unclear and use that as an excuse to do whatever they want?

If that is not a red flag for those of us who have to review a Presidential nominee, I don't know what is.

Now, again, someone might say everybody in politics has to make judgments about how a given law is to be interpreted. Those who disagree with those judgments call it pushing the envelope. Mr. Perez, however, does not merely push the envelope. All too often he circumvents or ignores a law with which he disagrees.

Here are a few examples: As a member of the Montgomery County Council, Mr. Perez pushed through a county policy that encouraged the circumvention of Federal immigration law. Later, as head of the Federal Government's top voting rights watchdog, he refused to protect the right to vote for Americans of all races, in violation of the very law he was charged to enforce.

In the same post at the Department of Justice, Perez directed the Federal Government to sue, against the advice of career attorneys in his own office. In another case involving a Florida woman who was lawfully exercising her First Amendment right to protest in front of an abortion clinic, the Federal judge who threw out Mr. Perez's lawsuit said he was ''at a loss as to why the government chose to prosecute this particular case'' in the first place.

This is what pushing the envelope means in the case of Mr. Perez—a flippant and dismissive attitude about the boundaries everyone else has to follow for the sake of the liberal causes in which he believes. In short, it means a lack of respect for the rule of law and a lack of respect for the need of those in positions of power to follow it.

Just as troubling, however, is the fact that Mr. Perez has been called to account for his failures to follow the law, and he has been less than forthright about his actions when called to account. When he testified that politics played no role in his office's decision not to pursue charges against members of a far-left group who may have tried to prevent others from voting, for instance, the Department's own watchdog said ''Perez's testimony did not reflect the entire story.'' And a Federal judge said the evidence before him ''appear[ed] to contradict . . . Perez's testimony.''

Perez has also made misleading statements about this case under oath—under oath—to Congress and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

Mr. Perez's involvement in an alleged quid pro quo deal with the city of St. Paul, MN, also fits the pattern. Here was a case where Perez was allegedly so concerned about a potential Supreme Court challenge to the legality of a theory he championed in housing discrimination suits known as ''disparate impact,'' he quietly worked out a deal with St. Paul officials whereby they would withdraw their appeal to the Supreme Court of a disparate impact case if he arranged for the Federal Government to throw out two whistleblower complaints against St. Paul that could have recovered millions of dollars for the taxpayers that had been falsely obtained. The two whistleblowers' complaints were dropped, and the Supreme Court never heard the disparate impact case.

Perez told investigators he hadn't even heard of the disparate impact case until the Court initially decided to hear it. But that has been contradicted by HUD Deputy Assistant Secretary Sara Pratt, who told investigators she and Mr. Perez discussed the case well before that.

Taken together, all of this paints the picture, for me at least, not of a passionate liberal who sees himself as patiently operating within the system and through the democratic process to advance a particular set of strongly held beliefs but a crusading ideologue whose conviction about his own rightness on the issues leads him to believe the law does not apply to him. Unbound by the rules that apply to everyone else, Perez seems to view himself as free to employ whatever means—whatever means—at his disposal, legal or otherwise, to achieve his ideological goals.

To say this is problematic would be an understatement. As Secretary of Labor, Perez could be handling numerous contentious issues and implementing many politically sensitive laws, including laws enforcing the disclosure of political activity by labor unions. Perez's devotion to the cause of involuntary universal voter registration is also deeply concerning to me personally, and I would imagine many of my colleagues in the Senate also believe in the absolute centrality of maintaining the integrity of the vote.

Americans of all political persuasions have the right to expect the head of such a sensitive department, whether appointed by a Republican or Democrat, will implement and follow the law in a fair and reasonable way. I do not believe they could expect as much from Mr. Perez.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each and with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Ms. WARREN. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Ms. WARREN pertaining to the introduction of S. 897 are located in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

JOINT MEETING OF THE TWO HOUSES—ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF SOUTH KOREA, HER EXCELLENCY PARK GEUN-HYE

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will stand in recess until 11:30 a.m. for the purpose of attending a joint meeting with the House of Representatives to hear the President of South Korea, Her Excellency Park Geun-hye.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 9:59 a.m., recessed until 11:31 a.m. and the Senate, preceded by its Secretary, Nancy Erickson, Drew Willison, Deputy Sergeant at Arms, and the Vice President of the United States, proceeded to the Hall of the House of Representatives to hear an address delivered by Her Excellency Park Geun-hye, President of South Korea.

(The address delivered by the President of South Korea is printed in today's RECORD of the House of Representatives.)

At 11:31 a.m., the Senate, having returned to its Chamber, reassembled and was called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. HEITKAMP).

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2013

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 601, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 601) to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Boxer/Vitter amendment No. 799, in the nature of a substitute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2 p.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, what is the order?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in a period of debate prior to votes in relationship to S. 601.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, how much time is going to be controlled by Senator COBURN, the opposition to his amendments, and Senator WHITEHOUSE?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma controls 40 minutes. The majority controls 75 minutes.

Mrs. BOXER. How much time is there as far as Senator WHITEHOUSE is concerned?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is no specific time agreement for Senator WHITEHOUSE.

Mrs. BOXER. Thank you very much. I wanted to get the order squared away so I could share the information with colleagues before Senator COBURN is heard on his amendments.

Madam President, we are on the Water Resources Development Act—it is a great day for the Senate—because we have received a D-plus rating on our infrastructure. This is the greatest Nation in the world. If we cannot move people or products, if our ports need to be deepened—and because they are not deepened, we cannot move commerce in and out—we have problems.

As we move into periods of extreme weather—there is some debate as to why, and I will not get into that because it is almost like a religious debate, so I will not go there. The fact is we have extreme weather, and now that we have some rules in place, this bill will make it a lot easier for people in the State of the Presiding Officer to deal with the corps after an extreme weather event. For the first time they will not have to come back for new authorizations. They can do some moves right then and there to improve the situation, and that is a reform I think is very necessary.

I certainly thank Senator VITTER, my ranking member, and every member of the Environment and Public Works Committee. I want to thank all the organizations that have come to support this legislation. We have them listed, and I am just going to read a few of those.

Madam President, may I speak for approximately 5 more minutes.

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

Mrs. BOXER. We have the American Association of Port Authorities, the American Concrete Pressure Pipe Association, the American Council of Engineering Companies, the American Farm Bureau Federation, the American Foundry Society, the American Public Works Association, the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, American Society of Civil Engineers, American Soybean Association, Associated General Contractors of America, Association of Equipment Manufacturers, Clean Water Construction Coalition, Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute, Construction Management Association of America, International Liquid Terminals Association, International Propeller Club of the United States, and the International Union of Operating Engineers.

I will not read all of these as there are too many.

We received a letter today from the chamber of commerce, which I will talk about in a few minutes.

We also have listed the Laborers International Union of North America, surveyors, real estate people, Grain and Feed Association, the Retail Federation, the National Waterways Conference, National Stone Sand & Gravel Association, Portland Cement Association, the American Institute of Architects, the Fertilizer Institute, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, the Waterways Council.

This is just a sample. America is behind this bill. This is important. Everything we do here is important, and this is as important. It will, in fact, support over half a million jobs—not doing things we don't need but doing things we need and must do.

We have some very important letters. One letter is from the American Association of Port Authorities and the American Road and Transportation Builders Association. They talk about how it is important that this legislative progress should not be slowed or jeopardized by amendments that are not germane to the bill.

This is their language: If enacted, this long overdue legislation will ensure critical investments are being made.

They say nice things about Senator VITTER and me, which I will not read because it is too self-serving, but I am very proud to have it in writing. I will put it on my wall when I get back to the office.

There is another letter from the Transportation Construction Coalition, and it basically says: This bill will remove barriers to realizing the benefits of water resources projects. It needs to be bipartisan and bicameral. Let's swiftly pass this.

That is a very important message for us.

We have the Associated General Contractors of America, and they say: Please don't slow or jeopardize this bill.

We have a letter coming from the chamber of commerce, and it is going to say the same thing.

I know Senator COBURN feels very strongly about his amendments, and we have agreed to take them up and vote on them. Every Senator has the right to do anything they want. I just want to lay it out here for the American people: This is a public works bill dealing with water infrastructure. It is not a bill about guns, it is not a bill about a woman's right to choose, it is not a bill about gay rights or gay marriage, it is not a bill about those very hot button issues we know divide the American people.

I will have more to say after Senator COBURN talks about his amendment. I am just going to make a plea to my colleagues: We are trying so hard to accommodate everybody but, speaking for myself, I hope we can avert and avoid controversy on this bill. We have so much controversy every minute of every day. There have been terrible arguments on this floor about issues as to whether we should extend the debt ceiling, whether to default, do background checks. These issues are tough. I am not saying they should be avoided. We have to confront them. Every once in a while I hope we can take a pause from this controversy and do something for this country and come together without the rancor, without the upset, and without the divisiveness of some of these issues.

We will proceed to deal with these issues that Senator COBURN has brought forth on guns. After we dispose of these, I hope we will not have this kind of divisiveness on a bill that is so needed.

I thank the Presiding Officer very much.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, first of all, I thank my colleagues for the opportunity to have regular order in the Senate. The ranking member of the committee would like to have 2 minutes before I start.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, through the Chair, I thank the Senator from Oklahoma. I briefly want to say two things: No. 1, I too am very supportive of this bill, which I do think is a strong bipartisan and a reform-oriented effort. I think the best proof of that is that it came out of our EPW committee 18 to 0. We have a committee that reflects the wide spectrum of opinion of the entire Senate. The waterway infrastructure bill is important, so I am very supportive of it.

No. 2, I am also very glad we have this open amendment process. I think it reflects a lot of work and goodwill on a lot of folks' part, including the Chair and myself. I welcome this debate and vote. We want to take up and vote on amendments.

With that show of good faith, I hope Members can focus on germane—or at least relevant—amendments, and that is what we will be turning to in our next set of amendments.

I hope this open process and show of good faith engenders that response. I look forward to all of these amendments and debates and votes.

With that, I thank the Senator from Oklahoma for the time.

AMENDMENT NO. 805 TO AMENDMENT NO. 799

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The chairman—Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. The only thing I am chairman of, Madam President, is my dogs at home, but I thank the Presiding Officer for that misquote.

At this time, I call up Coburn amendment No. 805.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oklahoma [Mr. COBURN] proposes an amendment No. 805 to amendment numbered 799.

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To protect the right of individuals to bear arms at water resources development projects administered by the Secretary of the Army)

At the end of title II, add the following:

SEC. 20___. PROTECTING AMERICANS FROM VIOLENT CRIME.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) the Second Amendment of the Constitution provides that ''the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed'';

(2) section 327.13 of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations provides that, except in special circumstances, ''possession of loaded firearms, ammunition, loaded projectile firing devices, bows and arrows, crossbows, or other weapons is prohibited'' at water resources development projects administered by the Secretary;

(3) the regulations described in paragraph (2) prevent individuals complying with Federal and State laws from exercising the Second Amendment rights of the individuals while at the water resources development projects; and

(4) Federal laws should make it clear that the Second Amendment rights of an individual at a water resources development project should not be infringed.

(b) PROTECTING THE RIGHT OF INDIVIDUALS TO BEAR ARMS AT WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.—The Secretary shall not promulgate or enforce any regulation that prohibits an individual from possessing a firearm, including an assembled or functional firearm, at a water resources development project covered under part 327 of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of enactment of this Act), if—

(1) the individual is not otherwise prohibited by law from possessing the firearm; and

(2) the possession of the firearm is in compliance with the law of the State in which the water resources development project is located.

Mr. COBURN. A couple of years ago I added an amendment in our deliberative process that gave Americans their constitutional rights in the U.S. National Forest. There were two main reasons I did that.

No. 1, the amount of murders, rapes, robberies, and assaults were rising; and No. 2, there is some confusion with the conceal and carry State laws.

We have 35 or 36 States that have conceal and carry State laws, but when someone accidentally walks onto U.S. forest land, they are actually violating Federal law even though they might not know they are on State land versus Federal land.

I would note that since that time the amount of crime in our national parks has declined. So since then, we now have, throughout the country, the same approach we have in national parks on the Bureau of Land Management areas, the Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the National Wildlife Refuge.

The reason this is important for the Corps of Engineers is because after we passed those amendments, the corps proactively stated that none of this applied to them. Well, the fact is the corps has more visitors every year on their 422 lake and river projects, 11.7 million acres, 95,000 camp sites, and 6,500 miles of trails, and they have more than 370 million visitors. Corps projects are the most visited of any single Federal agency sites—even more than the 280 million annual visitors to our national parks.

Americans who camp, hunt, or fish on these federally managed lands are prevented from exercising their Second Amendment rights that have been guaranteed by the Supreme Court, but also are under the jurisdiction of their State laws.

The purpose of this amendment is so law-abiding citizens who are granted the authority in their State will not be vulnerable to criminals or dangerous wildlife while on Army Corps land, and we, in fact, will ensure they have their rights guaranteed. This does not include an exemption for Federal facilities, Army Corps headquarters, research facilities, lock or dam buildings, or any other significant infrastructure associated with the corps. This amendment would simply require the Corps of Engineers to follow State firearm possession laws on lands and waters managed by them—the same approach the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, the National Parks, and the National Wildlife Refuges use.

It is a simple issue. This is the only area of Federal lands now where we put people in double jeopardy if they are accidentally on corps land; they are violating Federal law even though they are complying with their State laws. They are totally in compliance with the State laws, but if they step one foot onto corps land, they are violating corps regulations. This amendment makes it consistent across all government lands—we have already done it everywhere else—the corps land, which is the most visited, the most utilized lands we have in the country. It is straightforward.

I am very appreciative of the chairman of this committee for her cooperation in allowing this amendment. As a matter of fact, I am so cooperative I am not going to offer the other one so I can help move her bill forward. I congratulate her on the bipartisan work she has done on her committee.

Mrs. BOXER. I thank the Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. I think this is a principled stand. The question is, Why should we not have the same policy everywhere, No. 1; and No. 2, Why would we dare deny the rights we give everywhere else on Federal Government-owned land—why would we do something different on corps land?

I actually wouldn't even be offering this had the corps not proactively stated that what we passed did not apply to them. We actually intended for it to apply and, technically, they could get out. All we are saying is let's make it the same everywhere, so you can follow State law, be a good, law-abiding citizen; but if a person happens to walk onto corps land, they are violating a Federal statute according to the corps. Not on BLM lands, not on Forest Service lands, not in the Parks, but if a person walks up to a lake in Oklahoma that is run by the corps, they are violating Federal law but they are not violating State law. So we ought to have consistency with our law. This is about consistency, good government, and common sense. Wouldn't it be a tragedy—and it happens all the time—that a person is on a campsite in Oklahoma and because there is no law allowing that person to carry their weapon onto that campsite, they are vulnerable to the prey of people who are going to violate that law. That is exactly what was happening in the national parks. We were having women raped, we were having people murdered, we were having people accosted and robbed. Guess what. That has all markedly declined since we allowed gun owners to carry their guns. There has not been, to my knowledge, one case of an inappropriate use by a law-abiding citizen of their weapons in those areas. So it is common sense.

My hope is we will pass this amendment and have a consistent law on all Federal lands so people can be protected under the Second Amendment, people can follow their State's law and do it adequately and accurately and be great law-abiding citizens.

With that, I reserve the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I wish to thank my friend from Oklahoma because it was tough for me on this bill to face the first amendment being a gun amendment. The Senator from Oklahoma has very strong emotions about it. So do I. We just come down on different sides. But I believe we want to show our good faith. I am also pleased we are not going to vote on the study amendment because, as I researched it, it looks as if there is already a study underway and I look forward to looking at the results of that study with the Senator from Oklahoma in terms of the buying of ammunition. I thank the Senator for that. It means a lot.

I ask the Chair, since Senator COBURN is now not going to take up one of his amendments and we only have one more, what is the status of time? How does that change things?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority controls 65 minutes, the Republicans control 64 minutes.

Mrs. BOXER. I thank the Chair. Madam President, I am going to answer a question that was posed rhetorically by my friend, which is a fair question. Why make a difference as far as who can carry a gun on Federal land versus national park land? My statement will address this directly to my friend.

Coburn amendment No. 805 would make it legal for anyone to carry weapons on critical water infrastructure property managed by the Army Corps of Engineers. My view of this is it is a dangerous amendment. He and I just see it very differently.

I believe this amendment would put our national security at risk by making the Nation's dams, reservoirs, hydroelectric powerhouses, navigation locks, major river systems, levees, and other flood risk management features vulnerable to attacks.

Current law on Army Corps property is this: Army regulations prohibit the private possession of loaded firearms, ammunition, loaded projectile firing devices, and other weapons on Army Corps property unless—and this is important—unless the weapon is being used for hunting, fishing, or target shooting in designated areas. So let's establish that, yes, people can bring a gun onto corps property, but it needs to be for hunting, fishing, or target shooting.

I don't know what other usage there would be. I guess one could argue that a person wants to defend themselves, but they could argue that anywhere. So I don't know what more my friend wants. We have hunting, fishing, and target shooting in designated areas so we don't have these weapons near this critical infrastructure.

Similar to the regulations that govern private gun possession on military bases, corps regulations require guns to be unloaded when transported to and from these designated hunting, fishing, and target-shooting areas. In addition, under current law, the regulations allow for permission to be given to private individuals by the district commander of the corps. So if somebody has a need to do this, they can get permission to do it. As I look at the current rules, I see it very differently. I see the Army Corps cooperating, making sure people can take their weapons onto corps land, but making sure the uses are the recreational uses. If they have a special problem or a special issue, they can get permission to carry a gun for other circumstances.

So the law already allows for the transport of guns on and off Army Corps property when used appropriately for hunting or sport. I guess we would have to say why would we have an amendment here that I believe will put our critical water infrastructure installations and millions of Americans who visit corps land at risk? I think it is a public safety issue.

Why do I oppose this Coburn amendment and why do I say it is dangerous? First of all, Army Corps rangers are not trained or equipped to be law enforcement officers. That is quite different from the national park lands. Second, Army Corps facilities are infrastructure that is critical to national security, the economy, and the safety of the American people. Third, the amendment ignores significant increases in the budget deficit, and I know my friend is, if not the biggest deficit hawk, certainly one of the biggest deficit hawks in history—ever since I have been here, which is a long time. So we have costs—notifying the public of the change in law and somehow hiring security guards to protect dams and reservoirs and other critical infrastructure.

I have sat in on numerous discussions, both classified and unclassified, that talk about the need to protect the critical infrastructure of this world in which we live. In this world we live in, we may well see more homegrown terrorists who know our land and who know where these dams are, and who know where these reservoirs are, and who know where these locks are.

The Army Corps rangers are not trained or equipped to be law enforcement officers. They have no authority to carry firearms, to make arrests, or execute search warrants. Corps rangers are tasked with resource management and recreation maintenance. They are not law enforcement officers.

The Coburn amendment would allow individuals to carry loaded or concealed weapons on all corps land as long as the individual's possession is in compliance with the State law where the property is located. By the way, I appreciate the fact the Coburn amendment does that, because some others have offered amendments where if a person is in a State that allows conceal and carry, they can go to any State. The Coburn amendment doesn't do that. I appreciate that very much.

Now in the 49 States that allow concealed carrying of loaded weapons, the corps would not be able to prevent visitors from carrying concealed loaded weapons on corps campsites and hiking trails. Yet the corps has no employees who perform law enforcement duties. I have said this now three times. It is a very important point. We are putting our corps people in a situation where they are unarmed and people coming on the property are armed. So if someone carries a weapon onto corps land—and I agree with my friend that 99-something percent of the people are wonderful and would never think of committing any type of felony, but we know violent crime happens every day. Good Lord, all one has to do is read the paper. We know there are—how many deaths every day from guns? There are 87 deaths a day from guns. A lot of that is suicide and a lot of that is violence toward another person. So let me tell my colleagues what the corps can do in the case where there is a felony on the land there—someone doing something violent. They could write a ticket or call for backup. Since they have no weapons and no authority to arrest suspects, it is a dangerous situation. If this were to pass, we would have to spend a whole lot of dough making sure we train the corps personnel or allow them to hire law enforcement. We are talking about a lot of funds we don't have.

I don't know what the problem is. Honestly, maybe my friend has heard from colleagues or friends or people who are upset about this. But the fact is people can have weapons on corps land for all kinds of reasons pertaining to recreation, which is the point. Yes, one has to get them to the site not loaded and so on, and there are rules and regulations, but I don't think that is a problem. Some of the hunters I know are extremely proud of the safety record they have had and what they teach their kids.

Now let's talk about the facilities that I think are being put at risk—facilities important to our national security, to our economy, and to our public safety. The Department of Homeland Security under President Bush took action in 2003 to list—and I am quoting—this sounds funny—''dam''—D-A-M—''assets.'' Those include navigation locks, levees, and water retention facilities, as a sector that is critical to the function of the economy, to the government, to our society, to the well-being of our people. The inspector general notes that these assets are especially important because one catastrophic failure at some locations could affect populations exceeding 100,000 people and have economic consequences surpassing $10 billion. So we are talking about changing the law on corps land that would expand the right to carry a gun, which people now have on corps land as long as it is for recreation purposes—expanding it in a way that could threaten critical infrastructure. This is in a situation where there are no armed guards. One catastrophic failure could affect 100,000 people and could have economic consequences surpassing $10 billion.

This is a report from the Bush administration, folks.

A 2011 DHS Inspector General report indicated there were numerous security gaps already at critical dam assets across the Nation. So I do not know why we would allow anyone to bring firearms to those critical infrastructure facilities. They can use them for hunting and fishing, but we should have some rules that protect this infrastructure.

Just notifying the public of the change in law that my friend wants to see happen will cost an enormous amount of money—millions of dollars. The Coburn amendment does not address the costs, and normally he would do that in an amendment: address the costs the corps would incur in order to train their workers to carry weapons or to hire outside security for that.

I appreciate and respect the views of my friend, but I also think this is something we should not do today on this bill now, especially when we are seeing a lot of talk about more homegrown terrorism. We want to protect our infrastructure. It may be that the corps ought to look at more protection for these facilities. I am willing to look at that. But I do think we are making a problem where there is not a problem. People can go on corps land and use their guns for hunting and fishing, recreation and target shooting, and I think that is working out fine. This seems to be an amendment that is solving a problem that, frankly, does not exist.

I have 38 million people in my State. That is a lot of people. I asked: Do we

have a lot of letters on this? I, at this point, do not know of any. But I may have some now that the Senator has brought this up. We probably have it on both sides now. But I hate to see us do this because I think it is going to put critical water infrastructure at risk.

This is not the national parks. These are not facilities where we have armed guards. If something were to happen to a reservoir, to a dam, the Bush administration tells us it could be quite devastating to communities.

So I hope we will oppose this amendment. Again, it is with respect that I say these things. I say them because I truly do think this is misguided. I hope we can get on with the underlying bill.

I thank my colleague and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, first of all, our amendment exempts the areas the chairman talked about—locks and dams. All those areas are exempt from this amendment. As ranking member on Homeland Security, I know more about these issues than probably anybody other than our chairman and the past chairman and ranking member in terms of the safety.

The people the chairman talks about do not care what the law is now. They do not care what the law is. So the people about whom we are going to be worried—Boston has pretty tight laws. They did not care what the laws were. They broke multiple sets of laws, as we saw what happened in Boston. We have to prepare for that regardless of whether this amendment goes through.

I would also note, in several of our national parks we have corps land where we have hydroelectric facilities and we have these things. We have not had any problem with that. What we have had is a marked decline in the number of rapes and a marked decline in the number of murders in national parks since we instituted the State laws in national parks for guns.

On campgrounds we do have problems with rapes, with accosts, with assaults, with robberies; and we do have murders on corps land and campgrounds. So the point is, standardizing where you can go—I would also make the point, we only allow State law to apply. If Oklahoma law is different than California law, it is not Oklahoma law, it is whatever California law is and recognizing that individual right so we do not put people in jeopardy when they accidentally get on corps land.

I understand her inhibition toward it, toward any expression of the Second Amendment generally. But the fact is we ought to have a common policy in all areas. We already do it in Bureau of Land Management, we already do it in the Forest Service, we already do it in national parks. So we should not exempt the corps.

The fact is, the people who are going to violate our laws are not the law-abiding citizens. They are not the law-abiding citizens. It does not matter what we do; they are not going to pay attention to what we do. The one thing we have proven in the National Parks is, when we allowed people the ability to carry and follow their own State's law in terms of their Second Amendment, we saw rapes go down, we saw murders go down, we saw assaults go down, and we saw robberies go down in the national parks.

The same thing will happen on corps land. Most of the people will not carry. Most of the people will not come in. But to deny the ability to do that, that is what this amendment is about.

I will be happy to debate the Senator further. The fact is, there is a big difference in our view of what the Second Amendment should be about in this country and our trusting of law-abiding citizens to do the right things. Her issue on critical infrastructure—we are doing everything we can do to protect that now and building toward the ultimate goals of where we need to be, and this is not going to change our approach. It is not going to change it at all. So I would dispute the fact that it is going to change our approach.

As we look at critical infrastructure and the protection of it, we are going to do the same whether or not this amendment passes. It is not going to have any impact on it.

My hope would be that since I actually have withdrawn the other amendment we would yield back the time and move to Senator WHITEHOUSE's amendment as soon as we can.

With that, I reserve the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I wish to ask my friend to show me where he excludes the areas that have the critical infrastructure because we have a report from CRS that says they are not excluded. The dams are not excluded.

Mr. COBURN. I will be happy to get it for the Senator.

Mrs. BOXER. No problem.

Madam President, I think the point is, the Senator tries to say what I think about the right to bear arms. He does not know my views. It is very clear the Supreme Court has stated the Second Amendment—that there is a right to bear arms. But just as any other right—free speech, freedom of the press—rights are not unrestricted. We all know the story: You have free speech, but you cannot go into a theater and yell ''fire, fire'' unless there is a fire because you could be charged for causing a riot. So there is no absolute right.

The corps has stated on their land you can already bring a gun as long as it is about hunting, it is about fishing, it is about recreation. But they say, if it is near their critical infrastructure—which the Bush administration says is a homeland security necessity to protect—you cannot carry a loaded weapon.

My friend says he excluded these areas. I am telling you—you can read this—there is no exclusion. And if you read the CRS——

Mr. COBURN. Will the Senator yield?

Mrs. BOXER. I will in 1 second. I want to read what CRS says:

> Proposed legislation does not explicitly provide the Corps with authority to restrict firearms at Corps facilities (e.g., dams) or in specifically designated areas.

I am happy to yield.

Mr. COBURN. I will get the Senator the actual statute.

Federal structures are covered under another statute and I will get that statute for it. The reason we did not specifically represent that is because they are already covered. We did not exclude those structures. We said: Corps land. We did not specifically say that, and we will get you the code where Federal structures are excluded.

Mrs. BOXER. Well, if I could say to my friend, through the Chair, fine, get me the code. But the Senator said his amendment specifically excluded it, and it does not. I am researching now that part, but there is no question there is no explicit prohibition here.

So now you get into a circumstance where you have one Federal law that says one thing, another Federal law that says something else, and we know where that leads, folks. That leads to court.

I think my friend wanted to exclude being able to carry weapons near levees and dams and so on. He ought to like the status quo because that is the status quo. The status quo is, if you want to use a gun for hunting, fishing, recreation, fine, the corps already allows it. You just cannot use it on critical infrastructure. He says that is his point. What is the problem? What is the problem?

As I discuss this with my friend, I do not see why his amendment is necessary. I hope he will withdraw it, frankly.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, I do not have any intention of withdrawing the amendment. There is a Federal statute that already prohibits the carrying of firearms in Federal buildings and structures, and we will get the Senator the statute. That is very clear. We were advised by legislative counsel we did not have to put that in there because it is already prohibited. I will challenge the statement of the CRS and will give the Senator the section of the code that provides that.

Again, the point is, this critical infrastructure is already being beefed up. We are going to be doing that in Homeland Security. We are doing that in Homeland Security, and it has no bearing whatsoever on the Second Amendment right to unify our policies across all government-owned land in this country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the CRS report summary that was done on this identical bill, which clearly states in their analysis that this would allow individuals to carry firearms—loaded—on to levees, dams, near reservoirs, and the rest. It is clearly stated here:

Proposed legislation does not explicitly provide the Corps with authority to restrict firearms at Corps facilities [like dams]. . . .

And it goes on to say that is their decision.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Congressional Research Service, July 12, 2012]

FIREARMS AT ARMY CORPS WATER RESOURCES PROJECTS: PROPOSED LEGISLATION AND ISSUES FOR CONGRESS

(By Nicole T. Carter)

SUMMARY

As part of its civil works mission, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manages water resource projects. Reservoirs lying behind Corps dams, and Corps navigation locks and their pools, are popular recreation sites, attracting 370 million visits annually. Corps projects include some of the most densely used federal recreation lands. Currently, 36 C.F.R. Section 327 sets out the regulations for public use of Corps projects. Section 327.13 generally prohibits possession of loaded firearms by private (i.e., non-law enforcement) individuals at Corps-administered projects unless they are being used for hunting at designated sites (with devices required to be unloaded while transported to and from the sites) or at authorized shooting ranges. The regulation applies at projects regardless of their location in states allowing open or concealed carry of loaded firearms.

Proposed legislation—the Recreational Lands Self-Defense Act (H.R. 1865, S. 1588), and Section 111 of H.R. 5325, the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of FY2013 (which are all substantively similar)—would bar the Secretary of the Army from promulgating or enforcing regulations that prohibit individuals from possessing firearms (including assembled or functional firearms) at Corps projects. The bills would require that firearms possession comply with state law. Supporters of the proposed legislation see it as a partial remedy to a current patchwork of regulations restricting firearms on federally managed lands, as a means to provide consistency for open and concealed firearms possession within a state, and as facilitating self-defense. They argue that enactment would establish Corps policies consistent with Section 512 of P.L. 111–24, which made it legal for individuals to possess firearms at National Park Service (NPS) and National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) units of the Department of the Interior (DOI). Other stakeholders are concerned that the proposed legislation may produce unintended public safety and infrastructure security issues at Corps projects.

The issue for Congress is not only possession of loaded firearms by private individuals but also how to maintain public safety and infrastructure security at Corps projects.

- Critical facilities security: Proposed legislation does not explicitly provide the Corps with authority to restrict firearms at Corps facilities (e.g., dams) or in specifically designated areas.
- Public safety and law enforcement: There are no armed federal law enforcement officers commissioned for public safety and security purposes at Corps projects. Unlike DOI, the Corps does not have authority to perform most law enforcement functions at its projects. Corps rangers are limited to issuing citations for regulatory violations and are not allowed to carry firearms. Most law enforcement is provided by local and state law enforcement personnel; the Corps' authority to contract for this assistance is $10 million annually.

A safety and security assessment of the proposed legislation for Corps projects has not been performed. DOI's Bureau of Reclamation is faced with similar safety and security issues at its water resource projects. It allows possession of firearms on Reclamation lands and waterbodies (e.g., reservoirs behind dams) when such possession complies with federal, state, and local law. The regulations restrict firearms at Reclamation facilities (e.g; dams, buildings). DOI and Reclamation also use multiple authorities and mechanisms to provide for armed and unarmed law enforcement and public safety and security. Whether the Corps, given its current authorities, could similarly provide for safety and security at its projects if the proposed legislation is enacted has not been assessed.

Mrs. BOXER. CRS did a big study of it. I appreciate my friend says he covers this. It is not in his legislation. It is just not in there. He does not refer to that other law. He does not say anything about the other law.

My point is that the corps already allows you to bring a loaded gun onto the premises. You can even get a special permit if you want to bring it to other areas. It is already the law.

So this is an amendment that, in my reading of it, would allow you then to go onto these other areas—the levees, the reservoirs, the critical infrastructure. CRS agrees. I have put it in the RECORD. My friend says no.

I will tell you something, I do not think we should move forward with this—he is—and we will see where the votes fall.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, I would yield back the remainder of my time if the chairman of the committee would do as well.

Mrs. BOXER. Yes, I do. I yield my time back as well and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. May I ask further consent that time during all of the quorum calls be charged equally to both sides.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BOXER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, for the interest of all Senators, we are moving forward with our bill. We have a first vote on an amendment at 2 o'clock. At this time we are determining whether Senator WHITEHOUSE will offer his amendment. If he does, there will be a vote on one of the two Coburn amendments—he has withdrawn the other—and then a vote on the Whitehouse amendment if, in fact, he offers it.

I would like say for the benefit of all Senators that this is a WRDA bill; this is a water bill. This is about dredging our ports. This is about making sure we have restoration of our wetlands. This is about making sure we have flood control protection. This is about the infrastructure of our country, the ability to move goods, and the ability to have an infrastructure that is much better than the D-plus it is rated at this time.

This is not a gun bill. I beg my colleagues, whatever side you are on, we cannot turn this bill into a gun bill because that is not going to happen. I hope my colleagues will look at the Coburn amendment and decide that the best course is not to have it on this bill. It doesn't belong on this bill, and it shouldn't be on this bill. It is nongermane, and, more important to me, it is very controversial.

I wish to ask the Senator from Rhode Island a question. I know the Senator has a wonderful amendment that deals with the protection of our oceans on a water bill. Guess what—an amendment about water on a water bill. This is good. I would ask my friend if he intends to offer his amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, through the Chair, I will tell the distinguished chairman that I, with great enthusiasm, intend to offer my amendment. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support it.

You should support it if you are from a coastal State because the coastal problems that coastal States face are so often overlooked. If you are not from a coastal State but you visit coastal States to go to the beach, if you like to eat fish or, frankly, if you like imported products that come through our coastal ports, you too have an interest in this legislation. I hope you will support it.

Finally, this is a piece of legislation that was agreed to before by this body in the form of the RESTORE Act. In the RESTORE Act, we literally sent billions of dollars to our colleagues along the Gulf States for remediation, repair, and economic reconstruction after the two disasters of Hurricane Katrina and the explosion of the oil

well. Those two disasters. So for reasons that don't merit further discussion here today, that part of the agreement was left unaccomplished.

Whether you are from a coastal State or whether you enjoy coastal products or visits, I would urge my colleagues, for the sake of the Senate being a place in which a bargain once struck is honored, that we owe a vote strongly in support of the authorization—and this is only an authorization, no funding whatsoever—of a national endowment for the oceans that will allow coastal and Great Lakes States to at least be able to compete for funding to be obtained later through existing structures—no new bureaucracies—so we can do what we need to do to protect our coastal economies.

I thank the chairman.

Mrs. BOXER. Retaining my time, I would like to ask through the Chair if Senator WHITEHOUSE has to actually send his amendment to the desk and ask for the yeas and nays. Because, if so, I think it would be an appropriate time to do that since we intend to vote at 2 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It can be offered at this time.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. If I may seek recognition.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

AMENDMENT NO. 803 TO AMENDMENT NO. 799

(Purpose: To create the National Endowment for the Oceans to promote the protection and conservation of United States ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems)

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. At the Chairman's suggestion, and with her permission, I ask unanimous consent that my amendment be called up.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Rhode Island [Mr. WHITEHOUSE], for himself, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. NELSON, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Ms. CANTWELL, proposes an amendment numbered 803 to amendment No. 799.

(The amendment is printed in the RECORD of Tuesday, May 7, 2013, under ''Text of Amendments.'')

Mrs. BOXER. Does the Senator need to ask for the yeas and nays or are the yeas and nays ordered?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas and nays would have to be requested.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask for the yeas and nays, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is not a sufficient second at this time.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I am very confused. Yesterday there was an agreement there would be a vote. What is my colleague's understanding?

OK, we just need to have some more time. So I recommend the Senator stay on the floor so we can get a colleague on the floor. That would be great. After we do that, I am going to encourage my friend to take some time and go into why it is so critical we pay attention to the oceans of our country, what is happening to the state of our oceans, and what is happening to the quality of our oceans, given so many factors, including the changes we are experiencing in climate, because he is a great expert on that.

Does my friend want some time now? I would like to see if I can get us to the yeas and nays.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, while the chairman goes about the parliamentary task of organizing a sufficient second on the national endowment bill, I do wish to describe some of the changes our coastal and Great Lakes States are seeing and need to deal with.

Probably the most obvious of all are the storms we have been seeing—the unprecedented and extreme storms we have been seeing—along our coasts. Whether it was Hurricane Katrina or Superstorm Sandy, we have seen unprecedented damage done at the merger of land and sea, where driven by these powerful storms the sea can wreak such havoc on the land. But it goes well beyond the damage of extreme storms. If we go out into the Gulf of Maine, we can see the cod catch, which is a historic fishery going back centuries, has now collapsed to the point where the Draconian measures that must be applied to that fishery actually risk extinguishing the fishing industry for cod in some of our Northeastern States.

We can move down the coast to the Carolinas, where highway departments are raising the bridges out to the Outer Banks in order to prepare for higher seas and stronger storm surges. We can go further south, to the Florida coast, where in some parts of that ocean—the Caribbean ocean nearby—as little as 10 percent of the coral remains alive. That is actually a pretty big industry for Florida. I think they do 15 million scuba dives a year for recreational purposes—15 million scuba dives—which are not just economically valuable for the dive boat owners and operators but for the people who travel, who have meals and who stay in hotels and buy equipment. They are not going to come to do scuba diving there as much if the famous Caribbean reefs and coral reefs off of Florida continue to die at the rate they are.

We can go all the way across the country to the West Coast, where we see the oyster fisheries in Washington and Oregon threatened by the acidification of the oceans. There have been oyster hatcheries that have had massive die-offs within the hatchery when acidified water from the sea welled up and came into the intakes of these, in many cases, multigenerational family operations and were too acidic to allow the larval oysters to develop their shells, resulting in massive die-offs and economic loss.

I can tell two stories about my home State of Rhode Island that are very current. In Rhode Island, the biggest storm we have seen, worse even than Superstorm Sandy in recent decades, was the famous hurricane of 1938, which did immense damage along our shoreline at a time when our shoreline was far less developed than it is now. Between the 1930s, when that hurricane took place, and now, the sea level at the Newport tide gauge in Newport, RI, has actually climbed 10 inches. So when the next hurricane of 1938 comes—or perhaps even a bigger one, as our current experience of storms would seem to suggest is possible—it will be driving a higher ocean against the shore and probably not just 10 inches higher, because a storm surge will stack that 10-inch increase as it crashes against our Rhode Island shores, and that can be a game changer.

States such as Rhode Island have to do a lot of work to reconfigure where the so-called velocity zones are, where it is safe to build or not safe to build, what is actually now vulnerable in a 100-year flood or a 500-year flood as things change along our coasts. That is something that is a little hard to debate. It is actually a measurement. It is a measurement of 10 inches on a tide gauge. This is not some theory. This is what has happened. That water lying out there 10 inches higher is a terrific risk to our State and something we have to prepare for. Given the way State budgets are, we would like to be able to compete, once we have found some Federal funding, for the ability to figure things out so investors and people living along coastal communities can have a solid and fact-based appreciation of what the risks are to them from this worsening condition of stronger storms and higher measured sea levels.

Another Rhode Island-specific example is the winter flounder. The winter flounder is a major catch species in Narragansett Bay—or at least it was. We can go back to the earliest Native American settlements and find winter flounder bones around the settlements. For many years the winter flounder was the biggest catch in Narragansett Bay. I know a certain amount about it because when my wife did her Ph.D. thesis, she studied the winter flounder in Narragansett Bay and what was happening to it and how its life cycle interacted with another bay creature called the sand shrimp—or the Crangon septemspinosa, which is the technical name. In the time between when she wrote her thesis and now, the catch of winter flounder in Narragansett Bay has crashed more than 90 percent. It is no longer an active direct fishery in Narragansett Bay.

I can remember not that many years ago, it doesn't seem, driving over the Jamestown Bridge or the Newport Bridge or the Bristol Bridge and looking down and seeing trawlers working the upper bay trawling for winter flounder. We don't see that any longer because that fishery has crashed.

It has crashed for two reasons. One is the bay is warmer in the winter. I am

having a dispute with PolitiFact right now, but I stand by my assertion it is 4 degrees warmer in the winter. They think it is more like 3 degrees warmer in the winter than it was 30 years ago. Four degrees in water temperature may not seem like much to us humans, but we don't live in that environment. If that is your environment, 4 degrees sends a signal to certain species they don't belong there any longer and to move to cooler waters.

The other thing it has done is it has allowed this other bay creature, the sand shrimp, to move in earlier to the bay when the larval winter flounders are still small enough to be eaten by the sand shrimp. It used to be the sand shrimp would come in and they would feed on the larval winter flounders, but enough of them would get big enough soon enough that they got too big to eat for the sand shrimp. In fact, as they got bigger, they would turn around and eat the sand shrimp. That was the cycle of life. Now the sand shrimp come in earlier. There are fewer winter flounder because of the temperature, and because they are getting in earlier, it is a much more dangerous environment because the larval winter flounder are smaller and remain prey longer. So for all those reasons, there goes what once was a very key fishery.

These are just individual examples. Every coastal State, every Great Lakes State could come and have their Senator give the same speech with at least two examples of things that are changing and making a dramatic difference in the coasts. The phrase I use is: The faster you drive, the better your headlights need to be. These changes are coming fast. Things that used to happen across centuries are happening in decades; things that used to happen over decades are happening in years. We need to have better headlights as we see these changes coming at us, and the headlights are the science, the research, the information, and the ability to do this kind of work.

I hope my colleagues, on the merits, will support my amendment. I hope even if they do not particularly care, even if they are from an inland State and don't have a great interest, that simply in the interest of the spirit of the Senate they will respect an agreement once it has been reached and will make an effort to make sure agreements, when struck, aren't broken and that I will get my partisan support.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I rise today in support of the 2013 Water Resources Development Act, or WRDA. I agree with my colleagues who believe that moving forward with a bipartisan WRDA bill is important for our communities.

As the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I believe we need to address the issues facing the Army Corps and the country. Today we have problems with aging infrastructure, with a lack of transparency, and with fiscal accountability—all of which impact the public health, the safety, and the economic welfare of our communities.

My staff and I have worked with our colleagues on the full committee and the subcommittee to create a bipartisan product to address these concerns. We may have our differences on a number of the issues, but the bulk of what we have accomplished is about protecting our States and protecting our constituents, not about partisan politics.

For example, issues such as flood mitigation are very important to my State. In 1984 the town of Baggs, WY, faced a major flood. The entire town had to be evacuated, and there was over $1 million worth of damage done. In mid-May of 2008, Baggs faced another major potential flood. The Wyoming National Guard was called in to assist, as well as the Department of Homeland Security. At the request of the Department of Homeland Security, the Army Corps Sacramento office sent an official who was able to oversee the reinforcement of existing berms and the construction of new ones. This time Baggs did not need to be evacuated and the damage was minimal.

Baggs is not the only town in Wyoming to need assistance to protect itself from the threat of flooding. Predicting floods and being better prepared for them is a major component in keeping Wyoming communities safe. That is why I proposed and successfully included language in this bill, with the help of the chair and ranking member, for an authorization for Upper Missouri Basin flood and drought monitoring. This program will restore the stream gauges and snowpack monitors through the Upper Missouri Basin at all elevations. These gauges are used to monitor snow depth and soil moisture, to help inform agencies such as the Corps as to potential flooding and also drought in the future. This type of monitoring will protect communities and save lives. The language is supported by the Upper Missouri Water Association.

I am also pleased that the language I have authored for technical assistance to help rural communities comply with environmental regulations was included in the bill. Rural communities often do not have the expertise or the funding to make important upgrades to their water systems. Dedicated professionals, such as the folks at the Wyoming Rural Water Association, use this funding to go into these communities and provide the critical assistance they need. I thank Subcommittee Chairman BAUCUS for his help in working with me to get this important language included in the bill.

As I mentioned, transparency and fiscal responsibility are also important components to tackling the issues that need to be addressed with the Army Corps. That is why I offered language to create an Army Corps project deauthorization process. It is one that mimics the Base Realignment and Closure Commission—you know, the BRAC Commission—that the Department of Defense uses to close or reconsolidate military bases.

Under my language, an independent commission appointed by the President would identify projects for deauthorization based on established criteria and then submit those projects as one package for an up-or-down vote by the Congress. There are many of these projects that are on the books. They are authorized for millions of dollars, and they are going nowhere. The backlog of Army Corps projects is currently about $60 billion according to the National Academy of Sciences. It is time for the Corps and Congress to clean the books, cut the waste, and bring fiscal responsibility to the WRDA process.

I am specifically thankful to Chairman BOXER and to Ranking Member VITTER and Subcommittee Chairman BAUCUS for supporting my language. I am also grateful to my colleagues for the bipartisan process under which this bill was considered. Our staffs worked well together. We put together a good product. I specifically want to thank a member of my staff, Brian Clifford, who worked diligently on this process and worked in a unified way. We see the results in the Senate.

The bill unanimously passed the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

Although the bill is not perfect and there is always room for improvement, I believe we have achieved a compromise, a solution that is substantive, effective, and in the public interest. This is a product that will save lives, will maintain the flow of commerce, and will protect communities for years to come.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COONS. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

EDUCATION EQUALITY

Mr. COONS. Madam President, as the son and grandson of classroom teachers, as a father myself, as someone for whom education played a central role in my life, and as a passionate believer in the power of education to change others' lives, I rise today to talk about a bill that is one of the most important to me that I have moved as a Senator.

The fact is if we look at the American national condition, the lack of access to higher education as well as the

lack of an opportunity for a quality education is one of the greatest problems we face. Inequality in having some real hope, some real promise of a shot at college defines and distinguishes the drivers of social inequality in America in ways it has not in decades. If we want to ensure going forward that American workers can compete in the global economy, if we want to ensure a country that is capable of living up to our promise of liberty and justice for all, if we want to deal with one of the biggest civil rights issues in our country, then we have to ensure every child has an equal chance for high-quality education regardless of the ZIP Code they are born into.

Long before I was elected to public office, I spent years working with a nonprofit education center called ''I Have A Dream'' Foundation. In my role there, I visited schools all over the United States. More often than not, these were schools in very tough communities and neighborhoods, schools that were in public housing developments or that were in some of the most forlorn and troubled neighborhoods in all of America.

What struck me over and over when I would go into an elementary school and talk to a group of young kids and ask: What do you dream of? What do you hope to be when you grow up? They would raise their hands, and none of them said: I dream of being in a gang; I dream of being in jail; I dream of being a drug dealer; I dream of dying before I turn 20. They would say: I dream of being a Senator or a lawyer or owning my own business or being a star in the NBA or being a success. The dreams we hear from kids in elementary schools are the same regardless of the community in America. Yet the outcomes are so desperately different.

What I saw in the nearly 20 years I was active with the ''I Have A Dream'' Foundation was that the young people who came from a community, family, or school where there was little or no experience or expectation of a college education sent a powerful, persistent, and negative message at a very early age—that college is not for them. They are told indirectly that it is not affordable, it is not accessible, it is not part of the plan for their future. Those messages have a cumulative, powerful, and consequential impact.

Very few of the 50 ''Dreamers'' from the east side of Wilmington that my family and I worked very closely with had any expectation of a college education. In 1988 when our chapter of ''I Have A Dream'' Foundation promised them the opportunity for a higher education through a scholarship, we could see the change. First we saw the change in their teachers and parents, then in their mentors and classmates, and ultimately we saw it in them. We saw a change in their hopes and their expectations.

The most powerful thing the ''I Have A Dream'' Foundation did in our chapter, and in dozens of chapters around the country, was to hold up a mirror to young people of their future that was a brighter and more promising future than they had ever dreamed of on their own. They were challenged to walk through that open door and make college not just a distant dream, not something they heard of or watched on TV, but something that became a part of their lived life, and to change their outcomes.

That experience has inspired the bill I introduced in the last Congress, and I am most personally connected to in this Congress.

Last year I found a Republican partner who shares my passion for expanding access to college and for making it more affordable. That partner is Senator MARCO RUBIO of Florida. Some folks have noticed that here in the Senate we don't always get along and we don't always agree and sometimes partisanship divides us. I have been very pleased to have this strong and able partner in moving forward a bipartisan bill which we named the American Dream Accounts Act. This is a bill that bridges the opportunity gap by connecting students, teachers, parents, and mentors to create a new generation of higher education achievers.

There are too many American kids today who are cut off from the enormous potential of a higher education. The numbers are grim. If someone comes from a low-income family, the chance that student will complete a college degree by the time that person turns 25 is about 1 in 10 at best.

In order to have the prospect of employment and opportunity of accumulating wealth and providing an education and security for our family and kids, a college education is essential these days. We in the Federal Government spend billions of dollars on making higher education affordable through Pell grants, yet do almost nothing to make it clear to children at the earliest age that this funding will be available to them.

In my home State of Delaware, our Governor Jack Markell and our first lady Carla Markell have done a wonderful job of incorporating the power of this insight and lesson. They are ensuring there is a State-funded scholarship and network of engaged mentors and real reform in our public schools. We don't tell kids, even in our State, in elementary school of the possibilities that lie ahead of them in a way that changes their expectations. That is what this bill will hopefully do. It encourages partnerships between schools and colleges, nonprofits and businesses. It allows them to develop individualized student accounts, such as their Facebook account, married to a college savings account; individual accounts that are secure, Web-based, personal, and portable; accounts that contain information about each student's academic preparedness and financial literacy. It is something that combines a portfolio of their entire education experience with the very real savings for the future of higher education we want to pull them toward from their earliest years.

Instead of forcing motivated parents or concerned teachers or interested mentors or empowered students—instead of forcing all of these folks to track down these different resources separately, this legislation, this idea would connect them across existing silos and across existing education programs at the State and Federal level.

So tomorrow Senator RUBIO and I will reintroduce this legislation as the bipartisan American Dream Accounts Act of 2013. We are working hard to earn the support of our colleagues in the Senate and in the House, and I will keep at this for as long as it takes.

The American Dream Accounts Act addresses the longstanding challenges and barriers to college access: connectivity, financial resources, early intervention, and portability. Let me briefly speak to each of those.

First, connectivity. The journey from elementary school, to high school, to higher education is a long one, and for a student to be successful it takes lots of engaged and attentive adults—motivated parents, concerned teachers, supportive family. So many students in our schools all over this country disengage or drop out along the way because they are not connected, they are not supported by those concerned and engaged adults. The American Dream Accounts Act takes advantage of modern technology to create Facebook-inspired individualized accounts—an opportunity to deliver personalized hubs of information that would connect these kids and sustain and support them throughout the entire journey of education by continuing to remind them of the promise of higher education and its affordability.

Second, these dream accounts would connect kids with college savings opportunities. Studies show that students who know there is a dedicated college savings account in their name are seven times more likely to go to college than peers without one. Think about that for a moment. States such as Delaware and our Nation invest billions of dollars in programs to make higher education affordable. Yet so few of the kids I have worked with all over this country in the ''I Have a Dream'' program have any idea. They have never heard of Senator Pell. They don't know Pell grants exist. They don't live in States that have the HOPE scholars, the Aspire scholars, or the Dream scholarships that a number of States have, and they don't know they will be there for them when they are of age to go to college. Why don't we tell them early? Why don't we change their expectations? That is one of the things this program would do. And it is not a new idea; it is a demonstrated one that we know works.

The third piece of this American Dream Accounts Act is early intervention. As I said, States and Federal programs that provide billions of dollars

in support to make college affordable don't connect with kids early enough. By letting them know early, we can change their ultimate orientation and outcomes.

The last important piece is portability. One of the things I saw in my own experience with my Dreamers, the students in the ''I Have a Dream'' program I helped to run in Delaware, was just how often they moved. Children growing up in poverty, in families facing unexpected challenges, relocate over and over and bounce from school to school, district to district, often facing overstretched teachers with full classrooms who, when they move midyear into a new school, don't get any background information or insight on the student who has moved into their classroom. So instead of being welcomed and engaged in a positive way, sometimes they feel and are disconnected and develop into discipline problems or students who are difficult to teach. The mobility that comes with poverty sometimes also leads to disconnection from education.

This robust, online, secure, individualized account would empower teachers to connect with parents, to connect with mentors, and to know the entire education history of the student newly before them. So no matter what disruptions or challenges a student might face as they travel through the long journey of education, their own individual American dream act—their own portfolio of their dreams and their activities and their progress—would be there with them.

Our Nation's long-term economic competitiveness requires a highly trained and highly educated workforce, and our Nation's commitment to a democracy and to a country of equal opportunity demands that we do everything we can to make real the hope of higher education for kids no matter the ZIP Code into which they are born, no matter their background. While we spend billions on making higher education affordable, we aren't delivering it effectively enough to change that future. What I saw in my years with the ''I Have a Dream'' program was bright faces, raised arms, hope, and opportunity that sadly was not as often as it could be realized. This program, this connectivity, this new type of account is a way to make real on that promise.

We can meet this challenge by connecting students with a broad array of higher education options, informing them about them early, whether it is vocational school or job training, community college or 4-year universities. Not everyone is made for a 4-year higher education degree. This would connect kids with all of the different opportunities for skill training and higher education that are out there. It also would support students as they identify the type of education best for them, the career they most want, and give them the tools to get there.

As I visit schools across my own State of Delaware, one thing is clear: All of these different resources currently exist in different ways and at different stages of education, but they are not connected in a way that weaves together students, parents, mentors, and the resources of our highly motivated, highly engaged State.

So this vision—one that has stayed with me from my time at ''I Have a Dream'' to my service here as a Senator—is that when we ask a roomful of elementary school kids in the future, ''What do you dream of, what is your hope,'' when their hands shoot up in the air and they list all of the different dreams they have, regardless of background or income or community, we can make that possible. We can make our investments real, and we can make the dream of equal opportunity a reality.

This year, with the support of lots of groups, including the Corporation for Enterprise Development, a wonderful group called Opportunity Nation, the First Focus Campaign for Children, we are hopeful that bipartisan support for this American dream accounts idea will simply continue to grow. Let's work together to empower students and parents of all backgrounds to achieve their dreams from the earliest age.

THE BUDGET

Madam President, I rise today to speak about our current impasse over the progress of the Federal budget. I have been a Senator for just a little over 2 years. I have presided over this Chamber a great deal, as has the Senator now presiding. I have listened to dozens of speeches from colleagues—in particular, Republican colleagues—upset that this Chamber and the Budget Committee on which I serve hadn't passed a budget in several years. But this year we passed a budget, finally. We went through the long and grinding process known here in Washington as vote-arama where we considered, debated, and disposed of over 100 amendments over hours and hours of deliberation and debate and voting on this floor, and we passed a budget.

It has been 46 days since the Senate passed our budget, but we still need to reconcile it with the House of Representatives' budget for it to become a forceful resolution, a budget resolution that drives the decisions of the Congress. It is important we do that because it has been 66 days since the sequester kicked in.

I know ''sequester'' is Washington-speak, but all of us as Senators are hearing from our home States the very real, very human impact of these across-the-board spending cuts that have begun to really bite. We hear about potential furloughs of men and women who serve at Dover Air Force Base. We hear about the tens of thousands of children being kicked out of needed Head Start Programs. We hear about the thousands of women not getting the breast cancer screenings they need, and we hear about the hundreds of thousands of children not getting the vaccines they are supposed to get. The impacts of the sequester are becoming stronger and broader and more negative all across our country.

The sequester exists because of a lack of political will to come together and resolve a fundamentally different vision between the Senate and the House enacted in our respective budgets. This sequester exists because we haven't come together across the House and the Senate in the way that for 200 years and more this Congress has done. When we pass a bill and when the House passes a bill, it is supposed to go to conference or reconciliation, resolution, and ultimately passage. Here is our chance.

Why would Republicans actively keep us from going to conference to finalize a budget, especially after years of coming to this floor and giving speeches, claiming over and over how terrible it was that we would not pass a budget in the Senate? Americans are tired of this dysfunction. In my view, today Republicans are manufacturing a crisis by preventing the Senate and House from coming together to reconcile our budgets in conference.

As I said, I am a member of the Budget Committee, and I can say with some detailed knowledge, as can the Presiding Officer, that there are real differences between the budget adopted here in the Senate and the budget adopted in the House. I believe the Democratic budget promotes growth and the Republican budget focuses on cuts. I believe ours prioritizes the middle class while the other prioritizes more tax cuts for the wealthiest. In my view, ours prioritizes balance; the other, politics. I think our budget puts us on the path toward job creation while the other takes a path to austerity. But we will never reconcile these two budgets, achieve a shared path forward, and set aside this terrible sequester if we don't go to conference.

Reconciling these two budgets is the definition of what I have heard Member after Member come to the floor and call for, what we have heard here in the Senate called regular order—the process set out by the Founders of this Nation and to which we should return.

These political games, in my view, are destroying this institution. I think it is no wonder the opinion of the average American across this country of this institution simply sinks lower and lower.

What is standing in the way of our progress on this budget at this point is repeated Republican objections. It is my hope that they will step aside and allow us to walk the corridor to the House, get to the conference table, and resolve our budget differences.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AMENDMENT NO. 805

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have up to 5 minutes to speak before the vote. Am I correct in assuming the vote is at 2 o'clock?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. Thank you very much, Madam President.

I wish to again let Senators know where we are. At 2 o'clock, we will be voting on a gun amendment. I would hope this gun amendment would not get the 60 votes required because I believe it is dangerous. Even though Senator COBURN says it would not allow guns to be carried on critical infrastructure such as dams and locks and reservoirs, we now have two studies that say, in fact, it would allow that.

According to the Bush administration, this critical water infrastructure is a target for terrorists. We are now entering into a stage when our leaders are talking about homegrown terror, and we do not have to look too much further than Boston to understand this is a problem.

Why would we want to have on a water infrastructure bill an amendment that allows people to come in with guns and go right to the heart of those critical water infrastructure projects—those dams, those reservoirs, those locks, et cetera—particularly since the corps already allows, for recreational use, the use of guns for hunting, target practice or fishing. That is already allowed.

There are rules. This is not comparable to the National Park Service. We could get into another debate on that. That one—I know some people here voted for that, to allow extensive guns being carried on parkland. That change was made. The corps is a different situation. The Park Service act like police. They can come in. They can quell a disturbance. They are armed. They are trained. The corps is not a law enforcement entity. That means what they would have to do, if there was a violent outburst, is call the local governments, the State governments, and we do not know how long it would take to have those law enforcement people arrive at such a situation.

So I am pleading with my colleagues, this is a water infrastructure bill. This is not a gun bill. This is not the place to add these types of amendments. We have a very bipartisan bill. It is supported by the chamber of commerce, it is supported by the unions, it is supported by local governments, by the Governors Association. I could go on and on. There is a list of literally 150 organizations. It came out of the committee with a bipartisan vote.

I hope when the clock strikes 2 we can have a vote that keeps us on track, that does not turn the WRDA bill into a gun bill. It is not necessary. It is not appropriate. The fact is, there is nothing in the amendment that would stop people from carrying guns onto critical water infrastructure. It sets up a national security threat. It endangers people.

I just want to be clear: I am not going to allow a bill to move forward that endangers the lives of the people I represent. I owe them a lot more than that, let alone the entire country. We all serve this Nation.

So I hope we will not pass this amendment. I ask for a ''no'' vote on the Coburn amendment.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). All time is expired. The question is on agreeing to the Coburn Amendment No. 805.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 56, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 115 Leg.]

YEAS—56

Alexander	Fischer	McConnell
Ayotte	Flake	Moran
Barrasso	Graham	Murkowski
Baucus	Grassley	Paul
Begich	Hagan	Portman
Blunt	Hatch	Pryor
Boozman	Heinrich	Risch
Burr	Heitkamp	Roberts
Chambliss	Heller	Rubio
Coats	Hoeven	Scott
Coburn	Inhofe	Sessions
Cochran	Isakson	Shaheen
Collins	Johanns	Shelby
Corker	Johnson (WI)	Tester
Cornyn	King	Thune
Crapo	Landrieu	Toomey
Cruz	Lee	Vitter
Donnelly	Manchin	Wicker
Enzi	McCain	

NAYS—43

Baldwin	Harkin	Reed
Bennet	Hirono	Reid
Blumenthal	Johnson (SD)	Rockefeller
Boxer	Kaine	Sanders
Brown	Kirk	Schatz
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cardin	Leahy	Stabenow
Carper	Levin	Udall (CO)
Casey	McCaskill	Udall (NM)
Coons	Menendez	Warner
Cowan	Merkley	Warren
Durbin	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wyden
Franken	Murray	
Gillibrand	Nelson	

NOT VOTING—1

Lautenberg

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this amendment, the amendment is rejected.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. One of the three scheduled votes has been withdrawn, an amendment, so we only have one more vote. Senator BOXER and Senator VITTER have a number of other people wanting to offer amendments today, so if you have amendments, talk to the managers of the bill.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. CARDIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mrs. BOXER. I ask for the yeas and nays on the Whitehouse amendment and urge its passage.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote in relation to amendment No. 803 offered by the Senator from Rhode Island, Mr. WHITEHOUSE.

The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President and colleagues, if I could have my colleagues' attention for a moment, I would appreciate it. This is a measure that this body has voted on before in a strong bipartisan vote. This was part of the RESTORE Act, which was a part of the highway bill.

For reasons that don't merit further discussion now, this piece of it fell out of the bargain that had been reached at the last minute in conference.

I hope this will be a bipartisan vote with support on both sides. If you supported the RESTORE Act, you have already supported this bill. If you believe that deals should be deals in the Senate, then you should support this bill. For all of us in coastal States who are facing very unique pressures, it is very important that we as a body support this bill.

It does not create a single extra bureaucracy or person. It works within the existing government, and it adds no funding. I am going to have to work with all of you to find funding for it later and within our existing budget constraints.

This is just the authorization. Please give me a strong bipartisan vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Who yields time in opposition?

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, a parliamentary inquiry.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. I understand there are some asking for a voice vote. Would that be all right with Senator WHITEHOUSE?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It would require unanimous consent.

Mrs. BOXER. All right. I think we should go on with the vote then.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the amendment No. 803 offered by the Senator from Rhode Island, Mr. WHITEHOUSE.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 67, nays 32, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 116 Leg.]

YEAS—67

Ayotte	Hagan	Murray
Baldwin	Harkin	Nelson
Baucus	Heinrich	Pryor
Begich	Heitkamp	Reed
Bennet	Hirono	Reid
Blumenthal	Isakson	Rockefeller
Boxer	Johanns	Sanders
Brown	Johnson (SD)	Schatz
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Cardin	King	Sessions
Carper	Kirk	Shaheen
Casey	Klobuchar	Shelby
Chambliss	Landrieu	Stabenow
Cochran	Leahy	Tester
Collins	Levin	Udall (CO)
Coons	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Cowan	McCain	Warner
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warren
Durbin	Menendez	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Merkley	Wicker
Franken	Mikulski	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murkowski	
Graham	Murphy	

NAYS—32

Alexander	Enzi	Moran
Barrasso	Fischer	Paul
Blunt	Flake	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Coats	Heller	Rubio
Coburn	Hoeven	Scott
Corker	Inhofe	Thune
Cornyn	Johnson (WI)	Toomey
Crapo	Lee	Vitter
Cruz	McConnell	

NOT VOTING—1

Lautenberg

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The 60-vote threshold having been achieved, the amendment is agreed to.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

CHANGE OF VOTE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, on rollcall vote 116, I voted ''yea.'' It was my intention to vote ''nay.'' Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to change my vote since it will not affect the outcome.

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

(The foregoing tally has been changed to reflect the above order.)

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I have a unanimous consent request. I will make it in a minute.

We are making good progress. We have three amendments in order now: the Blunt amendment No. 800, Pryor amendment 806, and Inhofe amendment No. 835. I ask they be the following amendments in that order to be considered; further, that no second-degree amendments be in order to these amendments prior to votes in relation to the amendments. That is my request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, we are well on our way to getting this bill done, I hope. The Whitehouse amendment was one that was overwhelmingly supported. I hope that will set the tone for this particular bill; that we will come forward together; that we will not have contentious issues that divide us and divide the American people on a bill that is so motherhood and apple pie as this one is, which is to make sure our ports are dredged, that our flood control projects are done, that our environmental restoration of wetlands is done. It is a very simple, straightforward bill.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

I further ask unanimous consent that immediately following my remarks here Senator WHITEHOUSE be recognized for up to 5 minutes to thank the Senate for this vote—I know he has worked exceedingly hard on this—and then there be a period of morning business for up to 30 minutes, with each Senator allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Under the previous order, amendment No. 799, as amended, is agreed to and is considered original text for the purposes of further amendment.

The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I appreciate the chairman's leadership and her offer of 5 minutes of time. I will not need anything near that. I want to take this moment to extend to all of my colleagues a very heartfelt thank you for that last vote.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate is in a period of morning business.

The Senator from Virginia.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H. CON. RES. 25

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise to make a few remarks and to make a motion. Everyone in this body knows one of the issues, the issue I believe is most holding back our economic recovery and most holding back our ability to sort through so many issues our country faces, is the issue of our debt and deficit. We are like $17 trillion in debt. The debt goes up over $4 billion every night when we go to sleep. This problem is structural in nature. Time alone will not solve this issue.

In the last 4 years, my time in the Senate, there has been no issue on which I have spent more time, spent more effort trying to reach out. I understand many of my colleagues actually try to avoid me in the hallways now because they fear they are going to get a Mark Warner harangue on the debt and deficit.

I also know the only way we are going to get this issue resolved is if both sides are willing to meet each other in the middle. This is a problem that cannot be solved by continuing to cut back on discretionary spending. It will require, yes, more revenues, and it will require entitlement reform. Those are issues where, unfortunately, in many ways our parties have not found agreement.

We have all agreed as well at least that, while we do not have to solve this problem overnight, we need at least $4 trillion in debt reduction over the next 10 years. The good thing is, while we have been lurching from budget crisis to budget crisis, we have gotten halfway to our goal. The good news as well is that this year both the Senate and the House adopted budget resolutions. As I said on the floor in March, I believe the Senate budget was a solid first chapter toward producing a balanced fiscal plan for our country. My vote for the Senate budget—and it was not a budget on which I would agree with every component part—was a vote for progress, a vote for regular order, regular order that so many of my distinguished colleagues who served here much longer than I say is the glue that holds this institution together.

It has now been 46 days since the Senate passed its budget. Unfortunately, there are certain colleagues on the other side of the aisle who seem to block our ability to go to conference. In a few minutes—just 2 minutes—I will ask my colleagues to agree to authorize the Chair to name a conference to the Budget Committee. Unfortunately, I expect that request to be objected to. I find that extremely disappointing. I can only speak at this point for folks from Virginia, but no single other issue is as overriding, as I travel across Virginia and I imagine for most of my colleagues as they travel across their States. At the end of the day, Americans, Virginians, want us to work together and get this issue solved.

We have seen, over the last 2½ years, as we have lurched from manufactured budget crisis to budget crisis, the effects on the stock market, on job creation, and our overall recovery. We have a chance to put this behind us. We need to find the kind of common ground between the House budget proposal and the Senate budget proposal on which so many have called upon us to work.

Again, I am going to make this motion in a moment. I want to add one last point. I appreciate some of the calls we have had from colleagues on the Republican side over the last couple of years for the Senate to pass a budget. I believed we needed to pass that budget. Mr. President, 46 days ago, after 100 amendments and a session that went until 5 o'clock in the morning, we passed such a document. I think it is time now that we allow the Senate to announce its conferees to meet with the House, to get a budget