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

Mr. SCHUMER. Put the bill on the floor, let rank-and-file Republicans vote their conscience, and this bill can pass.

In the New York Times today, it was reported that senior aides on the Republican side are considering just such a strategy to give them a soft landing on this tax debate—agree to the President's offer on the tax, the thinking goes, and live to fight another day on spending cuts.

We agree that a tax hike on middle-class Americans should be taken off the table. Once Republicans agree to higher rates on the wealthy, an agreement on the other sticking points of a grand bargain can quickly fall into place. So let's stop with the offers and the counteroffers that are leaked only to manufacture headlines in the press. Let's get serious and cross the biggest item of our to-do list off and get the Senate tax cut bill passed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the next 45 minutes be devoted to a colloquy between myself and my colleagues on this side of the aisle.

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

STEM JOBS ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this last week the House of Representatives passed a bipartisan piece of legislation called the STEM Jobs Act. For those who are unfamiliar with the term STEM, it stands for science, technology, engineering, and math—the hard sciences programs that we have too few graduates from in our colleges and universities. This bill passed in the House of Representatives with 245 votes and was originally sponsored by my friend and colleague LAMAR SMITH of Texas. It is very similar to a piece of legislation I myself introduced earlier this year.

The goal of this legislation is one that I think enjoys broad bipartisan support, and that is to help the United States retain more of the highly skilled immigrants who come to study at our colleges and universities. In particular, this bill would make eligible for a green card those who graduate from the STEM fields who get a master's degree or a Ph.D. We would not add to the net number of green cards that would be eligible. There are 55,000 diversity lottery visa green cards that would be substituted for by these STEM green cards.

We all know America's immigration system is broken. Unfortunately, it causes self-inflicted wounds in many respects, but particularly by driving away highly skilled foreign workers who want to start businesses and create jobs right here in America. This is not about hiring foreign workers to perform jobs where we have qualified Americans waiting in line for these jobs. The fact of the matter is, we do not produce enough American-born workers to fill the job vacancies in these fields.

Many of these potential job creators and entrepreneurs attend our colleges and universities. You might even say that the American taxpayer helps subsidize their education because many of them received world-class training at our public and private colleges and universities and then reluctantly return home to pursue their careers because they cannot get a visa or cannot get a green card here in America. We are cultivating human capital and then sending those individuals back home.

This is an area where there is broad support. My colleague Senator MORAN recently wrote a ''Dear Colleague'' letter which points out that roughly—he cites in the letter that more than three-quarters of voters support a STEM-type visa. He quotes in this letter, dated July 20, 2012, 87 percent of Democrats polled, 72 percent of Republicans polled, and 65 percent of Independents support the creation of a STEM visa. Of course if you think about it, it is common sense. Why in the world would we want to subsidize the education of these students from other countries, train them in these highly specialized and highly desirable fields, and then simply send them home?

I have introduced legislation over the past years that would increase the number of H1B visas, which are not green cards. They are actually temporary visas that would allow more of these foreign national students, trained in these STEM fields, to stay here in the United States and help create jobs here in the United States. This bill actually goes a step further. What it does is it provides them a green card, which is the first step toward a path to citizenship.

If you believe our current policy is a self-inflicted wound on our economy, you are exactly right. We are educating brilliant students and then compelling them to go to work in Shanghai or Singapore rather than San Antonio or the Silicon Valley. Meanwhile, we are handing out tens of thousands of diversity visas to immigrants chosen by random lottery, without regard to any qualifications they may have when it comes to job creation and entrepreneurship. It makes absolutely no sense.

I believe we need an immigration policy that serves our national interests. If there is one thing that we need more than anything else now, we need job creators and entrepreneurs in the United States. We know in the global economy it is people with special skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics who are the ones who are going to help us create jobs and grow the economy—not just for these individuals but for the people who are hired by the startup businesses they will create.

The STEM Jobs Act would mitigate the problem with the diversity lottery visa, which again does not distinguish between immigrants based upon the qualifications they have or their ability to create jobs or be entrepreneurs. It would mitigate this problem by making our immigration system more economically sensible. It would establish new visa categories for 55,000 STEM graduates of American research institutions and would eliminate the random diversity lottery visa to offset these new green cards.

Our competitors abroad are observing this brain drain that America is experiencing and they are taking advantage of it. In a global economy they are more than happy to take the best and the brightest foreign students who come and train in the United States and to encourage them to come to their countries and create jobs and economic growth there. This relatively minor change to our immigration system could deliver a major boost to U.S. economic growth. I realize many of our colleagues have different priorities when it comes to fixing our broken immigration system, but the reforms contained in the STEM Jobs Act enjoy bipartisan support.

I urge my colleagues, let's show the world we can agree on this commonsense, bipartisan immigration reform. Let's do something for our economy and let's take this first step in solving our broken immigration system.

Before I turn the floor over to my colleague from Kentucky, who I know has some comments on this topic, let me address two issues quickly. I can anticipate hearing from some of our colleagues that this does not solve all of what is broken in our immigration system, and I concede that is correct. But what we need more than anything is to develop some confidence-building measures for the American people to demonstrate that we can come together, Republicans and Democrats alike, and do what needs to be done which almost everybody agrees is common sense and then we can follow on with other solutions on a targeted basis for our broken immigration system.

I once believed, back in 2005, when Senator JON KYL from Arizona and I introduced something we called the Comprehensive Border Security and Immigration Reform Act of 2005, we should address this issue comprehensively. We tried in 2007. That bill failed on the Senate floor when Senator REID pulled the bill from the floor.

I believe now, given the temper of the times and given the skepticism with which the American people view us here in Congress, the only way we are going to crack this nut is to start small in targeted reforms such as the STEM Jobs Act. I believe this is the beginning and not the end of fixing what is broken about our immigration reform system. But if we cannot do this—if we cannot do this—I have next to no confidence we can do the rest that needs to be done as well.

A final point. I believe we should be family-friendly when it comes to our immigration system. This STEM Jobs Act takes a very important step in making sure families can be unified. Under the current law, someone who has a green card is not entitled to bring their immediate family into the United States to live with them while they are waiting for their eligibility for a green card. The STEM Jobs Act, though, addresses that by recreating the V visa, which would help us retain more of the potential job creators but it would also help unify the immediate families of U.S. permanent residents. Right now, the spouses and children of U.S. permanent residents have to wait outside, to wait in line for their green card, which causes families to be separated—something that none of us believes is an optimal situation. The STEM Jobs Act would let them wait inside the United States, unified with their loved ones until they are off the waiting list, which takes several years, and thus would promote family unification. That is yet another reason why this bill deserves our support.

I yield to my distinguished colleague from Kentucky, who I know supports this approach, for any comments he would care to make.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. I compliment the Senator from Texas for being a leader in immigration reform. There are many of us in the Republican Party who wish to have immigration reform. I do wish it be noted for the RECORD today that we can take a small step forward toward immigration reform today. This bill that would allow Ph.D.s, master's, successful graduates to come into this country with a green card could be passed today. This bill is at the desk and we will ask consent from the majority party today to pass this bill.

I will also note the President and the Members of the majority party will object. The President has said he will not pass this unless he can get everything he wants. When I go home or when I talk to folks with the media, they say: Why can't you guys get along? Why can't you do anything in Washington? Why is this system so horribly broken?

This is precisely why. We agree on this bill. I think the other side will stand and say they like the concept, but they do not want to do it yet. They want to wait until we agree on everything. Guess what. We are never going to agree on everything so we are never going to get immigration reform if we cannot start agreeing to some things and moving the ball forward.

This is the same on tax reform. This is the same on entitlement reform. We lurch from deadline to deadline. There will be a deadline, the so-called fiscal cliff coming up, and the President has announced that we do not have enough time to do entitlement reform. We don't have enough time to do tax reform. We don't have enough time to do immigration reform.

When are we going to start? When is there going to be a committee hearing designated toward entitlement reform? I have been here 2 years. There is no such committee. When will there be hearings on immigration reform? There will not be time. Deadlines will pass.

But not break things up into smaller pieces? Why have to have some enormous fiscal cliff or whatever that everybody has to agree to a thousand moving parts? We are of different persuasions, of different parties, of different beliefs. We are never going to agree on a thousand things. Why don't we start passing some things we can agree to? This is a small step forward. We can pass this bill today.

Does the Senator have an explanation that can help me understand why we have to have empty partisanship, why we cannot move forward to pass some small things for immigration reform?

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would say in response to the Senator from Kentucky that I have been in the Senate for some time now. I have been engaged in the immigration debates for a long time. I think one of the biggest challenges is we have tried to deal with this in a comprehensive way that has so many moving parts it is almost impossible to find a majority in the Senate, much less the House, in order to support all the various components of it. That is one of the things I like about this bill. It is narrow, it deals with a consensus reform—commonsense reform—and it avoids a lot of the controversy associated with other parts of the immigration subject. I do believe we owe it to the American people not to stop here, but it is a good place to start. Once we pass this legislation and people see that we have acted responsibly and in America's best interests, then we can regain their confidence that we can deal with other broken parts of the immigration system.

Mr. PAUL. I think another important point to make about this is we truly have different philosophical differences with people on the other side. But what people at home ask me is when you agree with the other side, when the other side says we want this part of immigration reform, why can't we do it? That to me is empty partisanship. Are we afraid to give Republicans credit for introducing immigration reform in the Republican-controlled House? Are we afraid it might be perceived as a Republican idea? That to me is empty partisanship. I routinely vote with the other side on some issues that some on this side object to because I believe in the issue. This is an issue where we all should be able to agree on immigration reform. Yet the other side will object to moving the ball forward on immigration reform. That I don't understand and that I see as empty partisanship, and that is the dysfunction of this body when we agree on something we still cannot pass it.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, will my colleague yield for a question?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator yield?

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 6429

Mr. CORNYN. I ask the Senator to withhold for a moment because I do have a unanimous consent request. I understand the Senator likely will have an objection to that. We have other Senators who are going to speak. Given the limitation on our time, what I wish to do, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 559, H.R. 6429, that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be made and laid on the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SCHUMER. Reserving the right to object, and I will object and explain my objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. OK.

Mr. SCHUMER. Very simply, I heard my colleague from Kentucky say if we agree on something, let's pass it. We do agree on increasing STEM visas. I am offering a proposal that does that and does it in a more fulsome way than the proposal of my friend from Texas. But what we do not do is take away other visas or add in other extraneous positions.

I would say the logic of my friend from Kentucky is impeccable, but because of constraints on the other side they could not pass a plain bill that just added STEM visas. They had to take away other visas that my colleague from Texas does not like—but many people do. They had to add in a few other provisions.

I would simply say that if my colleague from Kentucky says we should join together on something we agree with, I will bet he agrees with our proposal as well. And I will bet he agrees with it even more than the other proposal because we add two things that are not in the bill of the Senator from Texas. No. 1, we allow unused STEM visas to be used to reduce the backlog of employment green cards. There are 200,000 people waiting. It may well be that the 55,000 visas in the bill of the Senator from Texas are not going to be used up. That is what experts say. Second, we allow STEM green cards to be used by entrepreneurs, a bill that has been introduced by I believe Senator COONS, Senator MORAN—bipartisan—Senator WARNER as well.

I am going to object to this bill, not because it increases STEM visas and not for some larger purpose—although I do understand that if we pick off all the pieces each of us wants, we are not going to get comprehensive reform, and that is why the Hispanic Caucus opposes the bill of the Senator from Texas but supports our bill. I understand that. But if we just want to do STEM and do it in the best way possible without other provisions, because that is what we agree on, I would urge my friend from Kentucky, and those

Members on the other side, to support our bill.

So I object to the Cornyn bill, and I will be offering a bill on the same subject that is purer, cleaner, and more full on STEM visas than the proposal that was made by my good friend from Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I understand that the Senator from New York has objected, and of course here we go again making the perfect the enemy of the good and not moving forward on commonsense immigration reform in an area where there is a consensus.

There are several problems with the Senator's proposal. One is that it has not passed the House and this one has. It also has a 2-year sunset provision, as I understand, and there is no family unification provision. Also, it doesn't eliminate the diversity lottery visa which allows people to get green cards without regard to the qualifications that they bring to this country to create jobs and start new businesses.

I know we have the distinguished Senator from North Dakota here.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, if I might be recognized to offer my proposal? I have let my friend from Texas respond, but I have the—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator from Texas yield?

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we have four Senators who are prepared to speak, and I just want to make sure we have adequate time to speak. I ask that any time that is used by the distinguished Senator from New York not be added to or subtracted from our time. We have retained a total of 45 minutes.

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

Mr. CORNYN. Under those circumstances, I agree to yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3553

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 3553, the BRAINS Act, and the Senate proceed to its consideration; that the bill be read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

I will be brief because I don't want to take away from my colleagues' time. What this bill does is provide more STEM visas than the previous bill. It provides an entrepreneurship visa which the other bill does not. It does not take away existing visas, which the Senator from Texas doesn't like, but many other people find popular, good, and necessary. The unemployment rate for those on the diversity visas coming in is much lower than that of the national average.

If we want to pass a pure STEM bill without extraneous provisions added by people who are anti-immigration because they don't want to see any net increase in immigration, I urge the support of our bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, the problem with the Senator's proposal is that this piece of legislation he has referred to has not passed out of committee in the Senate. It has not passed the House. This bill, the STEM Act, has passed the House. Theirs has a 2-year sunset provision; this is permanent legislation. Also, it has no family unification provision that will allow the immediate family members of the green card holder to wait the time when they will become eligible for a green card in the United States as opposed to back in their country of origin, and it does nothing to promote merit-based immigration reform. We ought to be looking at immigration reform from the standpoint of not just how it can help the immigrant but how it can help America create jobs and entrepreneurship.

For those reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, at this time I yield to the distinguished Senator from North Dakota and then, following that, the distinguished Senator from Iowa for any comments he cares to make.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I thank the esteemed Senator from Texas and the Senator from Kentucky. I see the Senator from Iowa has joined us as well.

I rise to speak in support of the STEM Act but also to respond to the Senator from New York. I see the Senator has left, but I also want to respond to some of the points in support of the Senator from Texas.

The STEM Act passed the House; it was H. Res. 6429, sponsored by Congressman LAMAR SMITH. I argue that it accomplishes both of the things we are talking about today. It provides us with the opportunity to have a greater pool of employees with training in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, which is what we need in this country. It also accomplishes the diversity that was referred to by the Senator from New York.

So what the Senators from Texas, Kentucky, Iowa, and myself are proposing is to accomplish both goals. We are saying we can have the students who have graduated with either a doctorate degree or a master's degree in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, which is what we very much need to get our economy growing. A growing economy creates more employment. It also creates the revenue without raising taxes that we need to address our deficit and debt. So this legislation accomplishes both those goals and still provides an increase in diversity which is what the Senator from New York was talking about.

The additional point is the point that the Senator from Texas very clearly made. This legislation passed the House. The last time I checked, legislation has to pass the Senate and the House. That is a pretty important distinction.

Referring back to the comments of the Senator from Kentucky, who said if we cannot do it all at once because of disagreements, let's start getting done what we can get done, here is a bill that provides us with people in the science and technology fields who can help our economy grow. These are people we need very much. It will increase diversity, just as the Senator from New York said, and it has passed the House. Common sense says let's go. Let's pass the bill.

So we want to join with the Senator from New York, the Senator from Delaware, and the other sponsors to whom he referred, but let's join on something we can actually get done, meaning a bill that passes the House as well as the Senate. I think that logic is compelling.

I look at my own State of North Dakota. We are doing amazing things in energy. As a matter of fact, we are hot on the trail of the State of Texas when it comes to oil development. I am telling you, we are after you.

So what is that going to take? It is going to take continued development of the technologies that not only helps us produce more energy, but helps us do it with good environmental stewardship. What we are talking about is when we have the engineers, scientists, technicians, and mathematicians who graduate from our great universities with doctorate and master's degrees, they can stay and help us here rather than help someone else in some other country that would then get ahead of the United States. This will help us solve the fundamental challenges we face today, which is getting this economy growing so we get people back to work and creating the revenue the right way with economic growth to help us address our deficit and debt.

With that, I yield the floor to the esteemed Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. How much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Twenty minutes.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I yield to the distinguished Senator from Iowa for any comments he cares to make.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today, I'm proud to speak in support of the STEM Jobs Act of 2012, a bill passed by the House of Representatives last week. This bill would make available up to 55,000 green cards each year for foreign students who have received doctorates or master's degrees in science, technology, engineering, or math, also known as STEM, from a U.S. university. The bill would not increase overall immigration levels, but rather, would move our immigration