

I thank the Senator from Ohio.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

HONORING ARMY SPECIALIST FREDERICK GREENE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Earlier today the assistant Democratic leader, who is now presiding, delivered some eloquent remarks about the murders at Fort Hood. I believe there were two soldiers from Illinois who were there. One was from Tennessee, from Mountain City, TN, which is a beautiful little part of our State, way up in the northeastern corner near Virginia. Some people have said it looks like Switzerland and that the people there talk in Elizabethan phrases and tones.

SPC Frederick Greene, according to an article in the Washington Post:

... was a Tennessee native so quiet and laid back that he earned the nickname "Silent Soldier" while stationed at Fort Hood preparing to go overseas.

He hoped to spend the months before his deployment to Afghanistan with his wife of less than 2 years. She had made arrangements to leave their home in Mountain City, TN, next week and move to Fort Hood until January, when Greene was to ship out.

Instead, [they] are planning his burial in the northeast corner of the state where he grew up.

This is what Specialist Greene's family had to say about him, and I think it speaks as eloquently about his life and service to our country as anything could. In their words:

Fred was a loved and loving son, husband and father, and often acted as the protector of his family.

Even before joining the Army, he exemplified the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage. Many of his fellow soldiers told us he was the quiet professional of the unit, never complaining about a job, and often volunteering when needed. Our family is grateful for the thoughts and prayers from people around the country. We would like to ask for privacy during this emotional time because Fred, too, was a very private person.

We will honor the request for privacy of the family, but we will also honor Fred Greene for his service to our country.

Speaking just for myself, but I am sure most Tennesseans, most Americans, feel the same way—for 8 years now, tens of thousands of men and women from Tennessee have fought in Iraq and Afghanistan to keep terrorism from spreading here.

It is tragic enough when any one of them is wounded or killed in that fight; it is beyond belief when one of them is wounded or killed at home in a terrorist act at Fort Hood. That is hard for us to accept. But in accepting it and asking questions that we inevitably must ask about how this could have happened, we certainly can honor each of those who were killed, each of those who were wounded.

We can respect their service, and I especially want to show my respect for the family of SPC Frederick Greene and for his service.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed following the remarks I just made a brief article from the Washington Post and an article from the Johnson City, TN, Press of Tuesday, November 10.

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

[From the Washington Post, Nov. 8, 2009]

SPEC. FREDERICK GREENE, 29

Spec. Frederick Greene was a Tennessee native so quiet and laid-back that he earned the nickname "Silent Soldier" while stationed at Fort Hood preparing to go overseas.

He hoped to spend the months before his deployment to Afghanistan with his wife of less than two years. She had made arrangements to leave their home in Mountain City, Tenn., next week and move to Fort Hood until January, when Greene was to ship out.

Instead, Greene's wife and family are planning his burial in the northeast corner of the state where he grew up.

The 29-year-old enlisted in the Army six months after getting married because the military seemed like the best way forward, said Howard Nourse of Kentwood, Mich., who said he considered Greene a grandson. Rural Mountain City offered relatively few opportunities to advance, and he wanted to build a career, perhaps in engineering.

Greene's mother died when he was a boy, and he was raised by her twin sister Karen Nourse, and Karen's husband, Rob Nourse. Family members are leaning on their Christian faith as they grieve, said Howard Nourse, Rob's father. "God is still in control," he said. "Even though we don't understand why something happens, He's still in control."

[From the Johnson City (TN) Press, Nov. 10, 2009]

LOCAL SOLDIER REMEMBERED BY COMMUNITY
(By Brian Bishop)

One of the 13 killed during Thursday's Fort Hood attack was a local man—29-year-old Army Specialist Frederick Greene.

"Fred was a loved and loving son, husband and father and often acted as the protector of this family," Army Public Affairs Cathy Gramling said in a prepared family statement Sunday outside the Johnson City home of Greene's parents, Karen and Rob Nourse.

"Even before joining the Army, he exemplified the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage. Many of his fellow soldiers told us he was the quiet professional of the unit, never complaining about a job given, and often volunteering when needed. Our family is grateful for the thoughts and prayers from people around the country. We would like to ask for privacy during this emotional time as Fred, too, was a very private person."

Greene's family did not participate in the news conference, opting to let the military spokeswoman read the prepared statement.

"I don't have any information about what happened during the shooting," Gramling said. "The Army and other investigators are going through that now. I will say this, regardless of Fred's actions during the shooting, he signed up to serve our country. In my mind, and I believe in the minds of the family, he's already a hero, regardless of what happened that day."

Fred's parents attend River of Life Church just down the road from their home and pastor Donnie Humphrey is making sure the family gets the full support of the church during this emotional time while ministering to the church as well.

"We're doing as much or as little as they want," Humphrey said. "In this situation, what we've got to be really careful about is smothering somebody. We want to be there for them if they need us but not be in the way. In the grieving process, there's anger, hurt and confusion. That's kind of where our congregation is too, in shock this morning because we kept this quiet. They were shocked, hurt, confused and I'm sure some folks are angry as well."

Church members and others in the community speak well of Greene, who joined the military in May 2008, and say it is a loss that will be felt for a long time to come. Those that have known Greene all his life say he was a smart man on his way up in the world.

"I've known Fred and his family his whole life and he was a very fine boy, one of the finest you ever met," family friend Glen Arney said.

"I worked with him at the A.C. Lumber and Truss Company where he worked for a number of years. He went from building trusses to being offered the job of designer, but he turned it down. He was one of those who was smarter and more well-read than he let on. Everybody who met him, loved Fred Greene."

Exact details about the shooting rampage are not known as investigators from multiple agencies are working out what transpired when officials say suspect Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan opened fire.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. ALEXANDER. We are in the middle of the health care debate. We have different points of view. I am sure people are confused by what they hear. I think that would be inevitable with a 2,000-page bill, which is the House-passed bill. That is all we have today while the Democratic majority leader writes his version of whatever we are expecting to act on, behind closed doors.

Earlier this week I talked to a woman in my home town. She expressed what I suppose many people believe. She said: I am very confused by what I hear, but I do not like what I hear. My husband lost his job. He was one of the lucky ones; he got a new job. But it only pays 60 percent of what he was earning doing the same work, and he does not have any benefits.

So, she said: I went back to work. I am a small business woman. We needed the benefits, so I went back to work.

But she said: These proposals I am hearing about do not seem to be working out the way they are supposed to. They are putting more costs on us when we buy our insurance and when, as a small business person, I have to buy insurance.

She said: I do not like what I hear.

I think she is expressing a real concern—it is a complicated bill. There is a lot of concern on both sides. We heard the other side talking about myths and reality. I see the Senator from South Dakota. It looks as though he has the 2,000-page bill with him. It is good that he is young and strong and can carry such things. His eyes are good, and he can read it. It will take a while to do that, which is why, when this bill gets to the Senate floor, we want to make sure we read the bill, we

know what it costs, and we help the American people understand how it affects them.

I would ask the Chair if he would please let me know when I have 60 seconds remaining on my 10 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair will advise the Senator.

Mr. ALEXANDER. What I would like to suggest this morning is that we ought to focus on a forgotten word, and the word is "cost." This is supposed to be about reducing the cost of health care not increasing the cost of health care; reducing the cost of our premiums, which 250 million of us have. We have health care plans upon which we or somebody else pays premiums for us. We would like for those to go down or at least stabilize. That is what this reform is supposed to be about—and reducing the cost of health care to our government because all of us, including our President, have seen that we are going to go broke if we do not do that.

Here is the President speaking at the White House health summit on March 5 in words I thoroughly agree with:

If people think we simply can take everybody who is not insured and load them up in a system where costs are out of control, it is not going to happen. We will run out of money. The Federal Government will be bankrupt. State governments will be bankrupt.

That is President Obama using the B-word. Yet the bill we have coming toward us is indeed historic. But it is historic in its combination of higher premiums not lower premiums, of higher taxes, of Medicare cuts, and of more Federal debt.

Millions of Americans will be forced into government plans, perhaps including a new one, when their employers look at the option and say: We are out of here. They will write their employees: Congratulations. We are going to write a check to the government. That is better for us as a company, our bottom line, and you are in the government health care plan.

That is going to come as a shock to millions of Americans. We do not hear as much about it here. But one way the House of Representatives plans to pay for this expensive bill, that's going to cost between \$2 trillion and \$3 trillion, according to various estimates when it is fully implemented over 10 years, is to shift some of the cost to the States.

The numbers we throw around here after a while do not have any reality to them, but if you are a Governor—and our Governor, a Democratic Governor, has said that the House-passed bill—now that is not the Senate bill because the Senate bill is still behind closed doors; we have not seen it—but the House-passed bill will add about \$1.3 billion cost to the State of Tennessee over the next 5 years for its share of the Medicaid costs, including reimbursement of physicians.

I have been the Governor of Tennessee. I know how much money that is, and I cannot see how the State of

Tennessee can afford to pay for its share of these proposed Medicaid costs unless it institutes a new State income tax or seriously damages higher education or both.

So we should take a different approach. Instead of a 2,000-page bill with higher premiums—people say: Well, that is a myth. Well, it is not a myth. I mean, if you add \$900 billion in taxes over 10 years to insurance companies and medical devices, who do you think is going to pay it? The people who pay for insurance premiums are going to pay it. If you tax the oil companies, who do you think is going to pay the tax? The people who buy gasoline. Taxes are not paid out of thin air; companies pass them on. So premiums are going to go up.

They are also going to go up because of government requirements for an "approved government policy." Senator COLLINS of Maine said 87 percent of people in Maine would be paying more for the premiums they have today if they had to buy them new under the House-passed plan. So why do we not take a different direction? Instead of these 2,000-page bills, that cost \$2 or \$3 trillion, and are full of surprises and confusion, why do we not just set a goal of reducing costs? Why do we not go step by step in reducing those costs? I bet we could agree on a lot of things. Going step by step in the right direction is one good way of getting where we want to go. It also provides bipartisan support which would provide bipartisan support of the country, which the President and the majority will need to sustain the program. We want the President to succeed because we want our country to succeed. He is our President. But this bill will not help him succeed. It will not help our country succeed.

Just to conclude with one example of what a step would be is the small business health care plan, which we worked on for a long time. Senator ENZI from Wyoming has been the principal sponsor. It would allow small businesses to combine and offer insurance to a larger number of employees.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, such a plan, as I just described, would add nearly 1 million, 750,000 people would become insured. Three out of four people who are employees of small business would have lower rates, and we would reduce the cost of Medicaid by \$1.4 billion.

That is just a step, but it is a step in the right direction. So I would hope we can focus on costs, reducing costs. Republicans have a series of steps we would like to take in that direction. We reject these 2,000-page bills that raise taxes and premiums and Medicare cuts. We hope we can come to some agreement before we conclude the debate.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I want to commend the Senator from Tennessee.

I totally support his approach. I think handling health care reform in a way that reflects a more thoughtful step-by-step approach is the correct way to proceed.

The leadership, the Democratic leadership in the House of Representatives, wanted to pass a health care reform bill in the worst possible way. They succeeded on Saturday, passing it in the worse possible way. It is a 2,000-page bill which was debated for about 4 hours and passed on a party-line vote. It was a partisan bill, very limited amount of debate, very few number of amendments that were offered. I think the Republicans were able to offer one substitute during that entire debate.

They passed out a 2,000-page bill that expands the Federal Government by \$3 trillion over 10 years when it is fully implemented. So you have a 2,000-page bill coming out of the House of Representatives, a \$3 trillion expansion of the Federal Government, and I think what the American people are probably asking in observing this process is, What does it all mean for me?

Well, let me tell you what it means. If you are a taxpayer in this country, if you are someone who currently does not have insurance in this country, you are going to pay higher taxes. If you are somebody who has insurance, you are going to pay higher taxes. If you are a medical device manufacturer, you are going to pay higher taxes. If you are a small business, you are going to pay higher taxes. If you are someone who has a flexible spending account, you are going to pay higher taxes. If you are someone who has a health savings account, you are going to pay higher taxes. If you are someone who itemizes on your tax return and deducts your medical expenses, you are going to pay higher taxes.

So pretty much that kind of covers the gamut. Everybody in this country is going to be hit with higher taxes to pay for this monstrosity, this 2,000-page bill, which, according to the CBO, raises taxes in the first 10 years by three-quarters of \$1 trillion.

What is interesting about that, when I mention that people who do not have insurance are going to pay higher taxes, there is, in this bill, what is called an "individual mandate." Those who would pay the higher tax under the individual mandate—it would raise taxes by about \$33 billion—are people who currently do not have health insurance coverage. What is interesting about that is that the CBO has looked at who would be impacted by the individual mandate and found that almost half of that tax burden would fall on taxpayers who are making between \$22,800 a year and \$68,400 a year. So about half of the individual mandate, about half of that \$33 billion tax increase, would fall on individuals who, in their incomes, fall into the middle of that category, \$22,800 a year to \$68,400 a year. That is according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Now, it raises taxes by \$135 billion on businesses through what is called a

“pay-or-play mandate.” In other words, if you do not offer health insurance, you do not offer insurance that meets the government requirement, then you pay a payroll tax starting at 2 percent, up to 8 percent of payroll. That raises \$135 billion in this bill in additional taxes and taxes that are going to hit small businesses.

There are also taxes on what they call “high-income earners.” That raises about \$460 billion in the bill. It is designed to hit people who make between \$500,000 and up to \$1 million a year, which is sort of the traditional “tax the rich and pay for this thing.”

The dirty little secret in all of that is that tax hits a lot of small businesses. In fact, about one-third of that tax is going to fall on small businesses that file or are organized as subchapter S corporations or LLCs and therefore file on the individual tax return.

So we are going to be faced with a situation where next year a small business—when the tax cuts that were enacted in 2001 and 2003, the top marginal income tax rate—goes from 35 percent to up to 39.6 percent. You will add in this health care, this 2,000-page bill, a 5.4-percent surtax on those high-income earners. So if you can believe this, the top marginal income tax, Federal income tax rate in this country, will go up to 45 percent—45 percent.

That is the highest rate we have seen in 25 years. As I said, it would be one thing if it were just hitting high-income individuals who were making more than $\frac{1}{2}$ million a year, but it does not. It hits small businesses, small businesses that are organized as partnerships, subchapter S corporations, LLCs, and, therefore, file an individual tax return.

So they have \$460 billion of tax increases there, \$135 billion in the pay-or-play mandate, \$33 billion in tax increases through the individual mandate—all totaled, \$752 billion in new taxes in this 2,000-page bill that are going to be passed on and paid for by the American public.

The Joint Tax Committee said of the Senate bill—by the way, this is the Senate version of the bill. This is only 1,500 pages. We do not know—as the Senator from Tennessee pointed out—what the final Senate bill is going to look like.

All we know is that this is the version that was reported out of the Finance Committee, 1,500 pages also filled with higher taxes on individuals and small businesses.

The argument was made that we will make the people who are wealthy, the affluent, pay for this. What the Joint Tax Committee found was that 87 percent of the tax burden in the Senate Finance Committee bill would be paid by wage earners making less than \$200,000 a year and a little over 50 percent would be paid by those making under \$100,000 a year. If one fits into those categories, there are 46 million Americans who will be hit with higher taxes under the 1,500-page Senate Fi-

nance Committee bill as opposed to the 2,000-page House bill that passed on Saturday.

I remind my colleagues that when we talk about a massive \$3 trillion expansion of the Federal Government, it has to be paid for somehow. Of course in this case, it is paid for in the form of higher taxes and by way of Medicare cuts that will hit very hard on seniors, \$170 billion in cuts to Medicare Advantage, cuts to providers such as hospitals, home health agencies, hospices. Everybody gets to have their reimbursements cut in order to finance this \$3 trillion monstrosity of an expansion of the Federal Government.

Having said that, it would be one thing if, in fact, the goal was accomplished, which is to reduce health care costs. Ironically, after a \$3 trillion expansion of the Federal Government and three-quarter trillion dollars in additional taxes in the first 10 years, we don't see any impact on insurance premiums. In fact, they will not go down; they will actually go up.

I want to read what the Congressional Budget Office said about that:

On balance, during the decade following the 10-year budget window, the bill would increase both federal outlays for health care and the federal budgetary commitment to health care, relative to the amounts under current law.

That is consistent with everything we have heard so far from the Congressional Budget Office about the impact this bill would have on overall health care costs and on the premiums average Americans would end up having to pay.

With respect to State governments, because something has been said in this bill about the expansion of Medicaid, in fact, there is a massive expansion of the Medicaid Program, to the point that a decade from now one-quarter of the entire population would be on Medicaid. This was a program that at one time was designed to assist poor, disabled people who really need assistance with health care. A decade from now, with this expansion of Medicaid, we would see one-quarter of the population on Medicaid.

The other component of that, the element I think should be so disturbing to States—as we all know, Medicaid is a State-Federal shared responsibility. I see the Senator from Nebraska, Mr. JOHANNIS, a former Governor, who knows full well about the cost of Medicaid to State budgets. What this bill would do is increase the amount of cost passed on to States by \$34 billion. States are going to have to look at how they are going to finance this thing, probably in the form of additional and higher taxes.

We have a \$3 trillion expansion of the Federal Government, cuts to Medicare that will affect not only seniors but also most providers, and massive increases in taxes which will hit squarely small businesses and individuals, in particular individuals who make less than \$100,000 a year. We need to do

what the Senator from Tennessee suggested; that is, start over and do this step by step rather than a massive expansion of the government that raises taxes and increase health care costs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. GILLIBRAND). The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. JOHANNIS. Madam President, if I may start out today and use a portion of my time to ask if the Senator from South Dakota would answer a question or two about Medicaid, the first question I have for the Senator from South Dakota is, when it comes to Medicaid, why would we be putting a mandate on States at a time when every State in the country is going through a difficult budget cycle? In fact, Nebraska literally, as I speak, is in special session to cut the budget by over \$300 million. Why would we do that with this health care bill?

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, that is exactly the point. Why would we pass on \$34 billion in additional cost to States when, as my colleague suggested, in States such as Nebraska and South Dakota, it is on the front page every day about decisions made at the State level, about cuts that will have to occur, looking at revenue increases, with the economy in the difficult situation it is in? I can't imagine complicating that by passing on an additional \$34 billion in cost that every Governor and every State legislature will have to deal with.

Mr. JOHANNIS. Madam President, I begin my comments and thank the Senator from South Dakota for answering that question. Having been a Governor and, for that matter, a mayor, this is a very difficult time back home. When I refer to “back home,” I refer to Nebraska, but every Senator could say the same. State budgets are struggling.

Today, I rise because I believe there is another important point to be stressed as Senators on both sides of the abortion issue decide how they want to approach their vote relative to this legislation.

We saw a clear pro-life approach when the House passed what is now being referred to as the Stupak amendment. That amendment is straightforward. It says no Federal tax dollars will pay for abortions, whether that is directly or through subsidies or any other means. Put another way: If you accept a subsidy from the Federal Government, you cannot use that to fund an abortion. It is clear and straightforward. This carries on the long-standing tradition of separating tax dollars from abortions.

Now the focus is on the Senate. The House passed their legislation on Saturday. I have heard very little about the importance of what some have characterized as little more than a procedural vote. In reality, it is an important vote that might well become the deciding factor in the debate over Federal funding of abortion. Let me explain. It all depends on whether the

ban on Federal funding of abortions is weakened in the Senate bill compared to the House.

As I speak today, the Senate bill is being written behind closed doors by the majority leader and others. If their final product includes anything less than the House-passed ban, the critical vote for pro-life Senators will be their vote on cloture on the motion to proceed. Why? Because if the motion to proceed is successful, it will end, in my opinion, any chance to match the House bill's ban on using Federal funds to fund abortion. It is the way the Senate works, according to its rules. Sixty votes would be needed to change the bill once a motion to proceed passes. Let me repeat: 60 votes would be needed to change the bill once a motion to proceed passes. We all know, regrettably, that there are not 60 Senators who would support the House provision that bans Federal funding for abortions; therefore, we would lack the votes to close the door on Federal funding of abortions if this bill proceeds to the floor with a weakened approach.

The ban on Federal funding of abortions must be a part of the Senate bill before debate is allowed to proceed. Don't be fooled by the claims that the motion to proceed to the bill is a first step in improving the bill; it will be the final say for the pro-life community.

I applaud my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have declared they will accept nothing less than a complete separation between Federal funds and abortion services. I wish to express unequivocally, I stand firmly with them. If we are presented with a weakened ban on Federal funding of abortion compared to the House version, we must vote against cloture on the motion to proceed to the bill. In my judgment, this point should be nonnegotiable.

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.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3082, which the clerk will report by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3082) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of

Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Johnson/Hutchison amendment No. 2730, in the nature of a substitute.

Udall (NM) amendment No. 2737 (to amendment No. 2730), to make available from Medical Services, \$150,000,000 for homeless veterans comprehensive service programs.

Johnson amendment No. 2733 (to amendment No. 2730), to increase by \$50,000,000 the amount available for the Department of Veterans Affairs for minor construction projects for the purpose of converting unused Department of Veterans Affairs structures into housing with supportive services for homeless veterans, and to provide an offset.

Franken/Johnson amendment No. 2745 (to amendment No. 2730), to ensure that \$5,000,000 is available for a study to assess the feasibility and advisability of using service dogs for the treatment or rehabilitation of veterans with physical or mental injuries or disabilities.

Inouye amendment No. 2754 (to amendment No. 2730), to permit \$68,500,000, as requested by the Missile Defense Agency of the Department of Defense, to be used for the construction of a test facility to support the Phased Adaptive Approach for missile defense in Europe, with an offset.

Coburn amendment No. 2757 (to amendment No. 2730), to require public disclosure of certain reports.

Durbin amendment No. 2759 (to amendment No. 2730), to enhance the ability of the Department of Veterans Affairs to recruit and retain health care administrators and providers in underserved rural areas.

Durbin amendment No. 2760 (to amendment No. 2730), to designate the North Chicago Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Illinois, as the "Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center".

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. JOHNSON. Madam President, I look forward to making progress on the MILCON-VA bill today so we can reach agreement on a finite list of amendments and vote on them next Monday, followed by final passage of the bill. I wish we were in that position today, but since that is not possible, I hope we can at least arrive at a roadmap to final passage next week.

This bill is too important to our military troops and their families and to our Nation's veterans to allow it to become caught up in petty politics. We do not need grandstanding on this bill or message amendments or delaying tactics driven by a political agenda. We just need to get the job done and get this bill to the President.

We will be working throughout the day to try to clear and dispose of non-controversial amendments and to try to come up with a short, finite list of amendments that can be voted on next Monday so we can clear the way for final passage of the bill that same day.

I know the leaders and the cloakrooms, as well as the committee staff, are working hard to clear amendments. I hope we will be at a point to dispose of some of those amendments soon.

I do not need to remind my colleagues that tomorrow is Veterans Day. If we cannot complete this bill today, let us at least return home with a plan to finish the bill next Monday.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

AMENDMENT NO. 2752 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2730

Mr. JOHANNNS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment, if there is one, be set aside and that amendment No. 2752 be called up.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nebraska [Mr. JOHANNNS] proposes an amendment numbered 2752 to amendment No. 2730.

Mr. JOHANNNS. 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: Prohibiting use of funds to fund the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN))

On page 60, after line 24, insert the following:

SEC. 6. None of the funds made available under this Act may be distributed to the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) or its subsidiaries.

Mr. JOHANNNS. Madam President, this is an amendment I have offered on several appropriations bills. Each time, it has passed with overwhelming bipartisan support. Additionally, the continuing resolution includes similar language. But, of course, the CR runs out on December 18.

We need to continue passing this amendment; therefore, I need to continue to offer it. It basically says we are blocking all Federal funding under this bill to ACORN. I do have a piece of legislation pending that would take care of this across the Federal system, but that has not come to a vote yet. So I am offering today this amendment on ACORN. This amendment will continue to protect taxpayer dollars.

I do want to indicate to the manager of the bill that, of course, I am happy to work with my colleagues on a voice vote whenever the appropriate time arises for that to occur.

With that, Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I rise today on the eve of Veterans Day to honor all those who have and are now serving to protect our freedoms, especially the service men and women of my State who have such a vital role in our Nation's defense.

At trouble spots across the world—from Afghanistan to Korea, Iraq to Kosovo—Alaskan servicemembers are on the front lines.

Today, I welcome the opportunity to praise Alaska's service men and women, their families who are such a key part of our communities, and the thousands of veterans who have chosen to live in the 49th State.