources gap. Despite the recent uptick, there has been a long and dramatic decline in European defense budgets for two decades before 2014, not to mention a significant absence of constituent support for defense expenditures in most NATO countries.

It is a battle of these nations who are dealing with slow or no growth—GDP stagnant—to come to the decision to meet the 2 percent obligation that they

have under the NATO treaty. They have other issues at home, migration simply being one of them, and a number of other domestic issues that have restrained them. But now the threat has become more real, and now the realization of how to address the threat has become more vital and necessary.

In his June 2011 farewell speech on NATO's future, Defense Secretary Bob Gates famously said that our European allies were and had been "apparently unwilling to devote the necessary resources or make the necessary changes to be serious and capable partners in their own defense." He declared that NATO faced "the real possibility of a dim, if not dismal, future."

But the response to this danger, now especially in the wake of Russian invasion and annexation of a neighbor—this is not the time to call for NATO's abandonment, but to press ahead in validating NATO's relevance, then finding the necessary resources. I believe that process is under way, as I have just described.

Given the new threats to NATO's eastern border states, our allies are finding greater support for making larger commitments to their own security. Another pressing reason to solve the resources problem is the host of new requirements this modern alliance needs to face.

Since the period of enlargement and the euphoria of democratic revolutions, NATO has made repeated attempts to define its new missions. The most recent strategic concept of January 2010 makes the alliance's newly global and political roles more explicit. It has identified numerous new transnational threats that a modern military and political alliance must confront. These include nuclear proliferation, cyber threats, terrorism, political instabilities, and missile capabilities.

No one can argue that these global threats are not the core of modern security challenges. Similarly, no one can dispute that the most effective and powerful alliance in world history should and must organize itself to confront them. And most certainly, no responsible leader should look at these threats and conclude an alliance built to confront them should be abandoned. Let me restate that. No responsible leader, now or in the future, should look at these threats and conclude that an alliance built to confront these problems and challenges should be abolished. Modern NATO activities extend well beyond Europe. These include combating piracy off the Horn of Africa, operational and training support for the African Union in Ethiopia, air policing of Europe's borders against Russian incursions, growing cyber defense alliance capabilities, expanded special operations capabilities and activities, development of a NATO response force for rapid reaction operations on land and sea, expanded joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations, and expanded

joint exercises to improve the alliance and member-state readiness. That is a big challenge, but that challenge is one that needs to be addressed.

In terms of more traditional warfighting, NATO has taken on missions in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Libya, and continued challenges will need to be addressed. It is not yet clear to me whether ISAF, the Afghanistan mission, will go down as a success or not, but it is clearly in the balance and needs to be carefully monitored.

It is clear that the Libya operation revealed numerous alliance shortcomings and was not a model of alliance coherence and cohesion. Rather, Libya was an example of failure at the political level to define the new NATO. The correct response to both, new challenges and admitted failure, is better leadership, better vision, and creative new thinking, along with the resources to carry out those goals.

I have suggested that these could be best applied in response to the Syria disaster, especially with the humanitarian catastrophe and the migrant crisis. I proposed that NATO could have helped member-state Turkey get control of its Syrian border to stop the flow of jihadists into and out of Syria.

It is clear to me that the uncontrolled flood of refugees from Syria could best be handled by creating safe areas in and near Syria so that the Syrian people can remain there under safe and humane conditions. Building on NATO's Bosnia experience, the Alliance could be critical to providing the security for such areas on the ground and in the air. This would not be fighting the war in Syria but protecting the populations of U.N. designated areas. Difficult? You bet, but it has been done before, and NATO is the only possible organization that is in a position to do it.

Although I emphatically believe that NATO continues to have enormous value to U.S. interests and global stability, I do concede that it needs a new vision of its role. That is clearly a work in progress and will have some false starts and failures along the way. How it turns out will not only be a function of resources, as I have discussed, but also an issue of leadership. On that score, I have some concerns. Frankly, I am worried.

The Obama administration seems to be guiding us toward a dangerous deference to others to address emerging global security challenges that are and will be threats to our own national security. The most alarming example is our acquiescence to Russia's vigorous engagement in Syria. Russia basically hijacked our paltry efforts to bring the Syrian disaster under control, inserted its military forces to change the dynamic on the ground, and guided the political process toward their ends. It has all been a sad display of American incompetence and impotence. The United States and its allies are paying the price for this failure of engagement.

After reading President Obama's recent and lengthy interview on foreign policy that was published in the Atlantic Monthly, I can tell he has not drawn the correct conclusions from the foreign policy failures in recent years in Libya, Syria, Ukraine, Russia, and elsewhere. For me, we have abdicated America's traditional leadership role. For the alliance, I fear this could be the beginning phase of our disengagement from Europe, which, if it continues, will be at our peril. Without firm U.S. leadership of NATO, we will begin to see the commitment of our allies weaken. They simply do not have the muscle or the financial capability to support a NATO coalition without U.S. leadership. Without the right kind of leadership, the importance of the transatlantic security relationship and the continued robust presence of U.S. forces in Europe will begin to lose advocates, as perhaps has already occurred among those who do not support our efforts.

If Americans come to see NATO's value in financial terms—bang for the buck—we will lose sight of its real value in the proper terms of national security, American reliability, and the eternal appeal of our community of values—in other words, the values beyond price that must be preserved if we are to prevail against our adversaries.

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

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

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. PERDUE. 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.

#### FUNDING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about why all of us are here. The primary role of Congress is to responsibly fund the Federal Government. To do that, we must set clear national priorities that we can financially support. All too often, the process of setting, and then sticking to these national priorities has become a purely political exercise, not a function of governing. It is the No. 1 complaint I hear when I travel back to my home State of Georgia.

Coming from the business world, I clearly see two interlocking crises we face as a country. First, we have a global security crisis. The world may be more dangerous right now than at

any point in my lifetime. Interlocked with that is our national debt crisis that threatens the ability we have to defend our country today.

As we begin the appropriations process, let's take an honest look at what we are appropriating for. One of our top national priorities is to provide for the national defense. It is one of only 6 reasons 13 Colonies got together in the first place; that is, to provide for the national defense. However, under Presidents Carter, Clinton, and Obama, we saw three different periods of disinvestment in our military. Our 30-year average of defense spending has been 4.2 percent of GDP. Following the Carter administration, the Reagan administration recapped the military. Then, we had another decline. You see the buildup in the surge in Afghanistan and Iraq, behind two wars.

We have been at war for 15 years. I believe in many cases we have burnt out our equipment, and in cases we are beginning to do that with our personnel, with longer tours and more difficult assignments in this hybrid war we are facing today.

Then you see under this administration a further decline, now to 3.1 percent of GDP. This is the lowest point since the Vietnam War, and the irony of that is that we are still spending \$600 billion of \$4 trillion total spending of the Federal Government on our military. The irony is the 30-year average of 4.2 percent, which is a hundred basis points below what we're currently spending—that's almost \$200 billion—in a \$19 trillion economy.

The question is how do we determine the priorities to keep a strong military? To make sure we can fulfill one of six reasons we came together as a country.

We are about to have the smallest Army since World War II, the smallest Navy since World War I, and the smallest and oldest Air Force ever. How can this be? The world is more dangerous right now than at any time in my lifetime.

We see increased aggression from traditional rivals, Russia and China. We also see the rise of ISIS, partly because of our own intransigence. They have to be stopped now, or we are going to have to deal with them later here. Boko Haram, Al Qaeda, ISIS—all of these threats are beginning to be interconnected and pose threats not just in the Middle East, but around the world.

Finally, we have nuclear threats from rogue regimes, like North Korea and Iran, and emerging, game-changing technologies, such as cyber threats, which nations like Russia are using for hybrid warfare right now in Eastern Europe. There is an emerging arms race in space. This is why our women and men in uniform need to have the tools and resources to complete their missions around the world.

This fiscal crisis is jeopardizing our ability to actually fund the missions being asked of our military today. Let me give two examples. JSTARS is a