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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, June 15, 2012, at 10 a.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13, 2012

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, give to us today the measure of grace we need to obtain Your promises. Lead our lawmakers to so embrace these promises that they will accept Your guidance, obey Your word, and walk in Your way. Lord, give them the grace so to run that they may reach their goal and so keep the faith that they may be true to You to the very end. Make them wise with Your wisdom, strong with Your strength, and pure with Your holiness.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUYE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 13, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUYE,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

FLOOD INSURANCE REFORM AND MODERNIZATION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

Mr. REID. I move to proceed to Calendar No. 250, S. 1940.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 250, S. 1940, a bill to amend the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, to restore the financial solvency of the flood insurance fund, and for other purposes.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. The Senate will continue to debate the farm bill today. We have a couple of votes lined up. We expect to have those this morning.

NOT TO COMPROMISE

Last week, in a moment of candor, House Republicans, led by Representative CANTOR, admitted they have given up legislating until after the election. Although there is far more work to be done, they have said they are going to have a timeout. I repeat, there is so much to be done—especially building on 27 straight months of private sector job growth—Republicans in the House are lurching from one recess to the next long recess. They don't take short ones, they take long ones. Last week's unscripted moment was a window into today's Republican Party—a party that obviously cares more about winning elections than creating jobs.

Then a couple of days ago we had another frank assessment of the Republican agenda. Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush said Monday that his father, George H.W. Bush, and Ronald Reagan would not fit into today's Republican Party. He went on to elaborate about some of the issues in which they are simply headed in the wrong direction. Governor Bush said today's GOP is defined by ''an orthodoxy that doesn't allow for disagreement.''

He is right. The Republican Party no longer has room for moderates or anyone unwilling to march in lockstep with the radical tea party. That is apparent every day on Capitol Hill—more so in the House than in the Senate, but it has now infected the Senate. It was obvious from the first weeks of this Congress that the House was taken over by extremists with no desire to work for the sake of the economy and

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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no concept of the meaning of compromise—and legislation is the art of compromise.

But over the last year and a half it has become clear that Republicans in the Senate are also in thrall to the tea party. We see the extremism in this Chamber—I have just mentioned that—where Republicans have blocked or stalled most every jobs creation measure we have brought to the floor. We see it on the campaign trail, where Mitt Romney told a crowd he opposes hiring anymore teachers, firefighters, and police officers. Putting more teachers in the classroom used to be a goal Democrats and Republicans could agree on. But all over the country, things are happening just as happened in Nevada a couple of days ago, where the school district—let's see, it must be about the third or fourth largest school district now in the country, the Clark County school district, with well more than 300,000 students—indicated they were going to lay off 1,000 teachers. But as a result of not filling some positions because of retirements, they were able to have to only lay off about 400-some-odd people. It is happening all over the country.

Sending more cops out on patrol used to be something that—I can remember when JOE BIDEN was down here fighting for his COPS Program. Police departments in Nevada loved the opportunity to get more people on the street. That is the way it was all over the country. We used to fight to get more cops on the street. Now we are doing everything we can to stop the layoffs, and we can't do enough because we can't get a bill passed over here to help. Hiring more brave men and women to fight fires and save lives used to be a goal Democrats and Republicans could agree on. Not now.

Because of global warming, there are fires raging all over the West. I spoke to Senator BINGAMAN from New Mexico yesterday. That fire in New Mexico is 400,000 acres and, he said, we have another fire that has broken out of only 40,000 acres. On the news this morning out of Colorado, one person has been killed, scores of buildings and homes burned to the ground. The tankers they are using to fight these fires are old. One of them crashed in Nevada last week, killing the pilots.

But today's radical Republicans have another agenda—not hiring more cops and not doing something to stop the teacher layoffs, but their goal is to drag down the economy because it is good for their politics. They believe the more horrible the economy is, the better off they are going to be in November. They love bad news.

We still have the fact that even though there were more than 8 million jobs lost during the Bush administration, we have been fortunate to bring back 4.3 million of those jobs. But we could have done so much more with the jobs measures we have brought before this body that were lost on procedural grounds over here.

Yesterday Governor Bush said his father and President Reagan—neither of whom could win a Republican primary today—both ''sacrificed political points for good public policy.''

I believe that. I was not a pal of Ronald Reagan's. I met him and worked with him. But Paul Laxalt—who retired, and I ran for his spot—was his pal, his friend. Ronald Reagan would not put up with what is going on here today, because there is no question that with Ronald Reagan the country came first, not elections.

I have great admiration for the first President Bush. I have in my private possessions a couple of handwritten notes he wrote to me. He would not put up with what is going on today. He was a pragmatist. He wanted to get things done for our country. He wasn't an ideologue. He was conservative. Certainly no one is better qualified to be President than the first Bush. He was a Congressman, head of the CIA, head of the Republican National Committee, the Vice President, Ambassador to China. He was interested in his country, not elections. He was a Republican, but we could work with him.

Today's Republicans aren't interested in good policy and, obviously, they aren't interested in creating jobs. They are too obsessed with defeating President Obama. That is their No. 1 goal. But don't take my word for it. The minority leader said so himself. This is what he said:

> The single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term President.

That is a quote.

America is battling its way back from the greatest recession since the Great Depression. And although we have created 4.3 million private sector jobs, there is so much more to be done.

I just left a meeting with people interested in infrastructure. We have 70,000 bridges in America that need repair and replacement. Not 700, not 7,000 but 70,000. The highway bill is hung up over in the House someplace. They aren't focused on jobs because they are too busy checking the political scoreboard.

Will the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

Under the previous order, the following hour will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, tomorrow, the President plans to deliver a speech to once again tout his favorite approach to the economy. I say that because aides to the President say we should not expect much new in the speech. We can expect more of the same: More government, more debt, and higher taxes to pay for it all.

According to news reports, some Democrats are starting to get a little wary of this approach. A number of folks who worked in the Clinton administration have suggested something more positive. But others are pleading with the President to double down on the message that government is the answer.

So far it appears as though the hard-left wing of the party has the upper hand. As liberal columnist E.J. Dionne suggested recently in the Washington Post:

> Let's turn [Reagan's] declaration on its head. Opposition to government isn't the solution.

Opposition to government was and remains the problem, and that is precisely what the President appears to be doing—doubling down on the same government-driven solutions that have kept the private sector mired in what some are calling the worst recovery ever.

These folks have so much faith in government that they seem blind to any failure or excess. They make no distinction between the things government has done well in the past and the things it does not do well now.

They have no limiting principle whatsoever. This is their logic: If you like the Hoover Dam, you should support bureaucrats making higher salaries and better benefits than the taxpayers who are paying for them. If you like the Transcontinental Railroad, you should support a $1 trillion stimulus bill that has been more effective at creating punch lines for late night comedians than it has at creating jobs. If you like the GI bill, they believe you must also embrace a debt-to-GDP ratio that makes us look like Greece.

These folks seem to have no limiting principle whatsoever when it comes to the growth of government. They have blind faith in it. It is the only thing they ever seem to want, and they are completely out of touch.

The President wants you to believe the reason we are in this economic slump is because States and local governments have been laying off government workers. But what he does not tell you, and what the American people will not hear him say tomorrow, is that since the recession began, for every government worker who has lost a job 11 private sector jobs have been lost—for every government worker who has lost a job 11 private sector jobs have been lost.

Another thing you will not hear the President say is that public sector unemployment is just over 4 percent—unemployment among public workers, just over 4 percent—while all other private sector industries are at least twice that. So government employment is not the problem. It is the private sector that is suffering, and it is the private sector where we need to focus our policies.

So the battle lines are clear: After 3½ years of failure, Democrats in Washington have one suggestion: more of the same. The President can repackage it however he wants tomorrow, but that is what it amounts to: more government, more debt, and fewer jobs—and that is not what Americans want.

Republicans have refused to go along with this approach, and we will continue to oppose it until the Democrats recognize what most Americans already seem to know: government is not the answer to what ails us; government is not the answer to what ails us. It does not mean government does not do some things well. It means government has its limits, and we have reached them.

I saw a story line this week about a high school in Utah. It said the school has been fined $15,000 for selling carbonated drinks. The school has been fined $15,000 for selling carbonated drinks. Why? Because Federal nutrition guidelines say the school cannot sell sugary drinks during lunch hour. Students could buy them before lunch and drink them during lunch, but they cannot buy them during lunch and drink them during lunch. The government will not allow it.

Madam President, we are not talking about the Transcontinental Railroad. We are talking about a government that has no sense of its own limits under the constitution and a President who does not seem to be willing to embrace anything that does not start and end with a government bureaucrat calling the shots.

It is time for a change, and here is what I would suggest: One, the Democrat-led Senate should pass a budget. It has not done so in 3 years. Two, the Senate should take up the 28 job-related bills the House Republicans passed that are collecting dust on the majority leader's desk. Three, we should pass comprehensive tax reform; and, four, entitlement reform. This Nation will not be able to get out from under the mountain of debt we have without addressing the out-of-control spending related to these programs. They are simply unsustainable.

As I said yesterday, without Presidential leadership, it simply cannot happen. The same failed policies are not going to cut it. The only question is whether Democrats in Washington are capable of seeing that.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, what is the speaker situation? Do I have some time now to respond to the Republican leader?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Currently, the time is under control of the Republican leader for the next 27 minutes.

Mrs. BOXER. OK. I would ask if I could have 2 minutes just to respond to my friend.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, we are going to divide time; are we not?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Yes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I suggest the Senator from California use Democratic time, and the time on this side be reserved.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I ask that I be allowed to speak on the Democratic side's time for up to 5 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I thank the Republican leader.

It just stuns me when the Republican leader comes to the floor and has his ''blame Obama'' moment every day that he can. I thought this one was over the top. It is as if President Obama came in and everything was great and suddenly things are not going well.

Excuse me, I was here. I know. I remember when we had surpluses under Bill Clinton and the Democrats, and the Republicans turned it into deficits as far as the eye could see.

I cannot forget that because I remember a time when there was discussion about whether we were even going to have U.S. Treasurys anymore because we were not going to have debt anymore when Bill Clinton was President, and the Democrats set us on that right course. We had a balance between investments in our people and fair taxes so that the top 1 percent paid a fair share, and everybody did well.

Madam President, 23 million new jobs were created with Bill Clinton. Then George W. comes in. Two wars go on the credit card, tax breaks to the wealthiest few—the millionaires and billionaires—on the credit card, and suddenly we have a crisis: No regulation of these sophisticated securities.

My friend in the chair, the Acting President pro tempore, knows well what happened: no oversight, derivatives, new kinds of securities, taking a beautiful home ownership ethic we had in this country and gambling on it. What happened? The worst crisis since the Great Depression.

Who comes into office? President Obama takes the oath. The unbelievable crisis he inherited and the unbelievable debt he inherited and the unbelievable budget deficit he inherited was just unbelievable. An auto industry was going to be gone.

My friend Senator MCCONNELL has a right to his opinion, and I respect it so much except he avoids telling the facts about how we got where we are. The American people do not suffer from amnesia. They understand this. They saw this President, this young President come in, faced with jobs bleeding 800,000 a month. Yes, he turned it around. Yes, he did, in fact, promote a rescue of the auto industry. We would have been the only great economy that did not have one if it was not for his courage. Yes, a couple of courageous votes on the Republican side joining with Democrats—that was a good moment. Yes, as Mitt Romney said: Oh yeah, they could have gone busto, bankrupt. We did not feel that way here. The President did not feel that way.

So all of this Obama bashing on the floor of the Senate is going to continue because Senator MCCONNELL is a very straightforward person, and he said—and I quote not the exact words, the sentiment, close to the exact words: Defeating President Obama is the highest priority of the Republicans. We are seeing that play out on this floor. I pledged that I would come here when I could to straighten out the record.

So let's be clear. This President took over in the worst of times since the Great Depression. There have been millions of jobs created—not enough. I will say this: If this economy sputters, this economic recovery we are in sputters, and has a hard time because of the depth of the crisis originally—the fact that the housing crisis still continues, the fact that there are problems in the global marketplace in Europe, and all of these factors—I want to say this: I want the person in the Oval Office to be a person who understands what is happening, and that is President Obama, who relates to working people, who relates to the middle class, who is not building an elevator for his cars in San Diego. That is how I feel.

Every time there is an attack on this President, I am going to come down here and tell the truth to the American people.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Madam President, I heard the remarks of my colleague from California, and I just cannot let the record stand that President Obama took over in the worst circumstances of our time. Really? The debt of this country was around $10 trillion when President Obama took office. In just 3½ years, that debt has almost doubled. We are now over $15 trillion and will soon be hitting the $16 trillion debt ceiling limit in just 3½ years. We are in a debt crisis not from the previous administration, we are in a debt crisis because we are spending too much, we are borrowing too much, and the President keeps talking about more taxes.

Just last Friday, the President came out and said: ''The private sector is doing [just] fine.'' It is government that is in a crisis. Well, yes, government is in a crisis. The private sector

is not doing just fine, and the government crisis is not caused because we are losing government jobs.

The government crisis is caused because we are spending too much, and we are going into debt that is unsustainable in this country.

For the millions of Americans who are out of work in this country, the President's assessment of the private sector must be like salt poured in a wound. My goodness, we have seen job numbers of over 8 percent unemployment since the President took office. The last 3 months have been not so good. We are still over 8 percent, and we went up a little bit to 8.2 percent in May.

So to the nearly 13 million Americans who are unemployed and the millions more who are underemployed or have left the labor force altogether because they have lost hope—Mr. President, things are not fine, and the private sector is not fine in this country, and the middle class is bearing the brunt.

On top of the unemployment rate for those who are in poverty conditions, the people who hold jobs are also losing ground. On Monday, the Federal Reserve reported that the median net worth of American families fell 39 percent between 2007 and 2010. We have not seen these levels since 1992.

During the same period, incomes also dropped sharply. Average household income fell 11 percent to $78,500, down from $88,300. The hardest hit? Families in the rapidly diminishing middle class. While these statistics are troubling, there is a concern that cannot be measured in dollars and cents; that is, that families are losing faith in a secure future. There was a time when every generation had a better quality of life and expected a better quality of life for their children than their parents had. That is not the case today.

In 2010, 35 percent of families said they did not have a good idea of what their income would be just for the next year. That was 31.4 percent in 2007, 35 percent now. So the number of families who are losing the faith that their children are going to have a better life than they have had is diminishing.

How could they be confident? The job creators in the private sector are the ones under siege. I cannot believe the President of the United States is so off base as to say the private sector is doing fine. Just this week, the National Federation of Independent Business released its monthly survey of small business optimism. Survey results continue to be historically low and consistent with the subpar performance of gross domestic product.

According to this survey, levels of hiring and spending remained depressed in May. We all know that. More important, so did plans for the future. The same report states that expectations for increasing future sales continued to be weak in May, far below readings recorded in any other similar period since 1973.

Many small business owners are reluctant to expand their businesses or hire more workers. Small business owners who expect the economy to further deteriorate outnumber those who think there will be an improvement. Small businesses are our Nation's primary job creators. Small business provided 55 percent of all jobs in the private sector.

Small business has created two of every three net jobs in the United States since the early 1970s. So I would say to the President of the United States, it is small business that is the economic engine of America, not government. That is the fundamental disagreement we have with this administration.

We must spur the private sector to create income, growth, and security in this country. The private sector is not doing fine. What should we be doing to help Americans get back to work? We need to address what is causing the uncertainty. Why are businesses not hiring? Because government spending that serves to crowd out the private sector is increasing. There are tax increases being talked about by the President constantly.

So they are looking at looming tax increases, burdensome regulations that they see coming by the bills, such as this, out of the U.S. Government. Those regulations hamper job growth in this country.

Then, on top of all that, on top of the talk of new taxes, on top of the burdensome regulations our small businesses face every day, in bigger numbers every day, it is the health care law that was passed 2 years ago this December.

If we want people to be hired, we cannot saddle our entrepreneurs and small businesses with new taxes, more regulations, and the cost, the overwhelming burden of the Obama health care plan.

President Obama, in an interview yesterday, dismissed questions from a small business owner about the negative impact of the health care law and what it is already doing to small businesses. Anybody who has paid their part of insurance, if they are lucky enough to be covered, knows that the premiums have increased and the coverage has decreased in anticipation of the Obama health care law, adding the new burden and cost on insurance companies, hospitals, doctors.

The costs of doing business in health care are increasing in anticipation of that health care law taking full effect in the next year. I have heard so much opposition in my home State when I travel around from small businesses that are just throwing up their hands and saying: I cannot provide the government-approved health care for my employees, which is going to mean I will have a new tax burden for every one of them as they then have to go on the government plan and fend for themselves.

Even families are going to have to do it or they will have to pay a tax. It is not just a good plan, it is the government-approved plan. So if they provide 35 percent of their employees' premiums, which is what they can afford, but the government requires more than that, they will still have to pay the fine. The small businesses are saying: I am going to pay the fine because that is my only alternative. Those with more than 50 employees, will have costly new Federal regulations to comply with. The financial penalty is so great we are seeing businesses stop at 49 so they will not have more workers and therefore have a bigger responsibility.

I received a letter from a small business owner in Arlington who said it best: ''Did Congress and the President know they were going to freeze our country's businesses' ability to help grow this economy when they passed this bill?'' I will point out that not one Republican in the House or Senate voted for this bill in Congress. So I would have to say to my small business constituent in Arlington: This was the Democrats in Congress and the President's bill. Not one Republican would support it because of the fear of exactly what is happening; that is, small business owners are losing faith that they will be able to grow, and that is what is causing the economic crisis we are in with unemployment over 8 percent.

A small business owner in Corpus Christi, TX, who has 34 employees told my office that his company's cheapest option for health insurance would boost premiums by 44 percent over last year. How can they do it? It is happening everywhere. I hear it everywhere I go. Clearly, this is not the incentive our economy needs right now.

We need government to get out of the way of the job creators in this country not block their path with miles of regulations, new burdens and costs—new regulations, new costs—and then the talk of new taxes which is prevalent everywhere.

Our best hope is that the Supreme Court will see this has a constitutional problem. Then we can start again and take a step-by-step reform. That will do what all of us want to do. Everyone in Congress and the President had the same goal; that is, to have more Americans with affordable coverage and options.

But that is not the bill that was passed, and it is why Republicans could not possibly support it, because they saw the burdens on families, on businesses, and they knew it was not going to encourage hiring, which is what we need in this country. We have a chance to start a process that will be positive. We need to do something to spur small business in this economy.

One thing that could be done, which is in discussions right now, is the Keystone XL Pipeline, which would create a $7 billion, shovel-ready, privately funded project that would transport over 700,000 barrels of oil from Canada

to the United States. It has been estimated it would create 20,000 construction jobs and as many as 100,000 jobs at refineries and other businesses.

By the way, we would be trading with a friendly partner, Canada, so we would not have to import more from unfriendly parts of the Middle East, and we would also be able to know that these are privately funded jobs, not one government cent. In fact, it would create taxes being paid to the government because people would be working, and that is the way we should be growing our revenue in this country.

But the President suggested a different solution. He said the answer is not to spur the private sector because they are doing just fine. He said let's spend more money bailing out the States because they are having a hard time. They are having a hard time. We can do something for the States, and it is not bailing them out with more borrowed Federal dollars that will continue to weigh down the dollar itself. No. We can do something for State governments; that is, stop sending Federal mandates that we do not pay for that we require them to do, put a moratorium on Federal mandates on States today. Let's start repealing these Federal mandates we are requiring States to absorb. It is killing their economies.

Medicaid and the lack of flexibility in Medicaid is the biggest expense most States have. It is a Federal mandate unpaid for and inflexible, not the choice States could make to cover the people who need the help. We can help the States but not at the expense of our dollar and our debt.

So the President is suggesting more spending and bailing out States, and we are offering a solution that says let's create jobs in the private sector. Keystone XL is ready to go right now, private sector, 100,000 future jobs, not one penny from the Federal Government.

Let's take these Federal regulations and let's put a moratorium on them right now and free our small businesses to be the entrepreneurs that built this country. It was the entrepreneurs who built this country in freedom. This country has been a magnet for people coming from all over the world because they could do their research in freedom. They could grow in freedom. They could keep the fruits of their labor and give their kids a better chance than they had, which they could not get in their home country. That is what built this country.

We can get right back there, but it is not by borrowing more, spending more, taxing more, and regulating our small businesses out of existence. We can do something positive, and it is time we got started.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, how much time remains?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Ten minutes.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I, too, wish to rise and talk some about the President's statement of last Friday but from maybe a different approach than one might imagine.

The President said he thought the private sector was doing just fine. I was driving in the car when I heard the statement, and the statement took me back because I feared the President might not actually know how the private sector truly was doing.

Twelve weeks ago, I spent a week on the road doing townhalls, knocking on doors, visiting with Georgians. I come to the floor to provide some information to the President that maybe the private sector isn't doing that well, and maybe there is something we can do about it—this administration and this Senate—because right now we are doing nothing and America is languishing because of problems, some of which are our making.

The private sector, by definition, is everybody other than the government sector; at least that is my definition. Let me talk about everybody other than the government sector for a minute and why they are not doing very well. Let me talk about the homebuilder I met in Valdosta, GA, who talked to me about the fact that he had just sold a home he built. I said that is great; house sales are getting better. He said, the only problem is I could not get an appraisal for what it cost me to build the house, so I am selling it, but I am selling it at a loss. Part of that is because of the regulation and oppression that is on appraisers right now because of a fear of appraisal fraud.

Or the tomato farmer I talked to from Bainbridge, GA. He talked about the indignation he had when the Labor Department promulgated a rule—they did not end up passing it—that would have said you have to be 18 years or older to work on a farm, even if it was your family farm—an overreach of the Department of Labor that, fortunately, they pulled back, but the type of overreach that causes people to retrench, not build and expand and move their business forward.

Or the 81-year-old community banker I talked to yesterday on the phone, from Calhoun, GA, who had a significant amount of his savings invested in stock in the community bank he had been a part of so much of his life, which is now under a cease-and-desist letter from the FDIC and is being managed under what is called a cease-and-desist order, which means the FDIC is basically running the bank, or limiting its parameters. The bank is slowly but surely dissipating its capital base until it gets to 2 percent and then the Feds will come in and close the bank and transfer its assets to a bigger bank and give them an 80-percent loss share guarantee, and the bigger bank will foreclose on the property and move forward.

In fact, what was intended by Dodd-Frank to reduce too big to fail and empower banks has done the opposite; the bigger banks have gotten bigger, the smaller banks have become fewer, and American banking and capital investment is less.

Or the hospital I visited in Thomasville, GA, which just finished its completion, the Archibald Center—a great center. They were talking about the difficulties they were having with employees and the fear they had that the NLRB mini-union ruling on Specialty Health Care was actually going to become the law of the land through regulation, where micro units within a facility could actually unionize, where just nurses in the emergency room, or in the ICU, could unionize, and everybody else would not. Can you imagine a hospital, department store, or a manufacturer with a union in the shoe department, a union in the nursing department, a union in the lumber department, a union on the loading dock, micro unions throughout the organization? You could not function; you couldn't cross-train, you couldn't manage. You would weight the playing field between management and labor in favor of labor and to the detriment of the investor who made the investment.

I could go on and on. It is those visits that I have talked about, the people in those cities I have talked to in Georgia, people in the private sector—they are not doing well. And it is for fear of overregulation and of uncertainty. If we can do anything to empower our economy in the short run in America, we can call time out and say enough is enough.

As I told a member of the administration 2 weeks ago, the administration, I think, wants to eliminate risk. Our job is not to eliminate; it is to mitigate risk. If you eliminate risk, you take the power of investments in the private sector, entrepreneurship, and capital risk, you take it out the window. You can't eliminate risk, but you can mitigate risk. So let's get back to mitigating risk, making sure we have a safe workplace, but where capital investment can be made. Let's make sure we mitigate risk in banking, but not so much that we choke out the small family banker. Let's make sure that agricultural workers are safe, but that the son of a farmer can work on his father's own farm. Let's make sure we are not overreaching so far that we are making the private sector's plight worse than it is today.

My message to the Senate and to the President of the United States is that the private sector is not just fine. Though it may not all be of the government's making, part of it is. We are making it worse. We are trying to run a country based on the three-legged stool of legislative, judicial, and the executive branch, on a two-legged stool of regulation through the executive branch and judicial regulation through the judicial branch—cutting out the legislative branch. Do you know what happens to two-legged stools? They fall over. The private sector is falling over, and it is, in part or in whole, because of us.

I hope the President understands that there is a private sector that pays the taxes and makes America work—a private sector that is hurting—and we can help the private sector. Let's put our nose and shoulder to the grindstone, and let's move forward in these months leading up to the election and change some of the overregulation and empower the private sector, not accept that we think it is doing just fine.

I end with this, the front page of the USA Today. Average family wealth net worth in the United States has declined 39.4 percent, back to the level of 1992, which simply means the private sector has lost 20 years of accumulation, equity, and investment in the economy of the last 3 years. That is unacceptable. It is why we have the depression we have in this country. We need to get our shoulder to the grindstone, make it work, and let the private sector be just fine again because of an empowerment of the private sector, entrepreneurship, and capital investment.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, we have six Senators, including the occupant of the chair, the Senator from New York, on the floor today in the majority time to discuss the jammed bipartisan Senate highway bill.

I heard my colleague from Georgia talk about how we are doing nothing and America is languishing. One of the things we are doing nothing on is passing a highway bill that should not be complicated. But it is jammed up by the House Republicans and, as a result, people in Rhode Island and elsewhere are suffering. I will be here throughout our majority period. I think the Senator from Minnesota and the Senator from New Hampshire were here first, so I yield to them.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Rhode Island for his leadership in bringing us all together. We have to get this transportation bill done. This is a bill that passed the Senate with 74 votes. So we are here today to say to our colleagues over in the House and to ask our colleagues on the Republican side in the Senate to ask the Republicans in the House to get this bill done.

Cold-weather States, such as Minnesota, it is sometimes said, have two seasons: the winter season and the construction season. This kind of delay can be crippling. We have a much smaller window of time to get these projects done.

We have people waiting in traffic. We ask the House, why are we making them wait? We look at the cost when we delay construction projects—the cost to taxpayers. Everybody knows if you wait too long to work on a project, and you are doing something on your house and you wait years to get it done, the costs go up.

We ask our friends in the House, why are they allowing this to happen and making this delay? Look at contractors, construction workers, and engineering firms. They need consistency. Why is the House making them wait?

Look at Caterpillar, a business that employs 750 people in my State. They make road paving equipment and have a manufacturing facility. I was there addressing the employees. They gave me a pink hat. There are people working all over that company. They want more jobs, and they want to make things in America, and they want to export to the world. We are not going to be able to do that if we don't have the roads and bridges that can take our goods to market. We ask the House of Representatives, why are we making these private employers wait? The bill makes critical reforms to our transportation policy.

Last week the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a report announcing that 58 percent of high school seniors said they had texted or e-mailed while driving in the previous month, and 43 percent of high school juniors said they do the same thing. This bill includes provisions to help prevent texting while driving, and incentives—the two of us together, Madam President, worked on the graduated driver's license standards in this bill.

Why are we making the parents of America wait while their kids are texting while driving? It makes reforms in the bill to transportation policy, reduces the number of highway programs from over 100 to about 30. So the Republicans in the House—how can they explain that they are making America wait to reform and make these programs less duplicative? It defines clear national goals for transportation policy, and it streamlines environmental permitting.

Why would you make America wait? That is what we are asking the House of Representatives today. Nobody knows better than Minnesota what happens if you neglect roads and bridges: The 35–W bridge crashed down in the middle of a river 6 blocks from my house.

So we ask the House of Representatives, why are you making the people of America wait?

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I am pleased to join my colleagues in talking about why it is so important to pass this transportation bill. I thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for organizing this effort.

In New Hampshire, we understand what Senator KLOBUCHAR was saying, that it is important to get this bill passed so we can get our construction season underway. We have a limited amount of time. In only 17 days, this Nation's surface transportation programs are going to shut down unless Congress acts to reauthorize them.

In March, nearly three-quarters of this Senate voted to pass a bipartisan, long-term transportation bill that maintains current funding levels and avoids an increase in both the deficit and in gas taxes. This legislation is important as we look at roads and bridges and mass transit that are going to have support. It is important as we look at the jobs in the construction industry and manufacturing businesses that depend on our transportation system.

In fact, the Federal Highway Administration estimates that for every $1 billion in highway spending, we support about 27,000 jobs. I was pleased last week to see an overwhelming bipartisan majority in the House vote to reject policies that will cut spending on roads and public transit by one-third. If that had passed, an estimated 2,000 New Hampshire jobs would have been lost. I think that vote sends an important signal to members of the conference committee that there is a strong bipartisan majority in both Houses of Congress to support funding for crucial investments in our transportation network.

I call on the House to work with the Senate in a similar bipartisan manner, as we did in the Senate, to pass transportation policies that put Americans back to work and generate economic growth. We have seen it in New Hampshire, where we have 29 construction projects that are going to be on hold if we cannot get transportation legislation passed here. We have seen it with Interstate 93, one of our main corridors going up and down the middle of our State, which has been delayed because of the delay in passing this transportation bill.

If we are unable to set aside election year amendments, unable to set aside this partisan politics and come together to do what is right for our country and our economy and pass a transportation bill, it will be putting this country in a very difficult situation.

The Congressional Budget Office has projected that the highway trust fund will run out of money next year—sometime in 2013. We are not exactly sure when. But that will mean funding to States will face drastic cuts without any reauthorization to shore up that revenue. And were the highway trust funds to run out of money, projects in this country would grind to a halt; it would decimate jobs in the construction industry. We cannot afford that.

Investing in transportation creates jobs and creates the conditions for our small companies to succeed. It should not be an issue about politics or partisanship. I urge our colleagues on the House side—because they are the ones holding this up—to come together and pass a transportation reauthorization bill.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I join Senators SHAHEEN and KLOBUCHAR, and I particularly thank Senator

WHITEHOUSE for bringing us together. Senator BOXER was on the floor earlier talking about the transportation conference committee, and Senator BEGICH is also here.

We are all here because of the urgency of the conference report being presented to us so that we have a multiyear reauthorization of the transportation programs of this country.

Let me point out, I know a lot of times our constituents are confused as to why legislation cannot move here. Clearly, the holdup in passing the surface transportation reauthorization is the Republicans in the House of Representatives. They are blocking a bill that has broad support from the industries that are affected by it, from the public, and from both Democrats and Republicans here in the Senate.

We passed a consensus bill. It is not even bipartisan, it is consensus. We were able to get the right balance between public transportation and transit and highways and bridges. We have the proper balance between how the money is controlled at the State level and how it is controlled at the local level. We have worked out a reform of our transportation programs to do this in a most efficient way. That bill is being held up for one reason and one reason alone; that is, the politics of the Republicans in the House of Representatives. They believe they can score political points by blocking any legislation from moving.

Let me underscore the points my colleagues have mentioned. This bill is all about jobs. It is all about rebuilding America and saving and preserving jobs.

On Sunday I was in Cumberland, MD, talking about the first Federal highway, the national highway that was built over 200 years ago, which was the first subsidized road in America. That brought jobs to our communities. It connected the East with the expanding Nation. Quite frankly, this Transportation bill connects our Nation, and it is important for jobs. In the western part of Maryland, we have the Appalachian highway that we need to complete, the north-south highway. That will affect jobs in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia. That is what this is about here.

A short-term extension costs us jobs. Last month we lost 28,000 jobs as a result of not being able to pass a multiyear surface transportation program. We lose the construction season, as my colleagues have pointed out. And quite frankly, we have the bill before us. We have the votes to pass it.

So what we are asking today is that the Republicans in the House release this bill, allow us to move forward so we can create jobs for America and continue the economic expansion for America that we need through modern transportation. That is what this is about, and that is why we are here today, to remind our colleagues, the Republicans in the House—the extremists who are holding up this bill—this is a bill that is important for our Nation. Let's move forward with the people's business.

With that, Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I would like to thank my colleagues for coming to the floor and especially thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for organizing all of us to come here to speak on an issue that is really the core of what we do here: to figure out how to build infrastructure for this country so our private sector can have the infrastructure to work from and play off of. But let's be very blunt and very honest about what is happening. This Transportation reauthorization bill passed this body with 74 votes. It was a bipartisan effort, hard fought, with incredible debate, encompassing many different issues. Now it sits in a conference committee with House Members, led by the Republican majority over there, not wanting to move forward.

Let's be very blunt about this. Not only do we have that bill over there, we have the VAWA bill, the FDA bill, the postal reform bill, and they are all just piling up over in the House. People wonder why the economy has been struggling this last month. Well, all the business that we should be doing and that we are doing here on the Senate side—we are passing stuff—is all piling up over there on the House side.

Actually, I did what we were calling ''Begich Minutes,'' give or take a few seconds. I went to the middle of the Capitol and described this incident of where we pass a bill, and then I physically pointed to the House side to show where the bill is now stalled. We have a small group within the Republican majority over there that is holding the Speaker hostage, literally, because they want to cut the Transportation bill by over one-third, which would devastate the infrastructure of this country.

Let me say from my own experience—and I know Senator WHITEHOUSE has heard this, and others have as well—as a former mayor, I was in charge of the metropolitan planning organization for our community of Anchorage, which maintained at that time approximately 45 or 48 percent of the population of the State. We were in charge of managing the road money. Every time Congress delayed their action or were ineffective in getting their work done, as a mayor, I had to put projects off, stall projects, and hold contracts and tell contractors they couldn't get to work. That created uncertainty, which at the end of the day does one thing: It costs more money. And the people who pay for that are the taxpayers.

So they sit over there in the House. I saw a comment that they want to do another extension. Well, we have had nine extensions. For people who don't know what extensions are, it is where the Congress says: Well, we will extend this bill for another week, another 2 weeks, another month. But these extensions create more uncertainty and add more cost. Every time you hear the word ''extension'' from the other side, that just means you—the taxpayers of this country—are paying more in taxes. That is what that means, pure and simple. ''Extension'' means you pay more for a project that should have been on the board and moving forward.

We have a bipartisan bill, with 74 Democrats and Republicans on the Senate side having voted for it. It is now lingering in conference.

We are now in the midst of the construction season. In Alaska—and I know my colleague from Minnesota, who has joined us, will know about this—the construction season is short. We need to have contracts let in early spring in order to construct in the summer and be completed by September or October because the asphalt plants close. When the asphalt plants close, you can't put asphalt on the streets. It is very simple. We have a very limited time. So the contracting community is frustrated and angry because they do not get the certainty they need to hire the people. They can't get them to work.

So I plead with the folks on the other side, the extreme folks in the Republican majority over there who are holding the Speaker hostage on this issue, let's do what is right for America. Let's make sure these jobs, these 3 million jobs that could be retained and added, move forward. In an economy where every job makes a difference, we are talking here about 3 million jobs. Let's move this forward. Let's quit the politics.

What is amazing about this—and I heard Senator WHITEHOUSE say this more than once—if the Speaker of the House would just allow the Senate bill to go to the floor for a vote, I can guarantee what will happen: Democrats and a group of Republicans will support that bill and pass it. But that is not the issue. We have a very small subset of the majority of the Republicans over in the House who have told the majority leader he is not moving anything—nothing, zero—because they are not betting on America like we are. We bet on America. We are betting on the right things. What they want to do is to cripple this country for their own political gamesmanship.

I have to say—and I would bet every one of my colleagues here would say the same thing—that when I go back home to Alaska, I hear how fed up people are with this. They are frustrated by the inability of Congress to do its work. And I have told my folks back in Alaska that the Senate is doing its work. We are passing bipartisan bills. But they get jammed up by a small group of extreme Republican tea party folks who believe the best way to solve problems is to do nothing and to let this economy falter.

So I hope Members will come to their senses over there. I can say that my

Congressman, the Republican from Alaska, is working hard to get this bill passed. He is on the conference committee. He is one of the Republicans who would vote with Democrats to get things done on this Transportation bill. Why? Because he likes building things. I like building things. But there are some other folks over there who have no interest in helping to build this country and make it a better place.

So, again, I yield my time. I hope folks on the other side in that extreme group will get some sense knocked into them. Maybe the American people will do it. I hope so.

Madam President, I yield the floor at this point for my friend from Minnesota.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Alaska and the Senator from Rhode Island.

I wish to emphasize the need to pass a long-term reauthorization of this surface transportation bill. It is time for Congress to do its job. Thanks to the leadership of Senators BOXER and INHOFE, this body passed a bill with 74 votes. Actually, it probably would have been 76 votes, but Senator KIRK is back at home recovering—and we wish him very well—and Senator LAUTENBERG couldn't vote that day. I think he was at the funeral of a friend. So it really would have been 76 votes. Unfortunately, our colleagues in the House were not able to pass a comprehensive reauthorization bill and were only able to join a conference committee after passing yet another short-term extension.

So I will repeat myself: It is time for Congress to do its job. As the Senator from Alaska, my good colleague, was just saying, the summer construction season is now upon us. In Minnesota, that is when we know we can build roads and bridges and light rail, because in November and December it gets cold and snowy.

State departments of transportation have already canceled projects because the House has failed to act. We have already lost thousands of jobs because, for whatever reason, the House will not pass a bill that received unanimous bipartisan support in the Environment and Public Works Committee and 74 votes in the Senate as a whole.

Speaker BOEHNER has said the House may just pass another short-term extension. But all of these extensions have whittled away at the highway trust fund—whittled it down to a dangerously low balance—and any further extension would put it in danger of going bankrupt.

This should not be controversial. This should not be partisan. Transportation and infrastructure have not been in the past. The Senate consensus bill simply maintains the current level of funding for our transportation system and streamlines many programs to make sure those investments are put to the best possible use. This is infrastructure that we need to stay competitive in our global economy.

Minnesota is ready to make these investments. Whether we are talking about maintaining our bridges so they are safe, expanding the new light rail system in the Twin Cities, or reducing congestion on our highways, these are projects that will create jobs now and strengthen our economy well into the future, as infrastructure always does.

On August 1 of this year, we in Minnesota will mark the fifth anniversary of a tragedy in our State: the collapse of the Interstate 35–W bridge in Minneapolis. The collapse killed 13 people and injured 145. That tragedy should have been a wake-up call in America and in this body. Bridges should not collapse in the United States of America.

If that was a wake-up call, the House seems to be content to have hit the snooze button and ignore the problem. Well, we cannot wait any longer. There is no reason not to pass this bill. Frankly, the Senate bill is the conservative solution. It is paid for, it consolidates many Federal programs, and it streamlines project reviews—all things that I have heard colleagues in the House ask for. The House negotiators need to work with Senator BOXER and Senator INHOFE and the rest of the Senate conferees and come to an agreement both the House and the Senate can live with. If they can't or won't, Speaker BOEHNER should—as the Senator from Alaska just said—just take up the Senate bill and give it an up-or-down vote.

Let's prove to our constituents that we can come together and do what is right. Let's pass a bill that will create jobs for workers in our States and build prosperity for our future. It is time for Congress to do its job and pass a transportation bill without any more delay.

I thank my colleagues, and I yield back to my colleague, the Senator from Rhode Island.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I thank the Senators on our side who have come here today during the majority time block to express their support for moving forward on the highway transportation bill.

Not all of them have had the chance to speak because time was short, but I wish to have the RECORD reflect that in addition to Senators KLOBUCHAR, SHAHEEN, BEGICH, CARDIN, and FRANKEN, who did speak, and myself of course, Senator GILLIBRAND is also here but presiding. Senator STABENOW was here but could not wait. Senator MARK UDALL is here. Senator CONRAD was here. We are all here because we are very concerned about what is going on with the highway bill.

We had a March 31 deadline in order to get things done by the summer construction season that we have heard so much about. We made the deadline. Not only did we make the deadline, we made the deadline with a bipartisan bill, one that was unanimous among both parties in the Environment and Public Works Committee and we brought it to the floor and we got it passed, 75 or more Senators supporting it. The House did not do its job. It did not have a bill. It could not pass a highway bill.

For folks who have been around here longer than I have, the failure to pass the highway bill is telling. This is not like getting an A on a chemistry test. This is like showing up for class, and they failed at that very simple task. So they asked for an extension. We probably should not have given it. We probably should have forced the vote then. But we did. We gave them an extension on the theory that, in good faith, they would come through. We knew the extension would cost jobs. The extension has cost jobs. Out of over 90 projects slated for this construction season in Rhode Island, about 40 are going to fall off because of the delay. Those are real jobs in Rhode Island, a State that needs them, and that is true across the rest of the country. Wherever winter falls, this predicament exists. So that is why so many of my colleagues were here.

Now we are closing in on the end of the extension we gave them. It will end June 30. I am here to urge that we give no further extensions. It is either govern or get out of the way to the House of Representatives. If they can't pass a highway bill of their own, let the Senate bill come up for a vote. It is bipartisan. It is supported by manufacturers. It is supported by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. It is supported by road builders. It is supported by environmentalists. It is supported by labor. It is a good bill. It had a great process, wide open, on the Senate floor. There is no excuse for not taking up that bill. I agree with Senator BEGICH. If that bill comes up, Democrats and Republicans together will give it a massive majority in the House, and people will be put to work.

One place where I think we all ought to be able to agree on both sides of the aisle is that Federal spending is actually helpful and does create jobs in building our roads and bridges. We don't expect Americans to repair the road in front of their house. We don't expect Americans to go and build bridges for themselves. It is a government job to build roads and bridges. The jam-up Speaker BOEHNER and Majority Leader CANTOR have created on this is costing probably hundreds of thousands of jobs right now in this country. Why they are doing it, their motive, that is not for me to say. But the practical effect is that jobs are being lost by unnecessary delay, created by Republicans in the House, which they could get rid of by simply calling up the bipartisan Senate bill and giving a free vote on it, letting it pass, and putting Americans to work.

I yield the floor. I thank the distinguished Senator from Utah for being

patient as I went over my time a little bit.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I thank my colleague.

Last week, I discussed some unfinished business that remains for Congress and the President to address. Specifically, Congress must take up a number of tax-related matters in very short order.

When I discussed this tax agenda last week, I referred to this chart. Things have not changed since then. As this chart shows, the tax extenders, which are overdue by almost one-half year, are not alone on Congress's to-do list.

We need to resolve the death tax. Death tax relief expires at the end of 2012. We need to prevent the 2013 tax hikes. As I noted earlier, we have the so-called tax extenders that are right there, and we have to address the alternative minimum tax—or AMT—the second one on that list. The issue of the AMT is what I would like to address today.

Thirty-one million American families will be caught by the AMT or are already caught. Yet Congress has done nothing to address the AMT. The alternative minimum tax is a stealth tax on 27 million families. Approximately, 3.9 million families paid the AMT last year, and they may not be surprised if it hits them again this year. But for the other 27 million American families set to be ensnared by the AMT, this represents a significant and stealthy tax increase.

The AMT burden is, in fact, far broader than just the 31 million American families who are in its sights. Nearly double that number—60 million American families—must fill out the AMT worksheet to determine whether they owe an alternative minimum tax. While not as bad as paying the tax itself, the task of compliance is just another time-consuming, government-imposed challenge for Americans families they don't need to have.

To get some idea of the magnitude of the AMT's reach, consider this chart. It breaks down, State by State, the number of American families hit by the AMT.

When I speak of those now being caught by this tax, I am referring to those families who make estimated tax payments and who are scheduled to make their second payment tomorrow.

Last year, 3.9 million families were hit by the AMT. I think this was 3.9 million too many, but it is considerably better than the more than 31.1 million who will be hit in 2012.

The reason we are threatened by such a large increase this year is that over the last 11 years, Congress has passed legislation to temporarily increase the amount of income exempt from the AMT. Unlike many other provisions of the Tax Code, the AMT exemption amount is not automatically adjusted for inflation. These temporary exemption increases have prevented millions of middle-class American families from falling prey to the AMT, until now.

While I have always fought for these temporary exemptions, I believe the AMT ought to be permanently repealed. One reason to pursue permanent repeal is the uncertainty that the AMT creates for taxpayers when Congress must revisit and adjust it every year.

Unfortunately, a permanent fix does not appear to be forthcoming. Congress has yet to undertake any meaningful action on the AMT. President Obama has proposed permanently patching or maybe even repealing AMT. Yet what he gives with one hand, he takes away with another.

He has proposed to pay for an AMT fix with this so-called Buffett tax. The thing is, the Buffett tax is nothing more than a new alternative minimum tax. The solution to the alternative minimum tax problem surely can't be an alternative minimum tax.

Moreover, the revenue generated by the Buffett tax—in spite of the suggestion by the President that this tax on the rich could pay for all things good—would not come close to providing the revenue necessary to address the AMT in a meaningful way.

Despite assurance from the President and his allies that AMT relief is an important issue, nothing has actually been put forward as a serious legislative solution for this year. There has been no Senate committee markup or floor action for tax extenders, the AMT patch, death tax reform or even preventing 2013 tax hikes.

This year is about half over, and all we have is talk about the need to address the AMT, but a theoretical discussion is not a substitute for real action, as anyone making a quarterly payment today will attest to.

Everyone seems to agree something needs to be done—and done quickly—but the discussion does not go any further from there. We are out of time. The second quarterly AMT payment is due. Today, taxpayers across the country are under a legal requirement to pay their estimated tax. They will use the form depicted on this chart right here—''2012 Estimated Tax.'' Though I hope otherwise, I expect I will be here again when the third payment comes due saying basically the same thing.

A question remains about whether people who should be making an estimated tax payment tomorrow actually will. Most of these 31 million taxpayers subject to the AMT do not even know they are subject to the alternative minimum tax, so they will not be making that estimated tax payment tomorrow, even though they should. If one fails to pay sufficient estimated tax or have a sufficient amount of wages withheld on a timely basis throughout the year, then one can be subject to interest and penalties. This is an awful spot for Congress to put the American families in.

It is also worth recalling that the IRS cannot just flip a switch and have its systems in place for an AMT patch. This is not done overnight. It takes months. The Congress's failure to act on a timely basis could actually delay the processing of 2013 refund checks perhaps by even a few months.

The failure of Congress to promptly enact an alternative minimum tax fix would have a cascading effect on our system of tax administration. Software providers and tax preparers would struggle to keep up.

One of the issues holding back an AMT fix is that many on the other side insist that, unlike new spending proposals or extensions of existing spending programs, AMT reform should happen only if it is revenue neutral. That means any revenues not collected through reform or repeal of the AMT must be offset by new taxes from somewhere else.

Notice that I said ''not collected'' rather than ''lost.'' This distinction is important for the simple reason that the revenues we do not collect as a result of AMT relief are not truly lost. The AMT collects revenues it was never supposed to collect in the first place. If we offset revenues not collected as a result of AMT repeal or reform, total Federal revenues over the long term are projected to push through the 30-year historical average and then keep going.

Originally conceived as a mechanism to ensure that high-income taxpayers were not able to eliminate their tax liability completely, the AMT has failed. The AMT was originally created back in 1969, with just 155 taxpayers in mind—155—a mechanism to ensure that high-income taxpayers were not able to eliminate their tax liability completely. The AMT has failed completely. On the one hand, as IRS Commissioner Everson told the Finance Committee in 2004, the same percentage of taxpayers continues to pay no Federal income tax.

On the other hand, the AMT is projected to bring in future revenues it was never designed to collect. At least 31 million middle-class families are now in the AMT's crosshairs, and that was never meant to be. That is quite a change from 155 rich people who never paid any taxes. It should serve as a cautionary tale for those who believe today's tax increase proposals will remain limited to the so-called wealthy.

During the 2008 campaign, President Obama advocated for a permanent AMT patch. His budgets have maintained that position. While permanent repeal without offsetting the AMT is the best option, we absolutely must do something to protect taxpayers immediately, even if it involves a temporary solution, such as an increase in the exemption amount. Of course, if we do that, we are going to be in the same fix next year, and I will again be making the same points.

This coming Friday—June 15, 2012—taxpayers making quarterly payments are going to once again discover that the AMT is neither the subject of an

academic seminar nor a future problem we can put off dealing with. The AMT is a real problem right now. If this Congress was truly serious about tax fairness, it does need to stand and take action.

I would like to take a few moments to address another matter of importance.

A conference committee is currently meeting with the goal of producing a transportation bill. As I said at the public meeting that was held last month, ensuring that local communities have a strong voice in the transportation decisionmaking process is a priority of mine. There are many ways this can be achieved, but one particularly effective method is through the implementation of environmental streamlining.

Negotiations are still ongoing, so I do not want to go into too much detail. Yet environmental streamlining is something that will benefit my own home State of Utah and every other State that is currently forced to comply with redundant and oppressive redtape when engaging in transportation projects with the Federal Government.

The highway trust fund, which funds many transportation programs, currently has more money coming out of it than is going into it. While there are many who want to deal with bloated and unfocused spending by raising taxes, I disagree. If revenues do not meet outlays, then we should not be punishing the American taxpayer; rather, we should be reevaluating spending priorities.

In addition to examining what Congress spends money on, we need to ensure that money being spent is spent efficiently. Currently, governments at the Federal, State and local level spend considerable resources complying with Federal regulations designed to protect the environment. Given that many of these regulations have accumulated over time, I am confident that we can scrape many of these barnacles off the ship of state without harming the environment.

Both the Senate and the House recognize the truth of what I am saying, and both bills currently in conference reflect this sentiment. Both contain provisions designed to streamline or simplify the environmental reviews with which transportation projects must comply. In particular, I am appreciative of the efforts shown by Chairman MICA of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for his role in highlighting the importance of environmental streamlining within the conference committee.

Madam President, I inquire how much time I have remaining.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is no controlled time. The Senator has the time.

Mr. HATCH. I do not want to infringe on my colleagues. Let me just say this: I am appreciative of the efforts shown by Chairman MICA of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for his role in highlighting the importance of environmental streamlining within the conference committee. I hope the rest of my fellow Senate conferees are carefully reviewing his suggested language. I know all of us want to do all we can to expedite project delivery times while minimizing redundant costs. Chairman MICA is clearly eager to engage on this topic.

President Obama has talked in the past about the importance of funding shovel-ready jobs. All we are asking is when there is a shovel-ready job to move forward without undue or unnecessary environmental reviews.

I close with an appeal rooted in my role as ranking member of the Finance Committee. The highway trust fund is currently on a path to insolvency, and the Senate bill does not change that. By working with our colleagues in the House we can make sure taxpayer money is not wasted on redundant and unnecessary compliance and regulation. Despite current policy being green in the environmental sense, it does not mean we have to sacrifice being green in a budgetary sense.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COONS). The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I come to the floor to discuss the amendment that is pending to kill the Sugar Program in the United States. My colleagues should know that the domestic sugar industry employs 140,000 people in this country. If there were ever a jobs-killer amendment, it is the amendment that is going to be offered to kill the U.S. Sugar Program.

In advancing that amendment, a series of claims have been made about the U.S. Sugar Program that I believe are false. First of all, it is said that the Sugar Program has a high cost for taxpayers. That is false. It is said that it keeps sugar prices artificially high. That is false. It is said that the Sugar Program drives the confectionary industry out of the United States. That is false. It is said that the Sugar Program impedes imports into the United States. That is false. It is also said that consumers will benefit from eliminating the Sugar Program. I believe that is false as well.

Let's take each of these arguments in turn. First is that it has a high taxpayer cost. Here is the cost, according to the Congressional Budget Office, of the Sugar Program for 2013 to 2022. The cost is zero. It is hard to get lower than zero. Maybe the square root of zero would be lower. But those who say there is a high cost to taxpayers are just wrong. It is false.

The second claim is that it keeps sugar prices artificially high—false again. This chart shows the average retail sugar price in major countries around the world. Here is the United States way down here, 59 cents. The global average is 67 cents. The developed country average is 73 cents. We are below the global average, and we are below the average of developed countries. So the claim that it keeps sugar prices high is false again.

The third claim is that the Sugar Program drives the confectionary industry out of the United States. Wrong again. Here is what is happening to the U.S. chocolate and nonchocolate confectionery production in the United States since 2004. Do you see the trend line? It is up. More production not less production.

These are facts, and facts are stubborn things. Let's go to the fourth claim, that this Sugar Program impedes imports. This is maybe the biggest whopper of all. Here are the facts: The United States, in the period from 2008–2009 through 2010–2011, is the biggest importer of sugar in the world. So this program is impeding imports into the United States? If it is, it is not doing a very good job of it because the United States is No. 1 in imports of sugar in the world.

Before we get to the final assertion, let's look at what other countries, poor countries that produce sugar are saying to us about our Sugar Program. The argument made on the Senate floor is we are hurting poor countries with our Sugar Program. Maybe we ought to listen to what those poor countries say. Here is their organization, the International Sugar Trade Coalition, that represents sugar producers in 17 developing nations in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Here is what they say:

> The U.S. sugar policy contained in the Farm Bill passed by the Senate Agriculture Committee is important to sugar producers in developing nations because it provides a guaranteed level of access to the United States sugar market at fair, predictable prices. Attempts to weaken this policy through amendments on the Senate floor would not only harm U.S. farmers but also poor growers from developing countries where sugar is a key economic driver.

These are the poor countries that produce sugar who are saying to us: Keep your Sugar Program because not only does it benefit you, but it benefits us.

Let me go further in their letter:

> Ending the sugar program would reward only a handful of large food companies and agricultural superpowers like Brazil, while punishing some of the world's poorest economies.

It goes on to say:

> This was what happened when the European Union radically altered its sugar policy, and thereby lowered standards of living in places like Guyana, Fiji and Mauritius where there is no agricultural alternative to sugarcane. Sadly, Saint Kitts and Nevis had to stop sugar production altogether after 300 years as a result of the EU's reforms.

Let's not make that same mistake.

Finally, on this notion that consumers are going to benefit by eliminating the Sugar Program—really? Let's look at the facts. The green line is the trendline on retail sugar prices. That trendline since 2010 is going up.

Here is what the wholesale price of sugar has been—flat. Do you see the disconnection? Wholesale prices flat, retail prices up. The fact is that sugar is such a small part of the cost of finished products that it has almost no bearing whatsoever on retail prices of a candy bar, the box of cereal, or any of the other things that sugar goes into.

The record is so clear on the facts that I urge my colleagues to oppose the amendment being offered to kill the U.S. Sugar Program, to kill 140,000 good jobs in this country, to kill $19 billion of economic activity in this country. It would be a profound mistake not only for us but for the poor countries in the world that produce sugar, that are calling on us to keep our Sugar Program because not only is it important to U.S. farmers, it is important to their farmers as well.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the next 10 minutes be provided to Senator UDALL of Colorado and then 5 minutes for Senator GILLIBRAND of New York.

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

Mr. CONRAD. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. I thank Senator CONRAD. He is always gracious and compelling, and I appreciate the strong case he made for his point of view.

I rise as I did yesterday, and I will continue to do so, to highlight why it is so important that we extend the production of the tax credits, or PTC as it is known, for wind energy. Senator BENNET from Colorado joins me, feeling the urgency of the moment. Members of both parties have agreed that the PTC is vital for continued economic growth in our country. Put simply, the PTC means good-paying American jobs. The longer we wait, the more American jobs we can expect to be lost in the coming months and weeks ahead.

When I go home, Coloradoans say to me it does not make any sense that we would not extend the production tax credit. So over the next couple of weeks I am going to come to the floor every day to talk about how the wind production tax credit affects each State across the country, to drive home the point that real American jobs will be lost if we do not take this commonsense step.

The PTC has meant economic growth in Colorado. We have a favorable business climate in Colorado, and we have tremendous wind resources. In fact, if we harness the wind potential that is there, similar to the wind potential that is off the shores of the State of the Presiding Officer, there is enough wind power to go way beyond our needs. In Colorado's case, 25 times over the State's electricity needs could be met if we harness and harvest that wind.

That is an amazing statistic. It is generated by the National Renewable Energy Lab, which we are happy to host in Colorado, a flagship of energy research, development, and innovation.

I hope I will not have to say too many days in the future what I said yesterday: The strong growth in the wind sector is at risk. Thousands of jobs, as you can see in this chart of Colorado, have been created across my State, all the way from Pueblo in the south central portion of the State, to Greeley, Fort Morgan up in the northeast, to Yuma County way out in the eastern part of the State.

These are quality jobs. These jobs support families and communities. I want to put a face on these families and these communities. I want to talk about Derek Palmer. He lives in Greeley, up here in the northeastern part of the State. He has three children and a wife. He graduated from the University of Northern Colorado in 2011 with a degree in business management, and he has worked at the Windsor manufacturing plant—it is a Vestas plant that manufactures wind blades—for the past 9 months. He left an excellent managerial job in the service industry and joined Vestas, in large part because of the strong benefits package that is there for his wife and kids. He loves working there. He is patriotic, and he is helping our country become energy independent. Because of our inaction, thousands of jobs like Derek's are in jeopardy. This industry deserves some certainty, some stability, and so do countless families like Derek's in Colorado and all over the country. So if we don't act, I fear dire consequences.

The CEO of Vestas—I think you have met him, Mr. President—says that he expects the wind market in the United States to fall by 80 percent if the PTC isn't extended. Eighty percent is a huge number. That is 80 percent fewer jobs, 80 percent fewer families pulling themselves out of this recession, and 80 percent less investment than we have today, all because we are not active, all because we are not taking the right steps for it.

As I close, this is not a partisan issue. Both Democrats and Republicans, Senators and House Members, agree that we need to extend this commonsense tax credit. There are bipartisan bills to extend it. I led an effort with six Democrats and six Republicans here earlier urging us to extend the PTC. The solution is simple. We just need to extend the PTC ASAP. We need to do it. Let's do it as soon as possible.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I would like to commend the chairwoman of the Agriculture Committee and the ranking member of that committee for their dedicated effort to move the farm bill to the floor to discuss our Nation's agricultural policy and for their leadership in championing so many issues that help America's and New York's farmers.

I rise today because I really want to make clear to the American people just what is at stake and at the heart of this farm bill. It is about a growing economy for our family farms and for our small businesses. It is about reviving rural communities and rebuilding a thriving middle class and the opportunity for all of those who are trying to get there. It is about the health of our agricultural industry, the jobs it provides, and the health of our families whom it helps to feed. But from the amendments that are being filed today from across the aisle, you would not know it. There are some trying to use this bill to roll back protections for the air we breathe and for the water we drink. There are some who want to use this bill to expand concealed-carry laws for weapons. We are even seeing attempts to bring in the divisive politics from the Wisconsin recall and inject it right into the debate on the Senate floor on farm policy.

This bill has so much potential to create jobs, to help our farms thrive, to protect our farmers and small businesses from natural disasters, to feed our children, and to feed our at-risk seniors. But if we are ever going to reach that potential, we can't afford to get bogged down in these dead-end fights that are meant only to score political points.

Worse yet, there are Draconian cuts being proposed by some that will take even more money away from those who are the greatest in need. They want to take money away from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, better known as food stamps, which literally will result in children going to bed hungry in this country. These amendments simply do not meet the fundamental founding principles of this Nation or who we are as Americans. In this day and age, in this country, as rich as we are, to accept hungry children, hungry families, hungry seniors is unacceptable.

This farm bill started out with a $4.5 billion cut to food stamps over 10 years. These cuts must be restored. While I fought against these cuts with 13 of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle, others are still actually advocating for additional, much more extreme cuts. They could even cut SNAP by almost half.

If you have heard from families living off of food stamps, as I have, you know this is something no one strives for. Most have never imagined that they would be on food stamps or that they would need that kind of support. But many have been dealt a very bad hand in this economy, and through no fault of their own they are finding they are in need. Food stamps are often the last resort for those who are just trying to keep the lights on, put food on the table for their kids, and find their way back to that paycheck they desperately want to be earning.

Among all the families relying on food stamps at historical rates, we are now seeing veterans and their families. I can tell you that our veterans and their families have already suffered a lot. For these troops who are coming

home, they are coming back into a very tough economy and are unable to find the jobs they need. And we have to imagine these children of our vets who have already suffered so much, and now they are being faced with not knowing from where their next meal will come.

For any parent watching this debate today, I just want to ask one question. Has your child ever said to you: Mommy, I am still hungry.

Well, I can't imagine what a mother would feel like if she could not hand her child some food. I can't imagine what a mother would feel like if her child said that to her every single night. That is exactly what we are talking about today in this farm bill. As a mother and legislator, watching children suffer, watching America's children not having enough to eat is something I will not stand quietly by and watch.

Under this bill, nearly 300,000 families in New York will become food insecure, and what that translates to is $90 a month that they will have less money to put food on the table, and what that translates to is that it is the last week of the month. That $90 pays the grocery bills every single week. What do these families do when they don't have enough money at the end of the month? Despite not being responsible for the economic crisis our country has faced, we will be asking these families to share a disproportionate amount of the burden being placed on them.

We know that food stamps are such a good investment into our economy. For every dollar we put into food stamps, we get $1.71 back into the economy. Even one of the best economists, Mark Zandi, said: ''The fastest way to infuse money into the economy is through expanding the SNAP/food stamps program.'' These food stamps pay salaries for grocery clerks and truckers who haul the food. The USDA estimates that 16 cents goes right back to the farmer.

I know my time is expiring, but I have 13 bipartisan cosponsors for this amendment, and the list keeps growing with the support from the AARP, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and all of those who are fighting on the front line for hunger.

Our amendment will restore the SNAP funding back to the $4.5 billion that has been cut, and it will pay for the food our kids so desperately need. Every child in America deserves to be fed. Every child in America deserves to reach their God-given potential. We need to restore these cuts to ensure that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise to discuss a particular amendment—perhaps a couple of amendments—on the farm bill, specifically the amendments to the sugar portion. There are a number of titles, it is a big, complicated bill, and there is a great deal of discussion about the many reforms that are contained in this bill.

There is one very glaring exception. There is one huge program that has no reforms whatsoever in the underlying bill, and it just so happens to be in, in my view, one of the most egregiously flawed programs in the entire agricultural sector, maybe in government as a whole, and it is the Sugar Program. This is a program which systematically forces American consumers to pay much more than the global price for sugar. It is a huge transfer of wealth from consumers, including the poorest American consumers, to a handful of wealthy sugar producers. It is completely wrong, it is ill-conceived in the first place, it is perpetuated in this bill, and I think that is just unconscionable.

Some of the specific ways in which the existing program has the government completely manipulating the market for sugar include explicit limits on how much sugar can be produced domestically. There is a de facto government-imposed price floor on sugar rather than allowing the price to reflect whatever supply and demand would lead to. It puts strict limits on how much sugar can be imported without forcing Americans to pay taxes on those imports in the form of duties. It mandates that the government purchase excess sugar and then sell it at a loss to ethanol producers. All of these are features of the existing sugar policy, and all of them are left completely unchanged by this bill. So it is screaming for some amendments to provide some commonsense reforms to this very badly flawed program.

Let me be very clear. At the end of the day, the net effect of all of these machinations in which the government manipulates the market for sugar is that U.S. consumers end up paying much more, often about double the going rate that everyone else in the world who doesn't manipulate their markets pays for sugar.

By the way, that should be reason enough to end this program entirely, but there are other reasons. For instance, the existing sugar policy—as I said, unchanged in this bill—is absolutely costing us jobs in the United States. That is not even disputable. It is, on balance, a job killer. It is costing us jobs today specifically in manufacturing—the manufacturing of products that include sugar, of which there are many.

Here is a simple observation from the CEO of a candy manufacturer in Pennsylvania who uses sugar as an import. He points out: These sugar subsidies artificially inflate the price of one of the staples of the candy industry and force us, and any other companies, to choose between absorbing the higher costs, passing the costs on to consumers, or producing elsewhere.

The fact is that some people inevitably choose to produce elsewhere.

The next chart illustrates a point that has been made by the U.S. Department of Commerce. We are not just making these things up. Many U.S.—essentially sugar-consuming producers—manufacturers have already closed or relocated to Canada, where sugar prices are less than half of the United States. Why? Because Canada chooses not to have a ridiculous sugar program. So we lose jobs as manufacturers go to Canada, use market-priced sugar at much lower costs to produce candies, and then import them into the United States.

The next chart quantifies this. It is very simple. For every job that is protected somewhere where they are growing beets or cane sugar, three manufacturing jobs are lost. Again, these are statistics from the Department of Commerce. This is very clear. This is not really refutable.

The final chart illustrates this in another way. The Canadian Government has figured this out, and they advertise the fact that they have a huge competitive advantage because they choose not to create an artificially high price for sugar, and as a result they are constantly trying to persuade manufacturers to move up to Canada where they can have lower costs. By the way, for many of these companies, the cost of sugar in the United States is the single biggest cost they pay.

The other point that we should stress and that I would like to underline is that not only do we lose jobs systematically because of this program, it also hurts consumers. Think about it. Everybody consumes sugar. There is sugar in so many products that it is impossible to avoid this inflated cost. It should be seen as equivalent to a tax. It is as though the Federal Government is imposing a tax on sugar. It doesn't work literally that way, but it has that economic effect. It is completely equivalent. Who gets hit the hardest? It is the lowest income Americans. It is as regressive a tax as we can have. Think about that. Wealthy people devote a small percentage of their income to food. They have plenty of money to spend on other things. If you are a low-income American, then you necessarily are devoting a large part of your income to food, and so much of it is artificially inflated in cost by our own Federal Government. This is what is so egregious about it.

The GAO said in 2000 that the existing sugar policy forced Americans to pay $2 billion in additional food costs. And if we use their same methodology and we move it ahead to today, AEI projects that those costs are now $3.5 billion. This is a simple straightforward transfer of wealth from low- and middle-income and ordinary American consumers to a handful of wealthy producers. It is as simple as that.

There is one other feature. There is also an ongoing risk to taxpayers. Because of that feature I alluded to earlier in which the Federal Government buys what is deemed to be excess sugar and then sells it at a loss to ethanol makers, CBO projects this will lose $193

million for taxpayers over the next decade.

We have an amendment that would address this, the Shaheen amendment. I think Senator SHAHEEN has actually offered more than one amendment on this topic, one would repeal the entire program. I salute her. I agree with her. I support that. My understanding is that we will soon be voting on a motion to table that amendment. I think it is quite unfortunate that Senator REID would choose to take this amendment off the table, so to speak, to put it aside. A vote to table the amendment is, of course, a vote to kill it. I think we ought to be passing this amendment and end the practice of forcing American consumers to transfer this wealth in this fashion.

But I wish to also stress that I am concerned about the process that has gotten us here. I am concerned that Senator REID has intentionally chosen an amendment that is going to be very difficult to pass. As strong as its merits are, from my point of view, I know it is difficult to get a majority in this body to support the full repeal of this program. I hope we can succeed in that, but I don't know that we can. If we cannot, Senator SHAHEEN has another amendment that I have joined her on which would push back some of the excesses of this program—push us back to where we were back in 2008, prior to the most recent farm bill. The amendment makes some modest changes and just scales back some of these excesses. I certainly hope we get a chance to vote on that. If we can't pass full repeal, we have every right—and I would argue every responsibility in this body—to try to at least improve on what is such an egregiously flawed program.

Again, I would underscore the fact that the current bill is silent; in other words, it perpetuates, it continues this spectacularly flawed program that is so unfair to American consumers. We will have an opportunity to vote later today on a motion to table. I hope we defeat the motion to table so we can take up this amendment and do away with this program. But failing that, it is very important that we have an opportunity to at least amend the program.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleague Senator TOOMEY to talk about what truly is an egregious oversight in the underlying farm bill we are considering.

This morning, the Senate is going to have the opportunity to vote on an amendment that would repeal the Sugar Program. As Senator TOOMEY has pointed out, I submitted several amendments. One would reform the Sugar Program. The one we are going to vote on this morning is the one to actually repeal the program. I, as does Senator TOOMEY, hope we will get a vote on both, but I certainly hope people will vote against the tabling motion to repeal the Sugar Program.

The underlying farm bill we are considering reforms almost every farm program we have. Every farm group has had to sacrifice with this farm bill so we can reform these programs. Unfortunately, there is one glaring exception to these reforms; that is, the Sugar Program.

We need to reform the sugar subsidy because it costs consumers and businesses $3.5 billion each year in the form of higher prices. That is almost double the world average. We can see on this chart—which shows sugar prices over the last 30 years since 1981. This is the world price for sugar, and that is the U.S. price. We can see demonstrated very graphically—no pun intended—that we in America are paying almost twice what the world price is for sugar. It also costs us about 20,000 jobs every year. We are doing all this—we are affecting consumers and hundreds of thousands of jobs—to benefit fewer than 5,000 sugar growers. To benefit those 5,000, all of us are paying more, and we have been paying more, as this chart clearly indicates, for the last 30 years.

How does the subsidy program work? Senator TOOMEY did a great job of explaining it, but it essentially manipulates the market. It controls how much sugar is grown in the United States. It restricts how much sugar comes into the United States from outside the country. It sets a floor on sugar prices by providing a government guarantee to sugar growers on what they are going to get paid, and it requires the government, in some cases—this is what is truly outrageous—it requires the government to buy sugar off the market and then sell it to ethanol plants at a loss to taxpayers. The proponents of this program say it doesn't cost us any money? What our amendment would do is phase out this outdated program over the course of a couple years.

I wish to respond to some of the claims we have heard from those who support this Sugar Program. The first is that it doesn't cost taxpayers any money. That is if we ignore the fact that consumers are paying out of one pocket; they may not be paying as taxpayers in taxes, but they are paying out of the other pocket as consumers. But, in fact, that is not even accurate when it comes to taxpayer dollars. A recent study by Iowa State University showed that the program costs $3.5 billion a year to consumers in the form of higher prices, and the Congressional Budget Office estimates this program will cost taxpayers directly in the coming years. CBO has scored this amendment as saving millions of dollars for taxpayers in the next decade. So repealing the Sugar Program, according to CBO, will save millions for taxpayers in the next decade.

Those who support the Sugar Program also claim prices just aren't that high and that consumers actually benefit from the sugar subsidy. That is absurd. We can see graphed out very clearly what consumers are paying. Consumer groups, such as the Consumer Federation and the National Consumers League, support our amendment because the sugar subsidy costs consumers and businesses $3.5 billion a year.

Subsidy supporters cite a study which was paid for by the sugar industry to support their data. That is not accurate. Using data from USDA shows a very different story, because for wholesale prices which represent two-thirds of the sugar bought by businesses in the United States, the effect of the Sugar Program is obvious, and it is hard to argue with this drastic difference as displayed on the chart. What we have is a hidden tax that is designed to benefit a small powerful interest group. Again, studies have found that consumers are paying a cost to the tune of $3.5 billion a year.

The supporters of the sugar subsidy also say this program doesn't get in the way of job creation. This is an argument that just doesn't hold up when we look at the facts. Multiple studies have found we are sacrificing hundreds and thousands of jobs by keeping sugar prices high. In 2006, the Department of Commerce found that for every job protected in the sugar industry, three were lost in manufacturing. A recent study from Iowa State University found that we are sacrificing 20,000 new jobs created every year due to the sugar subsidy program. So we are losing 20,000 jobs every year because of the sugar subsidy. There is no evidence sugar reform is going to hurt job creation; in fact, it is going to help. We have a small business in New Hampshire, a family-run business called Granite State Candy. They have been doing very well. They would like to expand, but because of the high cost of sugar they are having trouble thinking about how they are going to pay for that.

There is nothing more definitive than the illustration Senator TOOMEY showed earlier today and that I showed yesterday on the floor which is from a Canadian brochure designed to attract businesses in the confectionery industry to come to Canada. It points out how much less they are going to pay. Here it is. It points out how much less businesses are going to pay for sugar in Canada and how much more beneficial it would be for companies to do business in Canada rather than the United States. It says very clearly:

> Consider these hard facts: Sugar refiners import the vast majority of their raw materials at world prices. Canadian sugar users enjoy a significant advantage. The average price of refined sugar is usually 30 to 40 percent lower in Canada than in the United States. Most manufactured products containing sugar are freely traded in the NAFTA region.

If one needs any other evidence, that is it. It is clear we are losing those jobs.

I strongly urge my colleagues to vote against tabling this amendment today.

This may be our only chance to reform the Sugar Program in this farm bill. Tabling this amendment would be a vote to support special interests, those fewer than 5,000 sugar growers, at the expense of over 600,000 employees in the food industry and millions of consumers.

Thank you very much. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I rise to speak against the Paul amendment No. 2182, which would cripple the food stamp program. I have to tell my colleagues that there is an aura of wonderment around here that says: Look, let's cut food stamps for hungry families and for little children. We have the agri companies to take care of, the agribusinesses, to make sure they can feed their children.

The most fundamental test for any family is to put food on the table—to make sure their children get the nutrition they need. When tough economic times hit, families can find themselves struggling to meet their most basic needs. The food stamp program was created so that even in the toughest of times, children in this country do not go to bed hungry.

Here is a picture of a child reaching out for food—the old story about models on cereal programs, talking about satisfying the brother's hunger with the old remarkable display of what it is that comes to the fundamentals and taking care or letting families who need help get some, especially in this area.

It is appalling that our Republican colleague from Kentucky has proposed an amendment to cut more than $300 billion from a program that is a lifeline for many families. These harsh cuts would punish families who need help the most. We are debating a bill that contains billions in support for big agricultural companies, but instead of targeting the subsidies they get from the Federal Government—from the taxpayers—Republicans say we ought to cut programs for hungry children. I wonder if those who want to cut the food stamp program would participate in a real way and say to their little children, say to their family: Look, just to show we are serious, just to show we care, we will limit the amount of food we are going to give our children, the amount of food we are going to give the elders in our household, to show we are serious about this.

Hungry children didn't cause the recession or the deficit. Cutting food stamps will not solve our debt problem. But hungry children don't have lobbyists, so programs such as food stamps end up on the Republican chopping block—heroic, muscular men and women who say: We want to make our country fiscally sound, so let's take the food stamps away from people who could be starving.

The Paul amendment would cut support for food stamps by almost 45 percent next year alone. The consequences could be devastating. The consequences would be devastating.

The numbers are staggering: More than 46 million Americans, including 800,000 people from my State of New Jersey—we are a State that has about 9 million people—are dependent on food stamps to make it through the month. Half of them are children.

When you look at this placard, can you imagine telling a mother that she has to tell her kids they have to do more with less food so maybe other businesses—agribusinesses—can continue to get subsidies?

Republicans should have to tell these families: We are not going to cut corporate subsidies. No, no; we have to do that. We have to make sure the rich will not pay more in taxes. So please understand, as we take food off their tables, we say to our kids: Eat less, get thinner, get trimmer. Stop doing your homework because you are too tired or stop complaining because you do not feel well when the food quantity is not sufficient.

On average the Food Stamp Program provides assistance of just $1.50 per meal—a buck and a half. There is not much there to cut. The Republicans who are so eager to cut food stamps from children should try living on $1.50 per meal for the next month. Let them then report how it feels, how their kids survived with less food than they need. Then we will see how eager they are to cut the food stamps.

The Republican approach would hurt those with the least to protect those with the most. That is not what this country is about. Too many of America's families are still struggling. Too many parents are still looking for work. Too many of our children are still hungry. The food banks across the country are getting evermore attention and visits.

Republicans should offer them help, show some heart. This is not an accounting organization. We are not here to just balance the books. Yes, we have to balance the books. I come from business, and I know what they have to do. But that means we would not be servicing our democratic structures, the people in our society who need help. Republicans should offer them help. Instead, they offer them deeper poverty and greater hunger.

The bottom line is this: At a time when 50 percent of food stamp recipients are children, it would be a moral stain on our country's character to cut this program. That is not what America is about, and that is not why any of us serve.

The children who would be harmed by reckless cuts cannot speak for themselves. But we should not need to hear their crying voices to know what is right. I urge my colleagues to listen to their consciences and defeat the Paul amendment.

I conclude by saying how disappointing it is to see a $4 billion reduction to the Food Stamp Program in the farm bill. I am proud to join Senator GILLIBRAND in offering an amendment to reverse these cuts. We are going to try to make that happen.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

AMENDMENT NO. 2393

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to an amendment that would eliminate the Sugar Program, and I urge my colleagues to table it at this time.

As we continue our work on the farm bill, as we debate these amendments, I think my colleagues should keep in mind at every moment that this proposal contains $23 billion in cuts that we have brought together on a bipartisan basis, and two-thirds of those cuts—$16 billion—is on only 14 percent of the bill; that is, the farm programs. Two-thirds of the cuts: $16 billion on the farm program.

This bill is supported by 630 conservation groups, nutrition groups—a number of them. Obviously, they would like to see changes. People want to make things better. But if we do not get this bill done, you can imagine what is going to happen to school hot lunches and the like.

Unfortunately, eliminating the Sugar Program would actually hurt jobs in America. I know Senator CONRAD was here earlier putting the facts out, but people need to know the facts. This is a zero-cost program that supports 142,000 jobs and generates nearly $20 billion in economic activity. This is the kind of value we are looking for.

I believe we need to be doing everything we can to maintain programs that are working for our farmers in an efficient way—programs that are supporting jobs and putting dollars into our economy, especially those programs that do not cost money.

Most of us can appreciate the value of a strong farm safety net. During our discussions in the Agriculture Committee, I worked with Chairwoman STABENOW and other members of the committee to make sure the bill provided for that safety net so the livelihoods of our farmers cannot be swept away in the blink of an eye by natural disasters and market failures and because, you know what, we as a country do not want to be dependent on foreign food like we are dependent on foreign oil.

The Sugar Program has played its own key role in shielding farmers from risk—albeit it is a different and more predictable kind of risk they face. I am talking about the risk of competing against heavily subsidized sugar from foreign countries.

Let's put it this way: If you do not like being dependent on foreign oil, you are not going to love being dependent on foreign sugar. Past U.S. trade agreements have already opened our domestic market to foreign sugar. Over the last 3 years, the United States, on average, has been the world's largest

sugar importer, supplying nearly one-third of our total sugar needs.

Since 1985 we have had 54 sugar factories close due to sustained low prices. Once these jobs are gone, they are gone forever. This is why we need to continue the Sugar Program in the 2012 farm bill—one that supports American sugar beet and sugar cane producers while ensuring an abundant supply of sugar for consumers and manufacturers.

We must continue this program. Look at what has happened. The average global retail price for sugar is 14 percent higher than it is in the United States. In other developed countries, the average price is 24 percent higher than it is in the United States.

Some people have blamed farmers for the high cost of sugar foods in the grocery store. But look at the numbers. For example, a $1 candy bar has about 2 cents' worth of sugar in it. A $3.50 carton of ice cream has about 10 cents' worth of sugar. So ending the Sugar Program is not the solution that will keep food prices competitive. It is the opposite.

This is an important program for our country. If changes are to be made to it, the answer should not be to eliminate it. That is why I ask my colleagues to join me in tabling this amendment as we work together in the future to make sure we preserve American jobs.

The sugar industry supplies American jobs. Just ask the people in the Red River Valley in Minnesota and North Dakota.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Minnesota for her comments. This is an amendment that has come up on a regular basis—always started from New Hampshire, always defeated by the Senate.

I encourage my colleagues to table Reid amendment No. 2393. This measure is known as Senator SHAHEEN's amendment to phase out the Federal Sugar Program.

First, I would like to commend Chairwoman STABENOW and Ranking Member ROBERTS for their work on the underlying bill. They proved that the Agriculture Committee is able to take a serious look at the farm bill programs and improve what is working while cutting what is not.

The Sugar Program is an excellent example of what works in the farm bill. Since its early years, the Sugar Program has evolved to ensure that beet and cane growers can continue to provide the United States with a safe and reliable source of sugar products. I underscore ''reliable'' because sugar is a unique commodity. Not only are sugar crops extremely limited in their seasons, but an added component is that both sugar beets and cane must be processed immediately after harvest. Processing involves what is essentially a refinery.

In Wyoming we have three facilities that process sugar, all of which are grower owned and operated. People can always tell its October back home when the large piles of sugar beets begin to appear outside the sugar plants. Workers race to produce raw sugar before the beets go bad. Any number of complications can spoil the crop and put the sugar refineries out of business.

Such unique conditions produce risk that is not common with other agricultural commodities. Because much of the year's sugar is produced in such a small window, a sugar program is needed to stabilize the price of sugar through the entire year. This policy benefits the very people who opponents of the Sugar Program wish to protect.

With stability in the sugar markets confectioners, food manufacturers, and beveragemakers have a steady supply of quality sugar without wild price swings. Not only are U.S. sugar prices stable under the program, but the United States offers sugar users some of the lowest prices in the developed world.

I also wish to add that the U.S. Sugar Program works to ensure that other nations have access to sugar markets. Some claim the U.S. Sugar Program is a protectionist policy. This could not be more false. Mr. President, 17 of the largest sugar exporting countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America have all expressed support for the U.S. Sugar Program.

As a matter of fact, the United States is the second largest net importer of sugar behind only Russia. The program is operated to ensure that we fulfill our trade obligations, especially within the WTO, and continues to provide a sugar market for developing nations wishing to export their product.

Finally, the U.S. Sugar Program has been run for the past 10 years at zero cost to the U.S. taxpayers, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture predicts it will remain that way in its current form for at least 10 more. As other colleagues have mentioned, this is all while the U.S. sugar industry has helped to generate nearly $20 billion in annual economic activity in our country.

Wyoming offers just a few examples of how much of an economic impact the sugar industry has on rural communities across our Nation. As I mentioned, the growers and local communities in my State own the plants that refine the raw sugar we use every day. Those plants produce jobs and keep economic activity local. With all the inherent risks in sugar production, these communities are able to continue providing the United States with a safe and reliable supply of sugar for the United States.

The U.S. sugar policy not only helps growers but keeps prices low for consumers. Some American food manufacturers will claim that it is the price of sugar causing them to shed jobs or move overseas. However, sugar represents only a small portion of the input costs that go into food production. Instead, it is the cost of labor, environmental standards, and regulatory burdens that play the biggest role in whether U.S. firms can compete with food markets overseas. In recent years, U.S. candy production has actually gone up, and the U.S. Sugar Program has played its role by keeping prices stable.

With that, I ask my colleagues to table amendment No. 2393 and keep the programs that work in this farm bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I rise today to support and underscore the points just made by Senator ENZI in support of the U.S. Sugar Program, which, as he indicated, has operated successfully at no cost to the American taxpayers, consumers, or food manufacturers.

As you know, the sugar beet industry is very important to my State of Idaho, bringing in approximately $1.1 billion in revenue every year. History has shown that grocers and food manufacturers do not pass their savings from lower ingredient prices along to consumers.

For example, from the summer of 2010 until now, producer prices for sugar have dropped nearly 20 percent. In fact, the U.S. Sugar Program remains crucial because other nations are implementing trade-distorting subsidies for their otherwise uncompetitive sugar industries. The world sugar price, as is so often debated in these Halls, suffers from government-backed dumping that protects sugar producers overseas to the detriment of American sugar producers—hence, the need for the U.S. Sugar Program.

Consumers in the rest of the world pay, on average, 14 percent more for sugar—in the developed world, 24 percent more—than American consumers pay. In America, sugar is a readily available and affordable product.

Critics of U.S. sugar policy make the argument that the program causes disastrous shortages in U.S. sugar supply, which flies in the face of reality. U.S. farmers and producers have proven themselves, time and again, to be the most efficient in the world, but they cannot be left alone to face a trade market undermined by foreign government manipulation.

Nothing could be further from the truth, and the latest numbers released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture underline that. The USDA now estimates that there is enough sugar surplus to give every man, woman, and child in this country nearly 12 pounds of sugar on top of what they already consume. This is enough surplus sugar to fill the Capitol Dome 55 times.

I strongly encourage my colleagues to oppose any attempts at repealing this program. At risk would be 142,000 American jobs generated by the U.S.

sugar-producing industry. Many of these jobs would be lost to subsidized foreign producers who are generally less efficient and less reliable and produce sugar far less safely and responsibly than American sugar producers.

I support Idaho's sugar beet growers as well as sugar growers throughout the country. I am committed to ensuring that they have access to the tools they need to produce an affordable and abundant sugar supply.

The bottom line is not only is this program not a cost to the U.S. taxpayer, it generates revenue to help us reduce our deficit. These are the kinds of programs we need to protect American producers.

I encourage all of my colleagues to oppose the Shaheen amendment.

Mr. INOUYE. Mr. President, I oppose the amendment offered by Senator SHAHEEN and others which would phase out the Federal Sugar Program. I would like to share some of my personal history with my colleagues. My grandfather and grandmother emigrated from Japan to work at McBryde Sugar Company on the island of Kauai in 1899. In my office here in Washington, I have a framed copy of the contract on which my grandfather, Asakichi Inouye, placed his ''X.'' The contract includes a photograph of this brave young man and his wife and a little baby boy they are holding, my father.

Nearly a century later, Asakichi Inouye's grandson is proud to be representing the State of Hawaii in the United States Senate. With exception of one, all of Hawaii's sugar plantations are now closed. The Hawaiian Commercial and Sugar Company, HC&S, remains operational on the island of Maui and employs nearly 800 employees. HC&S is Hawaii's largest provider of raw sugar, producing approximately 200,000 tons each year. In addition to the growing and milling of sugarcane, HC&S produces raw sugar, specialty sugar, molasses, and the generation and sale of electricity to help provide power across the island.

I am proud to represent the men and women in Hawaii who still work directly or indirectly for the sugar industry, and their families. These agricultural workers, who are among the world's most productive, have enjoyed collective bargaining for decades and are rewarded for their productivity with good wages, with some of the best health care benefits in the country, and with generous benefits for insurance and retirement. Their safety and their health are bolstered by some of the strictest worker protection rules and highest environmental standards in the Nation, and possibly in the world.

These workers, many of whose families have been in sugar for three or four generations, lead comfortable, but by no means extravagant lives. They can put their children through college and can look forward to a decent retirement, but they are far from wealthy in the monetary sense.

The U.S. sugar policy has ensured American consumers with dependable supplies of reasonably priced sugar, adhering to U.S. standards for food safety and quality. Consumers in other developed countries pay on average 24 percent more for their sugar than American consumers. The U.S. Sugar Program provides no subsidies to American sugar producers. For the past 10 years, the policy has operated at zero cost to taxpayers, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture predicts it will remain at zero cost for the next 10 years, to 2022. In the absence of a U.S. sugar policy, it would eliminate or severely damage the no-taxpayer-cost U.S. sugar policy, and, among other things, shift American jobs overseas. Hawaii's existing sugar producer could potentially close, forcing my constituents to lose their livelihood.

If the U.S. sugar policy were eliminated, our U.S. market would be flooded with subsidized sugar from the world dump market that is less reliable and less safe. The U.S. market would collapse, and efficient American sugar farmers would be driven out of business. Job and incomes losses would devastate rural economies where sugar is grown and harm urban economies where sugar is processed.

Further, if the U.S. sugar policy were eliminated Americans would have to cope with less reliable, less safe, more costly, foreign sugar. American consumers demand consistent quantity and quality. In other words, when consumers go to the grocery store to purchase sugar, they expect a high-quality product that is safe and contaminant free and identical with every purchase. They also expect to find such products on the shelf whenever they want to buy them. This is exactly what the American consumer gets from the U.S. sugar industry—so much so that we take it for granted. Further, in many of these countries, producers operate with labor, environmental, and food safety standards or enforcement that is much less than what American producers routinely meet. Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to table Shaheen amendment.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now withdraw my motion to proceed to S. 1940.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is withdrawn.

AGRICULTURE REFORM, FOOD, AND JOBS ACT OF 2012

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is my understanding that we are now on S. 3240, and the motion to recommit with a second-degree amendment numbered 2339 is now pending. Is that right?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3240) to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid (for Stabenow/Roberts) amendment No. 2389, of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 2390 (to amendment No. 2389), to change the enactment date.

Reid motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, with instructions.

Reid amendment No. 2391, of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 2392 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 2391), to empower States with programmatic flexibility and predictability to administer a supplemental nutrition assistance block grant program under which, at the request of a State agency, eligible households within the State may receive an adequate, or more nutritious, diet.

Reid amendment No. 2393 (to amendment No. 2392), to phase out the Federal Sugar Program.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to table amendment No. 2393. I ask for the yeas and nays on that motion to table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER), and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. KYL. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK).

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

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 119 Leg.]

YEAS—50

Akaka	Gillibrand	Nelson (NE)
Barrasso	Harkin	Nelson (FL)
Baucus	Hoeven	Pryor
Begich	Inouye	Reid
Bennet	Isakson	Risch
Bingaman	Johanns	Roberts
Blunt	Johnson (SD)	Rubio
Boxer	Kerry	Sanders
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cardin	Landrieu	Stabenow
Chambliss	Leahy	Tester
Cochran	Levin	Thune
Conrad	Lieberman	Udall (CO)
Crapo	Menendez	Udall (NM)
Enzi	Mikulski	Vitter
Feinstein	Moran	Wicker
Franken	Murray	

NAYS—46

Alexander	Carper	Cornyn
Ayotte	Casey	DeMint
Blumenthal	Coats	Durbin
Boozman	Coburn	Graham
Brown (MA)	Collins	Grassley
Brown (OH)	Coons	Hagan
Burr	Corker	Hatch

Heller
Hutchison
Inhofe
Johnson (WI)
Kohl
Kyl
Lautenberg
Lee
Lugar
Manchin
McCain
McConnell
Merkley
Murkowski
Paul
Portman
Reed
Sessions
Shaheen
Shelby
Snowe
Toomey
Webb
Whitehouse
Wyden

NOT VOTING—4

Kirk
McCaskill
Rockefeller
Warner

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to table amendment No. 2392, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be 4 minutes of debate equally divided prior to the vote, and that the time be controlled by Senator STABENOW and Senator PAUL.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, our system of helping ensure that no one in our country goes hungry is a noble one. We are now asking to spend $750 billion on food stamps. When we ask this, we need to remember that recently a woman in Chicago faked the birth of triplets in order to receive $21,000 in food stamps. We need to remember that millionaires, including Larry Fick, who won $2 million, is still receiving food stamps because he says he has no income. He has $2 million but no income. Amanda Clayton won $1 million recently in the lottery and she was aghast she lost a third of it to taxes. She now has two homes and mortgage payments and doesn't know how can she make it without food stamps. So we are paying millionaires food stamps. Thirty percent of Polk County inmates are getting food stamps.

There has to be some reason. Should you be able to buy junk food on food stamps? Should you get to go to McDonald's on food stamps? This is out of control. It is not about helping those in need, it is about being wise with taxpayer dollars and not giving people $20,000 a year in food stamps. We need to give only to those who cannot work, those who are infirm, those who are diseased and are not able-bodied. But we are giving to millionaires, and we are paying for junk food and giving to those who go to McDonald's, and it has to stop.

This program has doubled in the last 10 years. We do not have an endless supply of money. I think Americans would be flabbergasted at the amount of money and that some of these programs are duplicative. People getting food stamps for a meal are also getting a free lunch at school. Some of these programs are actually advertising for applicants. In my hometown they advertise to try to promote people coming in and getting the free lunch during the summertime.

It is not that we won't help people, it is that we need to be conscious of how much money we have and that we help only those who cannot help themselves. I would ask for some reason. The food stamp program is exploding, and I recommend we vote for this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, first of all, I strongly oppose this amendment and urge my colleagues to vote to table it.

I would agree with the Senator from Kentucky that nobody who wins the lottery should get food assistance, and we outright ban it in this bill. We outright ban a number of areas where there has been waste, fraud, and abuse. This bill does more on accountability on food assistance than we have seen in many years. But it also doesn't do what this amendment does, which is block grant funding, cut it, send it back to the States with no requirement it be used for people who truly need it.

I can tell you, coming from Michigan, I have people who have never before in their lives needed help with food assistance. They are mortified; they have paid taxes their whole life and they have never asked for help, but now that the plant has closed, they need some temporary help. Those folks are, on average, getting help for 10 months or less, and they deserve every dollar we can help them with.

I want to make sure that every single dollar goes where it should go. Waste, fraud, and abuse we tackle. But for somebody in this great country who has paid their taxes all their lives and worked all their lives and now needs help to put food on the table for the balance of the month, they need to know we are going to provide a little bit of temporary help.

This amendment is outrageous and would go completely against the commitment we as a country have made to help those who truly need it. I urge we vote yes to table this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The yeas and nays have been ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) is necessarily absent.

Mr. KYL. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK).

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

The result was announced—yeas 65, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 120 Leg.]

YEAS—65

Akaka
Alexander
Baucus
Begich
Bennet
Bingaman
Blumenthal
Boozman
Boxer
Brown (MA)
Brown (OH)
Cantwell
Cardin
Carper
Casey
Cochran
Collins
Conrad
Coons
Corker
Durbin
Feinstein
Franken
Gillibrand
Hagan
Harkin
Hoeven
Inouye
Johanns
Johnson (SD)
Kerry
Klobuchar
Kohl
Landrieu
Lautenberg
Leahy
Levin
Lieberman
Lugar
Manchin
McCaskill
Menendez
Merkley
Mikulski
Murkowski
Murray
Nelson (NE)
Nelson (FL)
Portman
Pryor
Reed
Reid
Roberts
Rockefeller
Sanders
Schumer
Shaheen
Snowe
Stabenow
Tester
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Webb
Whitehouse
Wyden

NAYS—33

Ayotte
Barrasso
Blunt
Burr
Chambliss
Coats
Coburn
Cornyn
Crapo
DeMint
Enzi
Graham
Grassley
Hatch
Heller
Hutchison
Inhofe
Isakson
Johnson (WI)
Kyl
Lee
McCain
McConnell
Moran
Paul
Risch
Rubio
Sessions
Shelby
Thune
Toomey
Vitter
Wicker

NOT VOTING—2

Kirk
Warner

The motion was agreed to.

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I was unable to vote on the motion to table the Paul amendment No. 2182 this morning due to a family commitment, but should I have been present, I would have voted yea on the motion to table the amendment.

SNAP was effective in helping over 786,157 individuals in my own Commonwealth of Virginia—including children and the elderly—have the resources necessary to purchase healthy food this past year. I believe that turning this program into a State block grant, as Senator PAUL's amendment would have done, would not allow this program to continue to be as effective. SNAP is the bedrock of our national nutrition safety net, serving as a first line of defense against hunger, and during this last economic downturn has made sure that low-income families across the Commonwealth and the country are helped in putting food on the table each night.•

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. MR. President, I now ask unanimous consent the pending motion to recommit be withdrawn; that amendment No. 2390 be withdrawn; that the Stabenow-Roberts amendment, No. 2389, be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be considered original text for the purpose of further amendment; that the following four amendments be the first amendments in order to the bill with no other first-degree amendments in order until these amendments are disposed of: Coburn, No. 2353; Hagan, No. 2366; DeMint, No. 2385; McCaskill, No. 2222; that there be up to 60 minutes of debate equally divided between the two leaders or their designees on each of these amendments; that upon the use or yielding back of this time on all four amendments the

Senate proceed to votes in relation to the amendments in the order listed; that there be no amendments or motions in order to the amendments prior to the votes other than on motions to waive points of order and motions to table; that upon disposition of these amendments, I be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. COBURN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. I wonder if I might ask the leader a question through the Chair. It would seem to me the process we are planning now is that the leader is deciding what amendments we will vote on and what we will not. I wonder if he would be open to the consideration of us sending up 40 amendments over the next 4 days and coming to an agreement on this, because what we are playing now is a game of low priority amendments versus high priority amendments in the name of saying we are doing something rather than having an open amendment process, which is the tradition of the Senate. My question to him is would he be amenable to have a discussion on a much larger number of amendments so we don't continue to get out of order? This is the first time I remember seeing this list, and this is a very low priority amendment for many.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wish my friend was near as exercised over the year, 18 months, on getting on a bill. It takes us a week to get on a bill because we have to file motions to invoke cloture every time we proceed to a bill. We could save a lot of time if we could get on a bill. One reason there used to be so much, as he said, tradition—tradition has been spilled into the spillways—is that it was a rare occasion you had to do anything to invoke cloture on a motion to proceed. Now it is what we do every time because the Republicans demand that.

In direct answer to the question, I have worked with Senator ROBERTS and Senator STABENOW. We are trying to get some amendments up. They may be low priority on his part, my friend from Oklahoma, but some people think these are important amendments. The two we just finished, no one can consider those low priority amendments, dealing with foodstamps and with sugar. These are always big deals on this farm bill.

So I say to my friend, Senator ROBERTS and Senator STABENOW are trying to come up with a list. The Republicans are having some kind of a steering meeting or whatever it is now. Maybe the Senator can go and visit with them and try to help us get a list.

I am not going to talk out here about a number, but as we did on the highway bill, we have done it on the FDA bill, come up with some amendments. There is plenty of dead time around here, and we don't have to spend a lot of time on the amendments themselves. Once we agree to them, we keep on talking about them forever.

To answer the Senator's question, yes, I would be happy if we could get, as we have been trying to get for a long time, an agreed-upon group of amendments. I want to finish the farm bill. I think it is extremely important to our country.

So, I say to my friend, I hope we can work something out. I have told my friend, the junior Senator from Michigan and the chairman of this committee, I would like something so we can enter into an agreement today and start voting on some of these amendments tomorrow.

Ms. STABENOW. Would the leader be willing to yield for a question?

Mr. REID. Yes.

Ms. STABENOW. Thank you very much. To emphasize what the leader indicated earlier, isn't it true that while we are moving forward step by step—before we get a larger universal agreement—as he has said, the leader is open to work with me, Senator ROBERTS, and Members on both sides of the aisle to get a larger list in the range in which the distinguished Senator from Oklahoma has talked about and certainly a list which we would begin to move through?

But while we are doing that, rather than just biding time on the floor, this gives Members an opportunity to debate on issues they care deeply about and continue to move forward.

In fact, is it the leader's desire that we do this and that we are in the process of putting together that larger universe of amendments?

Mr. REID. In response to my friend's question, the reason we had these two votes this morning is while we are working on coming up with a finite list of amendments, why sit around and twiddle our thumbs? At least through this process, we have gotten two major amendments out of the way. They are gone.

If my friend continues his objection, I am going to set up some more votes this way. Listen, this is not my preference for doing these bills. But I say to my friend, I would hope with the concern the Senator has for the finances of this country and how he cares about our country, care a little bit about these motions to proceed which are such a waste of our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I take the leader at his word. I will go back to my caucus and explain that I object to this group of bills, but I would also note we did get two amendments out of the way. The one amendment on sugar that had the potential to pass wasn't the one we chose.

So I come back to the point, never in the history of the Senate, with the rate at which we see now, did we give up our rights to allow the majority leader to decide what amendments will be voted on or offered. In fact, for the last 3 days, we could have had a great open process of having the floor open for amendments and moved 8 or 10 amendments a day. I understand the conflict. I understand what he is trying to do, and I understand the political ramifications of that.

I will go and seek the counsel and guidance of my caucus and return and give the leader's message.

With that, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Before my friend leaves the floor, I also look back at the days, as is recounted in Caro's book and as we have heard here, to the days when the majority leader truly did some things. During the days of Lyndon Johnson, we couldn't even have a vote on anything unless he gave the nod. I don't have that power anymore. That has changed over the years, but I would love to be able to have a bill brought to the floor. If we were able to get rid of these senseless motions to proceed that I have to file cloture on, we could spend a lot of time debating and amending these bills, and that is what we need to get to.

Mr. COBURN. If the majority leader would yield, I think the leader could eliminate motions to proceed very easily by saying that every bill that comes to the floor will have an open and honest debate determined by what colleagues and Members would like to debate, but we have not seen that. That is not just the Democratic control of the Senate; we have seen some with the Republican control of the Senate as well.

We are not going to solve that problem now. I will take counsel with my caucus, and I will get back to the leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of New Mexico). The majority leader.

AMENDMENT NO. 2406

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 2406 to the instructions, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes amendment numbered 2406 to the instructions of the motion to recommit S. 3240.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To eliminate certain working lands conservation programs)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. _____. ELIMINATION OF CERTAIN WORKING LANDS CONSERVATION PROGRAMS.

(a) CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM.—Subchapter B of chapter 2 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3838d et seq.) is repealed.

(b) ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM.—Chapter 4 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3839aa et seq.) is repealed.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 2407 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2406

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now call up amendment No. 2407, a second-degree amendment, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 2407 to amendment No. 2406.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To convert all mandatory spending to discretionary spending subject to annual appropriations)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. 12_____. FUNDING.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or any amendment made by this Act, each amount made available by this Act or an amendment made by this Act that is funded through direct spending (as defined in section 250(c) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985(2 U.S.C. 900(c))) shall be considered to be an authorization of appropriations for that amount and purpose.

FLOOD INSURANCE REFORM AND MODERNIZATION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 250, S. 1940.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is pending.

The Senator from Montana.

AGRICULTURE REFORM

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the farm bill and recognize the fine work the Senate Agriculture Committee did in bringing this bill forward.

I am disappointed, to say the least, that this bill is bogged down in legislative games. This bill is too important for folks to play politics. If we want to talk about a lack of predictability, this is a prime example. We should be passing a bill and instead games are being played.

Agriculture is the largest industry in Montana. Montana's farmers and ranchers produce the food that powers the Nation. Providing an effective safety net for those of us in production agriculture is important, and it is potentially very costly. It would have been easy for the Senate Agriculture Committee to write a bill that keeps spending at the levels of the last farm bill, but they did not.

This bill recognizes the fiscal challenges we face. It cuts more than $23 billion, more than double the amount proposed by the Simpson-Bowles Commission.

Due to the good work of the Senate Agriculture Committee, this bill produces meaningful savings and reduces the number of programs at the Department of Agriculture. At the same time the bill preserves a strong safety net for farmers, invests in conservation and nutrition and institutes much needed reforms.

I have offered amendments to address the issues that still face farmers and ranchers around the country. The first is my provision to ensure that farmers will be able to buy public varieties of seeds. My amendment will make sure the Department of Agriculture follows through on the government's commitment to public seed varieties. It ensures that the USDA will devote the resources necessary to support a strong public breeding program and develop public plant and animal varieties. For too long the Agriculture Department has failed to promote public seed varieties. The USDA must support diverse seed research that farmers can adapt to various growing conditions.

My amendment will not solve the problem, but it is a necessary first step to ensure that farmers have a choice of what kind of seeds to purchase.

I have also introduced an amendment that takes a proactive approach to protect our country's livestock producers. Back in 2009, Senator BARRASSO and I wrote a new law to help livestock producers get compensation for losses related to wolves. Any producer will tell us they would rather prevent predation than get compensated for a loss, but losses do happen. A number of States receive some assistance from that program. That is why I have introduced an amendment to help producers protect their livestock from the threat of predation. It is a commonsense solution to support livestock producers who live near protected populations of predators.

Speaking of commonsense amendments, I am also offering what some have called the biggest package of sportsmen's bills in a generation. My sportsmen's act combines over 20 different sportsmen bills. It comes in response to the concerns I have heard as a chairman of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus.

What I hear most often from sportsmen is the importance of access to public lands. That is why this bill dedicates funding to ensure sportsmen's access to some of the best places to hunt and fish in this country.

Some folks might ask why is this important, but hunting and fishing is a way of life in places such as Montana. In fact, one in three Montanans hunts big game and over 50 percent fish. For us, it is not just recreation, it is a critical part of our economy. It drives and sustains jobs.

So Senator THUNE and I, as cochairs of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, have combined the best bills and ideas from Republicans and Democrats. In addition to preserving access to public lands, it reauthorizes several vital conservation programs and preserves our shooting heritage. That is why it has the support in a wide variety of sportsmen and conservation groups. Neither party has a monopoly on good ideas.

My sportsman's act takes the best from the House bill and the best from both sides of the aisle in the Senate to move the ball forward for sportsmen and sportswomen in Montana and the Nation. By adding this sportsmen's package to the farm bill, we will conserve some of our most productive habitat, passing on hunting and fishing traditions to future generations and entrusting them to those who care about them the most.

(The further remarks of Mr. TESTER are printed in today's RECORD under ''Morning Business.'')

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

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

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, earlier this week I came to the Senate floor to speak about the importance of the forestry title in what is a bipartisan farm bill we are considering right now as I speak.

In my previous remarks, I spoke about a growing emergency in our Nation's forests caused by the largest bark beetle outbreak in our recorded history—an outbreak that is projected to kill nearly every lodgepole pine in Colorado.

I know the Presiding Officer from the neighboring State of New Mexico is experiencing these same conditions in his State. The Forest Service has estimated that 100,000 dead trees are falling in our forests every day. Hard to imagine, but their estimates are such: 100,000 trees every day. That means our landscapes are littered with tinder ready to burn, which, combined with the hot dry summer we are already experiencing, is a recipe for a disastrous fire season.

Mother Nature bats last, which means much of what we face is out of our control. But we can act, and we must act, in order to manage the magnitude of the crisis in our home States.

In some ways—I know the Presiding Officer sees this the same way I do—the forests in Colorado are the canaries in the coal mine that tie us into and identify the effects of a changing climate. Warmer temperatures and drought conditions have exacerbated beetle infestations in our forests, and we are now dealing with an unprecedented combination of explosive fire season events.

There is a raging Colorado wildfire today, as I stand here, in Larimer County—the High Park Fire—and it continues to grow. It has consumed over 46,000 acres. It has claimed the life of a local homeowner, and it is causing devastating effects in the surrounding communities. As of first thing this morning, only 10 percent of the fire had been contained. We have made sure, though, that all available resources are dedicated to this effort. I am told we now have over 1,000 firefighters on site,

which is good news. We will not know the true costs of the fire for some time, but it, undoubtedly, will have a lasting effect on my State.

I want to assure Coloradans that I will continue to closely monitor the High Park Fire to ensure that firefighters on the ground have all the resources they need to beat back this devastating blaze. I also urge my fellow Coloradans to heed the warnings and follow the evacuation guidance of the firefighters who are tasked with keeping us safe. Most importantly, I ask that we keep these brave public servants in mind as they work to protect lives and personal property—especially as what is a very unpredictable fire progresses.

Again, I know the Presiding Officer has had a series of fires in his State, and he knows the capricious nature of wildfire. I want to also, in giving a little more background, point out that the High Park Fire is burning predominantly on private land. But it is moving rapidly into a beetle-infested national forest. This is a reminder of exactly why we need flexibility to treat hazardous beetle-killed trees and to engage the public in the active and collaborative management of our Nation's forests.

We cannot reverse the tragic loss of life and property that the High Park Fire and many other fires have caused, but it is essential that we take steps to understand what can be done in the future to better prevent, prepare, and respond to wildfires. We must learn more about the conditions that make those fires catastrophic.

Let me start by talking about homeowners.

Homeowners can create what we know in our States is called defensible space, depth space. That involves clearing brush, moving woodpiles, and looking at other actions through which we can protect structures. Those actions have been proven to be the hallmark of what has saved such properties in past fires.

These are important takeaways we have learned in my State of Colorado in the wake of catastrophic fires, and they are also the result of subsequent stories and studies that I have called for to inform the public about what they can do to protect their homes and property.

The same studies have also taught us that Federal forest management policies must prioritize tree removal around communities to protect homes, roads, and infrastructure—something I have fought to provide resources for over the last decade. The added benefit to these efforts is that they create local jobs and support the critically important timber industry in our States.

But that is not all. We must also advance new policies that will actually help prepare our firefighters to combat these raging fires. A recent example of this is action the Senate took to pass a bill I cosponsored to expedite the purchase of much needed air tankers to fight wildfires. Our Nation's tanker fleet has aged and dwindled dramatically in recent years. Without sufficient air tankers, we are ill-prepared to respond to catastrophic fires—especially multiple fires at once. I am pleased the Congress passed this bill, and I understand the President is prepared to act quickly to sign the air tanker legislation into law. Still, we need to and we can do more.

We need more flexibility to treat forests more comprehensively. I believe, as I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, the forestry title of the farm bill is a good start. However, I believe it does not go far enough to authorize adequate resources to treat forests that have been affected by bark beetle infestations.

The Forest Service's bark beetle strategy calls for doubling the number of acres it has been able to treat in past years. In other words, the Forest Service is saying: Look, we want to double what we have been doing. We believe we have the expertise to do that. What else do they need, though? They need money.

In fiscal year 2011, the Forest Service allocated $110 million to treating acres affected by bark beetles in the Western United States. But if we are going to double that acreage, we are going to need more Federal support.

A year ago I fought to increase the amount of funding the Forest Service had available to treat hazardous trees. I worked with the administration and strongly supported a reprogramming request that would have allowed the Forest Service to use extra money to treat problem areas in the West.

The Senate supported this commonsense request. But, I have to tell you, unfortunately, the House Appropriations Committee stood in the way of getting these critical funds into the forests where it was and is still needed most. So that inaction meant that thousands of acres of beetle-killed trees were not treated—areas that are potentially now worsening the High Park Fire as we speak.

In the new farm bill, the Agriculture Committee has authorized $100 million for designated treatment areas affected by beetle infestation, which is less money than last year, and certainly not enough to double the number of acres that were targeted for fire prevention and tree removal.

At the current authorization level of $100 million, the Forest Service simply will be unable to meet its goal. To help remedy this, I have filed a bipartisan amendment, No. 2295, with Senator THUNE of South Dakota, which would increase the authorization for funding to $200 million to authorize adequate resources in order for the Forest Service to address these looming and immediate emergencies.

I have been a strong advocate for finding ways to ensure we are prudent in how we spend taxpayer dollars, but the need to address this crisis is immediate and the threat to public health, safety, and our economy will only get worse, causing us to pay more later. Another way to put it is it is less expensive to prevent fires, to prepare for fires, than it is to fight fires and then be involved in the rehabilitation of those landscapes after those devastating fires are finally put out.

In addition to the amendment I have filed with Senator THUNE that would provide increased authorization for the funding of tree removal, I have also filed amendment No. 2294 that would extend Colorado's good neighbor authority.

Good neighbor authority gives the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management the capability and the power to enter into cooperative agreements with State foresters to plan and implement forest health projects on more acres more efficiently. This would give my State and other States the opportunity to collaborate with Federal agencies to perform forest, rangeland, and watershed restoration services—actions that a study I requested after the Fourmile Canyon Fire in Boulder County, CO, found firsthand helps agencies and homeowners better prepare to reduce the risk of damage and loss of life from wildfires.

Lest viewers and those who are interested in wildfires think they are an aberration, wildfires are actually a fact of life in the West and in forests in general, and they will continue to occur over and over again in Colorado. But I am committed to doing everything possible to learn from every fire and take whatever precautionary measures we can, with the hope of saving more lives, property, and communities in the future.

As I have said before—and we all know—wildfires can easily become a multimillion-dollar effort affecting every level of government. As the bark beetle epidemic continues to present a significant threat to our economy, critical infrastructure, and important natural resources, we must allocate resources to address this epidemic up front in a commonsense way.

Again, I know the Presiding Officer has faced these challenges head on in his State. Some may see this as just solely a western problem, but I urge my colleagues to support bipartisan efforts to ensure that we manage our forests to reduce fire risk, protect water supplies, and bolster our economy.

Forests all over our country are susceptible and vulnerable to fires. We can work together in the Senate to ensure that we have the tools to protect our forests and protect the communities and the people who live in those communities.

I look forward to the Senate taking up these two important amendments in the near future as we hopefully move the farm bill to passage in the Senate and to the President's desk.

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

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

(The remarks of Mr. UDALL of Colorado are printed in today's RECORD under ''Morning Business.'')

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

(The remarks of Ms. MURKOWSKI are printed in today's RECORD under ''Morning Business.'')

Ms. MURKOWSKI. I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

A SECOND OPINION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today, as I do week after week, and have since the health care bill was signed into law, with a doctor's second opinion about the health care law. I do that as someone who practiced medicine, taking care of families all around Wyoming for about a quarter century.

I continue to hear great concerns from folks back home and across the country about the health care law. So often people ask the question: Does the President understand the health care law?

Well, last week President Obama shocked a lot of Americans when he made a statement—not on the teleprompter but off script—that the ''private sector was doing fine.'' He said the private sector was doing fine. He said the weaknesses in our economy had to do with State and local government.

The words made it very clear to people in this country that the President is not in touch with what is happening in this country—specifically with the economy.

But then on Monday, the President said something else about the health care law that made it once again look as though he doesn't understand what is happening all across America. During an interview the President was doing with a local news reporter from Sioux City, IA, he actually was surprised to learn that his health care law is hurting small businesses—certainly hurting small businesses all across the country. He was surprised to learn of that.

While the news doesn't come as a shock to most Americans, it definitely caught President Obama off guard. Here is what happened. The Iowa reporter told the President that one business in Iowa needed to ''close up shop and move the jobs back to Wisconsin'' because of the President's health care law. The President's response to the reporter I found troubling. President Obama said:

Yeah, that would be kind of hard to explain, because the only folks that have been impacted in terms of the health care bill are insurance companies.

The President said that the only folks—only folks—who have been impacted in terms of the health care bill are insurance companies.

That is why I continue to come to the floor with a doctor's second opinion, ever since NANCY PELOSI made the famous statement that ''first you have to pass it before you get to find out what is in it.''

I had hoped that by now the President would actually know what is in the health care law. By his statements to this reporter in Iowa, it certainly seems to me the President does not know what is in the health care law, does not know how it is impacting jobs and the economy in the United States. How on Earth can President Obama believe insurance companies are the only people impacted by the health care law? Small businesses all across the country are being slammed by the law's expensive mandates—the mandates that people have to have government-approved insurance, which is much more expensive than what they had before. The insurance premiums that he promised would drop by $2,500 per family have actually gone up higher and faster than if the law had never been passed. The President said if you like what you have, you can keep it. We know that millions of Americans who had insurance they liked are not able to keep it.

The fact is that colleges are dropping their insurance plans for students because, under the President's law, those insurance plans were going to go up anywhere from 4 to 10 times more as a result of the mandates that those students buy government-approved levels of insurance, which was a lot more insurance than the students needed, wanted, or could afford. So the colleges are saying we cannot pass this expense on to students, so we are going to drop it entirely.

It is astonishing that the President doesn't realize how many people are impacted in a bad way by his own health care law. He thinks it is only the insurance companies, but small business owners are forced now, because of this law, to choose between bad choices. One is that they can offer very high-cost government-approved insurance, making it much more expensive for them to try to run their business and hire workers in this time of significant uncertainty in the economy, or they won't offer any health coverage at all because they cannot afford the law's out-of-touch and expensive insurance mandates. The choice is completely unacceptable, and the President should know that.

Someone in the White House ought to be informing the President. They ought to clearly be leveling with the President about the impact of his bill, his law, and his understanding of it, and what the impacts are on American families and the American economy. The private sector is not doing fine. This health care law negatively impacts people across the country, including many small business owners.

The President also deserves to know from his advisers that his health care law is having a significant impact on American seniors.

Earlier this week, Senator COBURN and I joined the rest of the Republican health care providers in Congress, in the House and Senate, and released a ''Doctor's Note on Medicare.'' This new report details how the President's health care law specifically makes it harder for America's seniors to get the care they need from a doctor they choose at a lower price.

I want to walk you through this report. There is a section called ''10 Facts Seniors Need to Know About Medicare's Future.'' I will focus on five of those.

One, to control Medicare spending, instead of trusting seniors, the President empowered 15 unelected bureaucrats. That is right, the President set up the Independent Payment Advisory Board, people who would be politically appointed—not elected by the voters but unelected bureaucrats. They will be the ones in charge of deciding and controlling Medicare spending.

Another is that doctors overwhelmingly believe the Independent Payment Advisory Board will hurt seniors' access to care. This is under the facts that seniors need to know about Medicare's future as a result of the President's health care law.

In a recent survey, 80 percent of doctors said this Independent Payment Advisory Board, which the President liked and put in his health care law, will cut reimbursement rates to doctors, which will harm seniors' access to care.

Now let's go to a third. Without congressional action, Medicare reimbursement rates will drop about 30 percent at the end of the year, which would harm seniors' access to care. That is in the law as it stands now. If the law isn't changed, that cut will automatically go into place, and it is going to be that much harder for seniors to get doctors. Seniors are very concerned right now about being able to find a doctor. If their doctor retires, they may have a hard time finding a new doctor. If the senior moves locations, they may have a hard time finding a doctor in that location. This is an increasing problem that is made worse by the health care law.

I think the President deserves to hear that and to know that and to realize the impact his law has had on people way beyond, as he says, just insurance companies. The President also needs to know—because seniors know—that the President's health care law took $530 billion from Medicare—not to save Medicare, not to strengthen Medicare, but to spend on other programs not for seniors. The health care law cut more than $½ trillion from the Medicare Program to fund new government programs. Seniors realize this, and it is

time the President of the United States understood the impact of the decisions he made when he signed this health care bill into law.

Many seniors on Medicare Advantage will lose their plan. More than one in four seniors are currently on Medicare Advantage. It is a choice they make. They know they are on Medicare Advantage. Over 11 million seniors are on Medicare Advantage. Yet, according to the Actuary of Medicare alone, by 2017, when the Medicare Advantage cuts in the President's health care law are fully implemented, roughly half—half—of seniors who like the Medicare Advantage plan they have will lose it.

The President said: If you like what you have, you can keep it. Perhaps he should have realized the bill he signed into law would cause him to break a number of the promises he made to the American people. That is another one of those broken promises. So the President promised: If you like what you have, you can keep it. But we find out many more people are not able to keep what they have. And the President said his plan would lower insurance costs by $2,500 per family. Yet we see insurance rates have gone up, and they are going up faster than if the law had never been passed in the first place.

So the reality is from the time I gave my second opinion speech last week until today, the President needs to realize the private sector is not fine and his health care law hurts small businesses, hurts seniors, and hurts patients all across this country. If the President wants to do something to help the private sector, he should work with Congress to repeal his health care law and to replace it with better reforms that would actually be better for patients and providers and taxpayers.

This health care law, as I see it, is bad for patients, it is bad for providers—the nurses and the doctors who take care of those patients—and it is terrible for the American taxpayer. What we need is health care reform that actually provides the care for people they need from a doctor they choose at a lower cost.

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

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

SUGAR PROGRAM

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise in strong opposition to multiple amendments to the farm bill that would undermine critical support for American sugar producers and the American jobs they create. These amendments would pull the rug out from underneath sugar beet producers in my home State of Montana. It would leave farmers and other sugar industry workers in Montana and across the country vulnerable to job loss. In these tough economic times, this is a step backwards in job creation, and that is a step we can't afford to take.

Montana is the fifth largest sugar beet-producing State in the Nation. In 2010, our cash receipts totaled more than $66 million, and those dollars mean good-paying American jobs. That is why the farm bill continues the vital support that helps America's sugar producers sustain more than 140,000 jobs and nearly $20 billion in economic activity every year.

Our sugar policy is a proven investment in American jobs at no cost to the taxpayer. That is right. Let me repeat that. The U.S. sugar policy doesn't cost American taxpayers a single cent. So why in the world would we want to get rid of this proven job creator at a time when jobs should be our No. 1 priority?

The policy does not restrict access to lower sugar prices for manufacturers, but it allows sugar producers from Montana and the rest of the United States to compete in the world market with access to less quality sugar, cheaper labor, and fewer regulations. Other countries very strongly protect their sugar industry.

Some argue our Sugar Program, while not costing the American taxpayer directly, costs them indirectly at the grocery store. But let me be very clear: For every $1 candy bar bought at a grocery store, only 2 cents of that total cost is sugar. For every $1, only 2 cents of the cost of that candy bar is sugar.

With no cost to the American people and proven benefits extending from rural farmers through the entire economy, this policy works. It is a lifeline to Montana's sugar beet farmers and the rural communities in which they live. I would not let us get rid of a policy that supports proven job creators at a time when we need jobs more than ever.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

FOOD FOR PEACE

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to address an issue related to hunger, a topic that is a significant component of the farm bill we are debating, and particularly to raise the topic associated with an amendment I have offered. It is amendment No. 2403.

Most of us have heard the expression, since it is an old saying, that goes like this: Give a man a fish and he eats for a day; teach a man to fish and he will eat for the rest of his life.

By teaching someone how to fish or how to grow crops, we help them provide food for themselves and for their families. The bill we are considering has funds set aside for a program called Food for Peace, title II. They are intended to do just that, to help combat world hunger and malnutrition. We have a long history in Kansas, Senator Dole being a prime example of someone who has cared greatly about hunger not only in the United States but around the world. The funds used here in Food for Peace are very important to us, certainly as a matter of humanitarian issues, but also to the security of our country and its future.

There are funds designated within that title II, some to be used for emergency aid and some to be used for developmental aid, the difference being the ability to respond to an immediate crisis or disaster, and other funds, the developmental aid, to be used to improve the chances that crisis never occurs.

The question I want to raise with my colleagues here in the Senate is how do we allocate the amount between emergency food aid and the amount of money we use to teach folks the skills necessary to help them survive when disaster strikes? We are not talking about any new spending, any new money; we are simply trying to address the issue how do we allocate what amount has already been decided upon by the committee.

I have been to Darfur, for example, spent time in Sudan, and saw the efforts by many to keep people from starving. Those are very important. I am thankful for the generosity of Americans, both as charitable organizations and as taxpayers, who provide emergency food assistance to these people. We never want to have the kind of suffering we see there and other places around the world.

But I am concerned about the allocation that is included in this bill and I have introduced an amendment to ensure that at least 20 percent of Food for Peace, the title II funds, is available each year for prevention-based programs that reduce hunger in poor, crisis-prone communities. If we can prevent the need for emergency food assistance and help more people gain the skills needed for their lifetime, then we should do that. That is what this amendment is intended to do.

The legislation we are considering significantly reduces the minimum amount of funding for developmental programs that equip vulnerable people around the world to feed themselves. The farm bill, this farm bill we are debating, reduces by nearly 40 percent the amount of funds that would be used for the important work of development aid. Instead, it directs those dollars to emergency food aid. The amendment I am offering would raise the minimum amount that would be spent on developmental programs by 5 percent so we can prevent circumstances where people are starving and need that emergency aid.

This has been an issue we have worked on for a long period of time.

This is my third farm bill as a Member of Congress. In the 2008 farm bill, we created a lockbox, an amendment I offered that was included in the 2008 farm bill, that set aside about $450 million for purposes of developmental aid, again trying to make certain we have the resources in place to reduce the chances we are going to need emergency aid. It is true that many countries have a high concentration of malnourished children, and subsistence farming usually goes hand in hand in those circumstances.

Affected by droughts and crop failures, eroding soils, lack of sustainable income, these populations are short of food several months of the year and they oftentimes need emergency food aid as a result. As a consequence of that circumstance, even though title II emergency food aid programs are intended to be short-lived, lasting between a few months maybe up to a year, usually most emergency food aid is directed to the same areas, year after year, because of the continuing need. It is a reoccurring need, in fact, so year after year we are trying to provide emergency food aid to the same populations and the same areas and the same countries.

My point is we would be wiser in spending our dollars by trying to reduce that reoccurring starvation, that recurring need, that lack of food, because of the amount and length of a food crisis and the need to stretch our taxpayer dollars as far as possible. Because using food aid more effectively is the key to success, the 2008 farm bill assured that a portion of that food aid would be combined with technical assistance, training, and business development to boost agricultural productivity, conserve natural resources, link farmers to markets, and improve child nutrition, incomes, and diets.

That lockbox set aside about $450 million. It is expected, if this bill were fully funded, that these millions are nearly now $100 million less. So we are moving in the direction of providing a lot less developmental aid. In fact, in the 1970s when this program was amended and altered, 75 percent of title II money, of Food for Peace money, was set aside for developmental aid. Over time, that amount has been reduced, time and time again. Through economic empowerment, improved infrastructure, watershed innovations, these programs in developmental aid help protect and safeguard against the need for emergency aid. Providing a consistent and adequate level of funding for prevention-based programs has been proven to work.

For example, in Haiti, World Vision has been implementing a 5-year multiyear assistance program, supported by developmental aid funding. The central plateau region of Haiti has historically suffered from lack of adequate food, causing extremely high levels of poverty and stunting among children under 2 years of age. World Vision has worked with clinic and community health workers through a mobile clinic strategy to provide nutritional and primary health care support to mothers and children. During their last national nutrition survey, large parts of that central plateau moved from red and yellow, crisis and severe insecurity areas, to green, indicating the investment in preventing malnutrition using the nonemergency programs is an effective and worthwhile investment in fighting ongoing hunger and preventing additional use of emergency funds down the road.

In Haiti we see the example of using the prevention dollars to reduce the need for disaster or crisis dollars. Title II prevention-based programs are implemented by private, voluntary organizations and co-ops. They are supported, begun, by the American people. They have regular audits and oversight. We are talking about organizations such as World Vision, as I mentioned, Catholic Relief Services, Food for Hunger, Mercy Corps, Congressional Hunger, the United Methodist Committee. These are folks who are engaged day in, day out, year in, year out, in trying to prevent hunger from occurring or the circumstances which create hunger in a community from occurring. The inability to plan and predict the uncertainty of the amount of money that would be available by what we do each year in appropriations and what we do every few years in a farm bill makes their job much more difficult. So the consistency of having the resources available to fight and the need to fight the circumstances that create the need for crisis intervention is something that is important, as is the certainty that can come from knowing there will always be this certain amount of money available for prevention.

Reasonable levels of food aid are important in both the urgent needs. There are going to be crises. Certain things happen—floods, natural disasters occur. We know we need to be able to respond quickly. But we also know we need to be able to reduce the incidence of hunger occurring time and time again in certain areas of the world. With this amendment, title II will still largely be used for emergencies but will increase by a modest amount the funding for developmental programs that helps eliminate the need for that emergency assistance down the road. I encourage my colleagues in the Senate to support this amendment.

I know this has been a significant issue within the Senate Committee on Agriculture and I appreciate their consideration of this topic. I commend the chairperson, Senator STABENOW, and the ranking member, my colleague from Kansas, Senator ROBERTS, for their tremendous efforts trying to bring to the Senate a farm bill that meets both the needs of agricultural producers and the people they feed. I offer my sincere appreciation to both those Senators and other members of the Senate Agriculture Committee for their work.

I particularly wish to express my gratitude for the Senator from Kansas, Mr. ROBERTS, for his continuing involvement in agriculture throughout his time as a Member of the House, chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, now the ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. His efforts on behalf of the folks back home as well as around the world are greatly appreciated by me.

Again I ask my colleagues in the Senate to support an adequate portion of the Food for Peace resources being used to stave off reoccurring food crises, rather than just reacting to them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MERKLEY). The Senator from Alabama is recognized.

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, as we deal with the farm bill we have to acknowledge that 80 percent of that bill now is the SNAP program, or the Food Stamp Program. I will repeat that—80 percent of this bill. So we need to not call it the farm bill anymore. It needs to be considered primarily the Food Stamp bill as that's what it is.

When we look at the bill, our sponsors are rightly pleased that they have tightened the belt of the farmers, they reduced some of the subsidies and programs, they created a little better policy, I believe, and they deserve some credit for that. But of the $800 billion that will be spent in the next 10 years, under current law—$800 billion compared to $200 billion in the rest of the farm program—for the $800 billion they are only claiming a $4 billion savings.

It is quite true that we in America do not want to have people hungry. We do not want to have people malnourished. What we want is to run a Food Stamp Program that has integrity, that creates an incentive for responsible personal behavior and that helps America to be a healthy nation.

I do not think we are there yet. In fact, we have Members on the Democratic side who are opposing even this $4 billion reduction in projected spending. This is less than half of 1 percent. And some of them don't even want to have that. Cut the farmers, all right, whack them 10 percent; but don't make real cuts to anything else or deal with any other programs. So our challenge simply is to make sure that people who are truly in need get the benefits. My Republican colleagues and I see this as a program that is temporary, helping people through tough times and creating an incentive for them to move on, be successful, find work and take care of themselves and their dependents.

I believe this chart will give some indication of the situation that we are in today. It is an accurate illustration of spending in this bill, the 2013 bill, which begins October 1 of this year. The Food Stamp Program will make up $82 billion out of the spending in this legislation that we are dealing with. In the bill, $6 billion will go to conservation programs—which is not really a

farmer's program, and they may get some benefits from it—another $6 billion for commodities, which is the orange in the chart, and $8 billion for crop insurance, which is the new fundamental basis of farm policy. I am not complaining that farmers are being squeezed. Hopefully, this has been done in a smart way that will also make those programs better. However, what I am suggesting is that there is virtually no change in the 80 percent of spending in this bill. We don't have the money to waste especially if it can be done better and smarter.

The main farm provisions in the bill experience a $14.7 billion reduction. That is a reduction of nearly 10 percent of spending relative to the baseline. To add some context, if the food stamp portion were to be reduced by 10 percent, it would save the U.S. Treasury $75 billion. Food stamp spending has quadrupled since 2001. It doubled between 2001 and 2006. Some people say the reason food stamp use is up is due to unemployment and recession. Well, that is not the entire story. For example, from 2001 to 2006, under President Bush's time when the economy had a small recession but was moving along very strongly in 2006, it still doubled from 2001 to 2006. At that time unemployment remained at about 5 percent. It is now 8 percent. When food stamps were first expanded nationally, 1 in 50 Americans were on the program. Today that number has increased to 1 in 7.

Are we confident that each of those seven Americans need this kind of subsidy? Are we sure that is needed? I believe we need to examine the program. If they need this benefit, let's get it for them. If not, let's not.

There are nearly 80 welfare programs provided by the U.S. Government, and 17 are for food and nutrition support. I repeat, 17 programs are for food and nutrition support. The costs now exceed $700 billion annually for all of these Federal programs, food and others too, plus $200 billion in State contributions. So that is almost $1 trillion a year, which is so much money it is difficult to express.

For example, an individual on food stamps may have a household that is eligible to receive and may receive $25,000 a year in total welfare support. We have a host of programs for which people can qualify, so we need to keep that in mind as we go forward. There is a patchwork quilt of Federal and State programs that help people in need. This is in addition to charitable and religious support that people can access.

The farm bill proposes to permanently elevate food stamps far above prerecession levels. In 2008 we spent less than $40 billion on food stamps. I repeat, in 2008—just a few years ago—less than $40 billion a year. Food stamp spending over the next 10 years is estimated to average almost $80 billion. This is double the prerecession amount.

This chart shows how we have grown from a little under $20 billion in 2001 to over $70 billion in 2022. We can see a little decline there between 2013 and 2022. That chart is based on projections from the Congressional Budget Office and assume that the unemployment will begin to drop in the future—we hope this is correct. Even though unemployment is expected to fall below 8 percent, they are not showing that we are going to have a major dropoff in food stamp spending in the future. Hopefully, unemployment will be falling. Hopefully, we will get this economy on the right track.

I would suggest the point that is revealed in this chart is that unemployment is not what is driving the food stamp increases. The increases far exceed the unemployment rate increases, and the decline from a projected reduction in unemployment is not very much either.

Were food stamp spending returned to prerecession levels those, say, in 2007, and then they were indexed for inflation, it would produce for the U.S. Treasury a $340 billion savings. So I don't think in 2007 the numbers that were spent are totally disproportionate to what we would need today, and I believe if properly managed we could do better.

The amendments I have filed—and there are four—address some of the perverse incentives for States to increase food stamp registration rather than an incentive to increase the integrity of the program.

For example, one of the things we need to do is to deal with the Federal provision that provides bonuses to States that increase the number of people who are registered. States currently receive bonuses for increasing enrollment and running the Food Stamp Program. They don't get bonuses for efficiently managing the program to reduce fraud, they don't get bonuses for finding people who are on the program illegitimately and selling their benefits in the marketplace or otherwise abusing the program, they get bonuses for seeing how many people they can sign up. That is not a sound policy.

The next amendment I have is Restoring the Asset Test for Food Stamps. You would think it is pretty well accepted that if a person has a certain amount of assets, they shouldn't have the government pay for their food. But through a system known as categorical eligibility, 43 States have now provided benefits to individuals whose assets exceed the statutory limit for them. Only 11 States did that in 2007.

Why? There are a couple of reasons. I guess one of them is they help get the incentive bonus for signing up more people. If they get around the asset test and sign up more people, maybe they get a bonus.

What incentive does the State have to reduce the amount of dollars from Washington? They don't match a dime of it. What incentive do they have to reduce the amount of money—free money in their minds—from Washington going to the State? Not much really.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, if passed, this amendment would save $11 billion, and all it would do is to say that SNAP beneficiaries would have to comply with the requirements of the program before they get the food stamps. It is called categorical eligibility. If people qualify for any other welfare program, the States have been given the power to say they qualify for food stamps even though they don't meet the formal qualifications for the food stamp program. Let me say that again—if they qualify for these others, under categorical eligibility they are categorically entitled to food stamps. That is not a good policy. It does not appropriately target the correct population, and we should fix that.

Another issue is what has been referred to as the LIHEAP loophole. This reform—and the amendment I have offered, and I hope we get a vote on it—requires households that receive larger food stamp payments on the basis of home energy expense actually provide proof of that expense. This is a real problem. States have been part of this, frankly. They have learned how to manipulate the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program money, and it creates an opportunity to have more people qualify for higher food stamp benefits than they are entitled to. It is not good policy and this abuse should be dealt with. The CBO says if that abuse were eliminated, it would save $9.5 billion over 10 years in addition to the other savings in this bill.

Then another amendment, called the SAVE amendment, would simply require that the Federal Government use a program called SAVE—similar to the E-Verify program—to ensure that those adults receiving benefits are, in fact, lawfully in the country. If they are not lawfully here, they should not be getting welfare support from the U.S. government. How basic is that? They just should not.

One of the most important things we can do to restore integrity in our immigration system is to quit providing economic benefits for people who violate the law. This is the first thing we need to do. It is an important thing to do. So I think that would be an amendment we should include.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, Federal spending is set to increase 50 percent over the next 10 years. I repeat: Federal spending is projected to increase 50 percent over the next 10 years, and this creates a problem for us. Our per-person debt is worse than that of Portugal, Greece, Spain, or Italy.

This is a chart that shows that. We didn't make up these numbers, and it is perfectly established that they are accurate.

This raises a good question. What is the per capita debt of the United States per person? In other words, what

does the U.S. government owe? It is $49,800 per person—man, woman, and child in America. In Spain it is $20,000, in Portugal it is $22,000, in France it is $35,000, in Greece it is $40,000, in Italy it is $40,000, and in Ireland it is $46,000.

This level of debt is not healthy for us. So the idea that we have an unlimited ability to throw money at every problem we have and that we don't have to make sure every single dollar we appropriate helps the people truly in need, and is wisely spent, is over. We have to end that concept. This government, this Congress, this administration has been far too blase about managing the people's money.

It is like we just want to leave the money out there and maybe it will create a stimulus and somehow it will help the economy and we will give more than we need to give and not worry about it. We don't want to investigate anybody who rightfully qualifies for these benefits. We don't want to cut off anybody who truly deserves these benefits. That would be unkind. However, it is not unkind to insist that people meet the qualifications of the program. The people who don't meet the qualifications don't get the money. That is only common sense, and that is justice as Americans know it.

It is amazing that 40 cents of every dollar we spend in our country today is borrowed. The United States is headed for what has been called the most predictable economic crisis in its history. The debt course we are on is unsustainable. We are headed to a debt crisis if we don't change where we are going, as every witness before the Budget Committee, of which I am ranking member, has told us. Yet many Senators in this body are not only unwilling to achieve more than $4 billion in savings from the $800 billion program, but some even consider $4 billion too much to reduce from the program.

The junior Senator from New York proposes to increase food stamp spending even more than the current growth we have seen, explaining that ''food stamps are an extraordinary investment because for every dollar that you put into the SNAP program [the food stamp program] you get out $1.71.'' I won't repeat that because this is what the director of the program said, or the Secretary of Agriculture, I believe. He said that for every dollar spent on food stamps, you get out $1.71. Under this reasoning, we ought to just increase the food stamp program 10 times. Why not? Under this reasoning we are going to get even more money back. Somehow, it is going to create a stimulus and it is going to bring more money in for the Treasury and make the economy grow. Why don't we just pay for clothes, shoes, and housing? Why not? It is precisely this kind of thinking that has bled our Treasury of money that we need to pay for the demands this country has.

I also think it is a moral issue. What is our policy objective? Is it our national goal to place as many people on welfare, food stamp support, as we can possibly put on that program? Is that our goal? Is that a moral vision for the United States of America, just to see how many people we can place in a situation where they are dependent on the Federal Government for their food? I just ask that. I think we should wrestle with that question.

Under the current proposal, no fewer than one in nine Americans will be on food stamps at any point during the next 10 years. Which is the better goal—to permanently have one in nine Americans on food stamps or to have as many Americans as possible achieving financial independence?

Left unattended, the safety net really can become a restraint, a trap. Welfare reform is guided by the moral principle that welfare support can become damaging not only to the Treasury of the United States but to the recipient. Over time, the trillions of dollars we spend on welfare programs—with the greatest of intentions, with the greatest desire to do good—can replace the normal support role of private family, church, and community. It can become a barrier to self-sufficiency and an incentive not to be engaged in the tough, real world of work and competition. So I think it is not compassionate to increase without limit the size and reach of the Federal Government. The central premise of the American society is that the empowerment of the individual is always preferable to the empowerment of the state.

The amendments we have spent a lot of time working on—each one of them is crafted to improve the program. None of them represent major cuts in the amount of spending that is involved in the food stamp program. For each one of them the biggest savings would be about $10 billion, but in each case it is $10 billion that would be saved, that would make the program more efficient, that would improve the integrity of the program, and not reduce any of the benefits that will go to those who would qualify for food stamps under existing law. It would not reduce that.

I am concerned that the majority leader has filled the tree on this bill. Senator REID has basically taken control of the amendment process. So we have a bill moving through the Senate that will spend about $1 trillion over the next 10 years, and 80 percent of the spending in this bill will deal with food nutrition programs, with SNAP programs—80 percent of it—and we have only had one amendment that deals with that program—only one.

We have been here for days without voting on anything.

Senator ROBERTS is trying to get amendments from the Republican side to be voted on.

The majority leader says: Well, I don't think I will approve that one. No, we don't want to vote on that. We have already voted on something like that. We are not going to vote on that. You have already had a food stamp amendment. We are not going to have any more food stamp amendments.

That is the kind of talk that is going on here.

This is the U.S. Senate, the greatest deliberative body in the history of the world—something we are exceedingly proud of—where we can have debate, vast, continuous, intense debate. It is part of the glory of this body. So now we have one person—the majority leader—using a parliamentary technique called filling the tree and basically saying I don't get a vote on any of those amendments I just mentioned.

I believe they are responsible amendments. I believe all four should be adopted. I believe it would make the food stamp program better. It would help ensure we have enough money to make sure the people who are in need get help. If we don't get off the debt course we are on, we are going to be in a crisis and all the programs are going to be cut—maybe more than we really need to cut them—because we have to get on the right course.

So I am objecting to this. I am not happy about it. I don't think it is healthy. I do believe the majority leader has utilized this technique of filling the tree more than any majority leader in history—far more than any majority leader in history—and it is not a healthy trend for the Senate.

We have always had a lot of amendments on the farm bill, and we need to have these amendments. So I hope and believe that—I hope we will get votes on these amendments. I hope that we will be able to debate these amendments and that we will be able to help improve the food stamp program.

I want to mention one more thing. Senator RAND PAUL offered an amendment earlier that did not pass that would have block-granted the money to the States. I am not sure—different people can disagree on exactly how he would go about that and whether he did it the right way and whether the spending level he chose was appropriate, but let me say this: A system in which the Federal Government gives an unlimited amount of money to the States creates a perverse incentive for the States to make sure they achieve every possible dollar from Washington. This system creates no incentive for the States to enhance the integrity of the program and to stop those who are abusing it, because when we spend State money to investigate and prosecute and stop abuse, we have reduced the treasury of the State. When we reduce the amount of food stamps pouring into the State, we reduce the amount of Federal money coming into a State—an additional adverse consequence economically for that State.

So we need to create a situation in which the State is given a certain amount of money—a fair formula—and then they have the responsibility of making sure it goes to the right people. If poor people aren't getting enough

money, they will then have an incentive to identify those who are improperly getting the money, cut them off, and direct the money to people in need. We don't have that incentive today. That is one reason the food stamp program is not operating effectively.

So I think Senator PAUL was correct fundamentally in his approach that block-granting the food stamp program to the States would create the right incentive to make the program more effective, to create more integrity, and to make sure people most in need receive the benefits.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, first, I wish to thank the Senator from Alabama for calling this body's attention once again to the debt crisis we face as a country. I was with some people just a little while ago, and I was telling them a story about a conversation I had in Colorado about our debt and our deficit and the moral obligation we have to our kids to actually deal with this problem and face up to the fact. My then-10-year-old daughter was with me, Caroline.

We walked out on the front stoop of this place, and she said to me: Daddy.

I said: What.

She said: Just to be clear—she was making fun of me because I say that sometimes—she said: Just to be clear, I am not paying that back.

That is the right attitude she ought to have and the right attitude children all across the country ought to have and the right attitude we ought to have. I look forward, when we get into this discussion this summer, to finding out how to find a bipartisan path through this morass so that Caroline Bennet doesn't have to pay back a debt she didn't accrue.

I wanted to come to the floor today to talk about the economy because I think one thing we can agree on in this body for sure is that the best deficit reduction program we can find would be to get this economy moving again. I wanted to talk about one sector in particular that has created tremendous economic growth in Colorado; that is, the wind energy sector. I know my colleague from Colorado, MARK UDALL, came down earlier today to discuss the same issue, and I so much appreciate his continued efforts in fighting for these jobs.

Just a piece of context here. We face very significant structural issues in this economy today. I have brought this chart down here before, but what it shows is that our gross domestic product—our economic output—is actually higher today than it was when we went into the worst recession since the Great Depression. Our productivity is off the charts. That is the blue line, the second line. It has been going that way since the early 1990s because of our response to competition from China and India and other places, because of our use of technology, and because of the recession itself, which drove productivity straight up as firms all across the United States tried to figure out how to get through this tough time with fewer people. But median household income continues to fall in this country, and we have 23 or 24 million people who are unemployed or underemployed, even though we are generating this economic output.

I think there are two fundamental answers to this. One is education. The worst the unemployment rate ever got for people with a college degree in the worst recession since the Great Depression was 4.5 percent. But the other is innovation. Jobs are going to be created tomorrow and next week and the week after that that have rising wages, not lowering ones, not falling ones. And this economic recovery, like the last economic recovery—those two together are the first recoveries we have had as a nation in our history where economic growth decoupled from job growth and wage growth. I don't know about the Presiding Officer, but that is what I hear about most in my townhall meetings at home.

The wind production tax credit, it seems to me, cuts right to the core of whether and how we want to compete in this global and changing economy.

Let me show another picture here. This is it. This is a factory in Brighton, CO—bricks and mortar, made in America. It is a wind production facility. We are not talking about some fly-by-night experimental industry here.

This credit has triggered tremendous economic growth in Colorado and all across the country—good-paying jobs, manufacturing jobs here in the United States. As Representative STEVE KING, a Republican from Iowa, said recently in an op-ed he published, the production tax credit has driven as much as $20 billion in private investment. This is not some Bolshevik scheme. That is $20 billion in private investment supporting jobs here in the United States, manufacturing jobs here in the United States.

Wind power accounts for more than one-third of all new U.S. electric generation in recent years. In Colorado alone, it has created 6,000 jobs. It has moved our State toward a more diversified and cleaner energy portfolio. But because they can't get any certainty out of Washington, like everybody else, developers and manufacturers are already starting layoffs. They are laying off employees today in anticipation of the credit expiring at the end of the year.

Vestas, which has a huge manufacturing footprint in Colorado, from Windsor all the way south to Pueblo, is poised to lay off 1,600 workers if we fail to act. It is hard for me to understand, when our concerns about the deficit and our concerns about economic growth are ones that we hear about every day on the floor, why laying off 1,600 workers in Colorado is a good idea. Iberdrola Renewables, also doing business in Colorado, has already laid off 50 employees. Nationally, 37,000 jobs are at risk, not to mention the ones we could have created after 2012 but won't if we let this credit expire.

I know sometimes I sound like a broken record, but the world is not going to wait for us. Our largest single export today is energy, actually—interestingly enough. That is a very recent occurrence that we became a net exporter of energy. Before that, our single largest export was aircraft. We build the best aircraft in the world. Mr. President, $30 billion a year is what that export is to the United States.

China's export of solar panels last year was $15 billion—half our largest single export. They did not export 1 solar panel 10 years ago, and we invented the technology in the United States. In fact, some of us claim we invented it right at home in Colorado.

I am sure China would love to have this business as well or we can get out of our own way and extend the PTC, extend the tax credit, save those jobs, and grow our own clean energy economy.

This is not a partisan issue. I led a letter several months ago, where Republicans and Democrats from the Colorado delegation came together to urge a quick extension as part of the payroll deal. That effort, unfortunately, was not successful, nor were the others we have tried to take in the interim.

Shortly after our letter I filed an amendment—a bipartisan amendment—with the Senator from Kansas, a fully paid-for 1-year extension of the credit. This place has become the land of flickering lights. We extend one thing for a month, we extend another thing for 2 months.

I am very proud of the work we are doing on FDA right now, which is a 5-year reauthorization. But, my goodness, couldn't we extend this for a year to give people some degree of certainty, particularly when it is paid for?

I thank Senator MORAN, Republican from Kansas, for joining me—or for letting me join him—to lead that amendment.

Following that, several colleagues and I have partnered with Senator GRASSLEY and others to write a bill that would extend the credit for 2 years. There is clearly plenty of bipartisan support out there, and I know the people in my State—whether Republicans or Democrats or Independents or not even thinking about that—I know they want us to get this done.

Nearly 7,500 Coloradans have already signed a petition on my Web site supporting the wind production tax credit. I urge others today who are watching this to visit my Web site and please add their name.

I conclude by asking why, when the economic stakes are as high as they are, the Congress cannot get its act together. We need to extend the wind production tax credit, and we need to do it now.

EQIP AND CSP

Mr. President, I rise to speak on Coburn amendment No. 2353, and I want to be the first to say how much I appreciate the efforts of my colleague from Oklahoma at deficit reduction. In fact, we are currently working together to promote a comprehensive approach to deficit reduction, and I deeply appreciate his leadership, which in many ways has been unparalleled on this issue. However, I have to oppose this particular amendment. I understand we are likely to consider the amendment this afternoon. I urge my colleagues to oppose the amendment by supporting the motion to table.

This amendment will repeal the popular Environmental Quality Incentives Program, EQIP, and the Conservation Stewardship Program, CSP. Both are critical programs authorized under the conservation title of the farm bill.

In Colorado, I have heard time and time again from our farmers and our ranchers how critical these programs are to holding on to their family farm.

EQIP, for example, is on the front lines of agricultural production. It helps farmers ensure that their operations contribute to clean water and clean air in our rural communities. It proactively and successfully addresses new and emerging resource issues to avert the need for regulation—to put our farmers and ranchers in a place where they have less regulation, not more, because of the work they are doing on the ground to conserve their lands.

Let me give you one example from Colorado. EQIP resources have been used to ensure that the sage grouse stays off the endangered species list—a listing that would threaten ranchers all across the West. That is the result of the great work that has been done by farmers and ranchers in Colorado with EQIP.

By providing resources to mark barbed wired fences—making them more visible to the threatened bird—EQIP is working for farmers and ranchers, and it is working well. It is the flagship of voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs, which is a direction I think we should be heading, and a direction we head in this farm bill.

Both EQIP and CSP provide quantifiable benefits that are reflective of the varied conservation challenges all across our country. So I strongly support this new conservation title as we reported it out of the committee in a bipartisan vote.

As I have mentioned, and has been discussed on this bill, this bill is also remarkable for the cuts it makes: $23.6 billion. To my knowledge, there is not any other committee in the Senate or any committee in the House of Representatives that has actually reached bipartisan agreement and, in this case, bipartisan consensus on budget cuts, which is the way we should be doing business around here because it is what the American people and the people in Colorado expect from us, particularly on these difficult questions around our deficit and our debt. And $6.4 billion of those cuts—$6.4 billion of that $23 billion—came from the conservation title, not all of which I liked, but we made difficult compromises at the committee level, and we ought not make further cuts on the floor, especially to programs that make smart and effective investments in our rural communities.

So I will oppose, for those reasons, amendment No. 2353 and support the motion to table, and I urge my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to do the same.

Finally, I wish to say thank you to the chairwoman of this committee and the ranking member, DEBBIE STABENOW and PAT ROBERTS, for their extraordinary bipartisan work in getting the bill this far. It is my fervent hope that leadership on both sides reaches an agreement on these amendments so we can move forward and do the right thing for our farmers and ranchers back home in Colorado.

With that, I see my colleague from Connecticut, Senator LIEBERMAN, on the floor. I thank the Presiding Officer for his patience and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I thank the Presiding Officer and my friend from Colorado.

Mr. President, I rise to speak as in morning business.

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

CYBERSECURITY

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the urgent need for the Senate to adopt cybersecurity legislation.

I begin by recalling a recent story in the Washington Post that detailed how a young man living an ocean away from us was able to use his computer to hack into the cyber control system of a local water utility here in the United States. It took him just 10 minutes and required no special tools or no special training.

While the hacker could have taken over the water company's operations and caused real damage, instead he posted screen shots of his hack on the Internet to show that he had been there and prove his point that our Nation's Internet security is woefully lax. And it took very little in the way of resources or skill to penetrate it.

This kind of story is but one piece of what I would call an avalanche of evidence showing that there is an urgent need to pass comprehensive cybersecurity legislation that will safeguard our critical cyber infrastructure.

The fact is, as this 22-year-old's activities showed, and as authorities in the area, such as ADM Mike McConnell, the former Director of National Intelligence, have said, the cyber infrastructure which is owned by private entities is simply not adequately defended. And when it is not adequately defended—and here I am talking about vital national systems: The electric power grid, water companies, transportation systems, pipelines, et cetera, et cetera—when the cyber systems that control them now are not adequately protected, it means our Nation is not adequately protected because a cyberattack can incapacitate vital national entities that we all depend on every day and, in fact, cause enormous harm and loss of life, as much as a conventional attack by air in earlier confrontations and conflicts.

Yesterday the majority leader came to the floor of the Senate and spoke, I thought, eloquently about the urgency of the Senate adopting cybersecurity legislation. I wanted to come to the floor today to thank Senator REID for that statement and to say, as chairman of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, how strongly I agree with him. Of course, we are not alone.

A few days ago six of our Nation's most experienced national security leaders, spanning the last two-plus administrations, transcending any lines of partisanship, wrote a letter to Senator REID urging him to bring up cybersecurity legislation ''as soon as possible.'' That is a quote: ''as soon as possible.''

In that letter to both—not just to Senator REID, but to Senator MCCONNELL, the Republican leader, as well—former Department of Homeland Security Secretary Mike Chertoff from the Bush administration; former Director of National Intelligence, ADM Mike McConnell, whom I referred to, from the Bush administration; former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, also from the previous administration; former NSA and CIA Director Mike Hayden, also from the previous administration; former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, GEN James Cartwright, and former Deputy Defense Secretary Bill Lynn sent this letter—incidentally, to say what is already a matter of public record. In doing so, they express opinions that are quite similar to what we have heard from all the leaders of the current administration when it comes to security—Secretary of Defense Panetta, Director of National Intelligence Clapper, Director of the CIA Petraeus, and so on, and, of course, Secretary Napolitano at the Department of Homeland Security.

I want to read from this letter from these national security leaders because it sums up where we are. I quote now:

> Given the time left in this legislative session and the upcoming election this fall, we are concerned that the window of opportunity to pass legislation that is in our view critically necessary to protect our national and economic security is quickly disappearing.

In the letter they went on to say—and I quote again

> We—

The signers of the letter—

> carry the burden of knowing—

Along with a lot of the rest of us—

> that 9/11 might have been averted with the intelligence that existed at the time. We do

not want to be in the same position again when ''cyber 9/11'' hits—it is not a question of whether this will happen; it is a question of when.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD.

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

JUNE 6, 2012.

DEAR SENATORS REID AND MCCONNELL: We write to urge you to bring cyber security legislation to the floor as soon as possible. Given the time left in this legislative session and the upcoming election this fall, we are concerned that the window of opportunity to pass legislation that is in our view critically necessary to protect our national and economic security is quickly disappearing.

We have spoken a number of times in recent months on the cyber threat—that it is imminent, and that it represents one of the most serious challenges to our national security since the onset of the nuclear age sixty years ago. It appears that this message has been received by many in Congress—and yet we still await conclusive legislative action.

We support the areas that have been addressed so far, most recently in the House: the importance of strengthening the security of the federal government's computer networks, investing in cyber research and development, and fostering information sharing about cyber threats and vulnerabilities across government agencies and with the private sector. We urge the Senate to now keep the ball moving forward in these areas by bringing legislation to the floor as soon as possible.

In addition, we also feel that protection of our critical infrastructure is essential in order to effectively protect our nation, and economic security from the growing cyber threat. Infrastructure that controls our electricity, water and sewer, nuclear plants, communications backbone, energy pipelines and financial networks must be required to meet appropriate cyber security standards. Where market forces and existing regulations have failed to drive appropriate security, we believe that our government must do what it can to ensure the protection of our critical infrastructure. Performance standards in some cases will be necessary—these standards should be technology neutral, and risk and outcome based. We do not believe that this requires the imposition of detailed security regimes in every instance, but some standards must be minimally required or promoted through the offer of positive incentives such as liability protection and availability of clearances.

Various drafts of legislation have attempted to address this important area—the Lieberman/Collins bill having received the most traction until recently. We will not advocate one approach over another—however, we do feel strongly that critical infrastructure protection needs to be addressed in any cyber security legislation. The risk is simply too great considering the reality of our interconnected and interdependent world, and the impact that can result from the failure of even one part of the network across a wide range of physical, economic and social systems.

Finally, we have commented previously about the important role that the National Security Agency (NSA) can and does play in the protection of our country against cyber threats. A piece of malware sent from Asia to the United States could take as little as 30 milliseconds to traverse such distance. Preventing and defending against such attacks requires the ability to respond to them in real-time. NSA is the only agency dedicated to breaking the codes and understanding the capabilities and intentions of potential enemies, even before they hit ''send.'' Any legislation passed by Congress should allow the public and private sectors to harness the capabilities of the NSA to protect our critical infrastructure from malicious actors.

We carry the burden of knowing that 9/11 might have been averted with the intelligence that existed at the time. We do not want to be in the same position again when 'cyber 9/11' hits—it is not a question of 'whether' this will happen; it is a question of 'when.'

Therefore we urge you to bring cyber security legislation to the floor as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

HON. MICHAEL CHERTOFF,
HON. J. MIKE MCCONNELL,
HON. PAUL WOLFOWITZ,
GEN. MICHAEL HAYDEN,
GEN. JAMES CARTWRIGHT (RET),
HON. WILLIAM LYNN III.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. The majority leader came to the floor yesterday, as I have said, echoing these sentiments in his floor speech, when he said:

When virtually every intelligence expert says we need to secure the systems that make the lights come on, inaction is not an option.

I could not agree more with Senator REID.

The fact is, the House of Representatives, the so-called other body of Congress, has passed a cybersecurity bill—a package that I think takes some significant initial good steps. I thank the House for that. But I believe the bipartisan Senate Cybersecurity Act of 2012, S. 2105, which is sponsored by Senators COLLINS, FEINSTEIN, ROCKEFELLER, and me, takes the additional necessary steps to secure our cyber systems and, therefore, is preferable.

It is preferable, in large part, because it addresses the need to secure our Nation's critical cyber infrastructure; that is, the computers that control the systems that, if commandeered, attacked or intruded upon, could allow an attacker to open and close key valves and switches in pipelines for gas and oil and refineries and factories and water and sewer systems and electric plants and banks and along transportation nodes without detection by their operators.

We need to pass this bill or something very much like it so we can go to conference with the House and iron out whatever differences we have this year so we can get legislation to the President's desk. He has endorsed, I am grateful to say, S. 2105—certainly endorsed the principles that are in it.

We have to do that so we raise our defenses before we are victims of a cyber 9/11. The time remaining to do so in this session is obviously growing shorter. We know the lameduck session will be almost exclusively taken up with difficult questions about the budget, debt, sequester, the expiration of the so-called Bush tax cuts and much more. So we have to act.

I am encouraged by Senator REID's statement yesterday and my own belief after conversations with him that the leader is intent on bringing this legislation to the floor in July. The truth is, if we do not take it up in July and see whether we have the votes—and I am confident we will when it comes to the floor—we are not going to be able to pass this legislation that is timely and allows us to go to conference, reach an agreement, and send the bill to the President of the United States for his signature.

When talking about cybersecurity, the biggest threats we all know come from other nations, nation states, also nonstate actors such as terrorists and organized crime syndicates. But this young man I referred to at the beginning of my statement and his ability to quite easily penetrate the cyber control system of a local water company in the United States shows us that an attack can come from just about anyone and from just about anywhere.

According to the Washington Post story, ''This individual who goes by the name prOf is a bright unemployed 22 year old who favors hoodie sweatshirts and lives in his parent's home somewhere overseas.''

But this good guy, white-hat hacker, knows the risks our Nation is facing. He told the Post:

Eventually, somebody will get access to a major system and people will be hurt. It is just a matter of time.

That is the truth. Six of our Nation's premier equity security experts are in agreement with this 22-year-old hacker as they said in their letter: It is just a matter of time. We have to act before that time comes. To my colleagues who have concerns about the Cyber Security Act of 2011, the Collins-Feinstein-Rockefeller-Lieberman legislation, I say: Come on and work with us. We can and must resolve our differences. In fact, around some of the major areas of discussion, controversy, the section of our bill that has performance requirements for private sector entities that own the most critical infrastructure which, if attacked, could cause mass deaths, casualties, catastrophic economic loss, and a denigration of our national security, those are—and then the other section being the information-sharing section, where some people have civil liberties or privacy concerns, there is a good-faith effort going on to resolve those differences because, I think increasingly, Members of the Senate on both sides, just reacting to the facts, are worried this is a real and present danger to our security.

Perhaps the most real and present immediate danger of a massive attack on our homeland that exists today is by cyber attack. I do not think any of us wants to look back and say: Why did we not act before we were attacked? Therefore, I am encouraged by these deliberations. But I say to anybody else who has concerns about our bill, Members of the Senate, please be in touch with Senators COLLINS, FEINSTEIN, ROCKEFELLER or myself.

If we cannot resolve our differences, then draft amendments and let's debate them on the floor and have up-or-down votes and let the Senate work its will. As Senator REID said in his remarks yesterday:

> Everybody knows this Congress cannot pass laws that do not have broad bipartisan support. So we are going to need to work together on a bill that addresses the concerns of lawmakers on both sides of the aisle.

That time is coming soon, I am confident to say, based on my conversations with the majority leader. That time is coming soon on the floor of the Senate, but we have to start now to make sure we are ready when the bill comes to the Senate floor. I guarantee that one day in the near future, if we do not pass comprehensive cybersecurity legislation, and there is a serious and significant cyberspace attack on us, we will rush to pass it and that will be too late and we will not do it in a thoughtful way.

Time grows short while the threat keeps swelling. What if the next 22-year-old who decides to take over a water plant or an oil or gas pipeline or an electric powerplant decides to make a more convincing demonstration than just posting screen pictures online? If a 22-year-old can do this, think what an enemy nation with a significant amount of money and personnel and training behind it could do to us if we are not adequately defended?

I say to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, because this is not a partisan issue at all, this is a national security-homeland security issue: Let's get to work. Let's get ready for the floor debate on cybersecurity that I am confident is coming soon. Then let's pass this urgently needed legislation for the sake of both our national and economic security.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 20 minutes.

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

STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I am going to take a few minutes to outline the amendments I plan to offer on the farm bill. In beginning, I particularly want to commend the chair of the committee, Senator STABENOW, and Senator ROBERTS. I think we all understand that if you want to tackle a big issue, an important issue, you have to find a way to come to something resembling common ground.

This bill is especially important. This is a jobs bill at a time when our country needs good-paying jobs. It is an extraordinarily important health bill, particularly one with great implications for how America tackles the issue of obesity. It is an environmental bill because it has great implications for conservation. And, of course, it has extraordinary impact on rural communities—rural communities that are hurting right now.

The amendments I am going to be offering on the farm bill address those major concerns, and those concerns are particularly important to my State. My State does a lot of things well, but what we do best is we grow things. We grow things, add value to them, and ship them somewhere. We grow lots and lots of things—hundreds of crops, wonderful fruit and vegetables. We want to have a chance to grow this part of our economy. It is a $5 billion economy for the State of Oregon, and one we want to strengthen in the days ahead.

The first amendment I will be offering on the farm bill addresses the Farm to School Program. Schools all across the country purchase produce—pears, cherries, tomatoes, and lettuce—from Department of Agriculture warehouses. In some cases, the warehouses may be hundreds and hundreds of miles away. There are schools, however, that wish to source their fruits and vegetables locally. There are producers who wish to sell their goods to local schools.

You don't have to be a fancy economist, but that sounds like a market to me. The Congress ought to enable this market, not make it more difficult for this market to function. I spent a lot of time in rural Oregon over the last few months. As I have previously indicated, Harry & David, a producer in my home State—and a lot of Senators have gotten their wonderful products over the years as holiday gifts—wants to sell their wonderful pears to the school down the street. In attempting to do so, Harry & David has been met with a real maze, a welter of odd Federal rules, that has prevented them from doing so.

It should not be bureaucratic water torture for a local producer to sell to a nearby school. It is getting at that kind of bureaucracy and redtape that my Farm to School amendment seeks to address. As of now, Federal agriculture policy seems to be dishing out a diet of paperwork, process, and limited options, when we ought to be promoting innovation and getting away from this sort of one-size-fits-all approach.

My Farm to School amendment would allow for at least five Farm to School projects across the country, where States like mine that are innovative, have established and proven Farm to School programs in place, would be able to source healthy, quality produce rather than buy it from one of these faraway Federal warehouses.

Under this kind of approach, with this crucial program, the schools are going to win, our farmers are going to win, and our kids will be able to enjoy delicious local produce every day with this particular amendment.

The second amendment I plan to offer also encourages healthier eating. This one deals with the SNAP program—the program formerly known as Food Stamps. As the occupant of the chair knows, this program represents a substantial amount of the funding for the farm bill—over $70 billion. There are 700,000 SNAP recipients in my home State of Oregon. For too many Oregonians, this program is the only thing that stands between them and hunger.

I have said it on this floor before, and I want to say it again: I am not in favor of cutting these benefits; quite the contrary. I think Senator GILLIBRAND has an excellent amendment to ensure that that doesn't take place. I hope she will win support in the Senate for it. We should not have, in a country as rich and strong as ours, this many Americans going to bed at night hungry and trying to dig themselves out of the great recession at the same time. So I am not in favor of cutting SNAP benefits, but I am in favor of incentivizing this program to make it possible for those of modest incomes to get healthier, more nutritious foods, especially in light of the growing obesity epidemic our country faces.

What troubles me is that, in one sense, the Food Stamp Program, the SNAP program, is something of a conveyor belt for calories. It essentially says all of the various food products are equal. At a time when we see such extraordinary rates of obesity, particularly for low-income children and low-income women, I only hope we can look at ways to create incentives for healthier eating.

I am not in favor of setting up some kind of Federal policy that starts dictating from Washington, DC, what folks who are using the SNAP program can eat. I am not interested in some kind of national nanny program, or something that says you can't eat this or that. What I am proposing is that here in the Senate, we look at ways, particularly when you are talking about $70 billion of Federal nutrition spending, to at least promote healthier eating wherever possible, and the increased consumption of healthy fruits and vegetables.

Studies by the Centers for Disease Control show that low-income women and children—those most likely to receive SNAP benefits—are more likely to be obese than higher income women and children. What I am proposing with this amendment is giving the States some flexibility to try out ways to make SNAP benefits a launch pad for better nutrition, rather than, as I characterized it earlier, a conveyor belt for calories.

What I wish—and I know the Chair hails from a State with a substantial amount of agriculture—is to see farmers, retailers, health specialists, and

those who rely on the SNAP program, to get together and find a consensus—some common ground—on a way to wring more nutritional value out of those SNAP benefits.

In Oregon, we have tried this idea out. Those in the retail community, farmers and anti-hunger groups got together, and this group thinks they can do more to improve nutritional outcomes under this very large program.

The amendment makes clear that you could not get a waiver to reduce eligibility, or reduce the amount of benefits that someone on the SNAP program receives. But you could, for example, try various approaches to promote nutritional eating. A State could encourage SNAP recipients to purchase more fruits and vegetables by partnering with grocery stores or other food sellers to provide coupons to enable SNAP recipients to purchase extra or discounted fruits and vegetables. There are now programs that allow SNAP benefits to be exchanged at farmers markets for coupons that produce $2 worth of produce for $1 of SNAP benefits. The cost of the extra produce is paid for using non-federal funds. A State waiver could enable this type of program, for example, to be expanded beyond farmers markets.

There is a host of innovative proposals, in my view, that could improve public health and increase the consumption of healthy food. I hope as we go forward toward the conclusion of this legislation in the Senate, we can look at ways to accept the proposition that not all of the wisdom resides in Washington, DC, particularly when we are seeing these skyrocketing rates of obesity, tragically with special implications for low-income women and children. I think there are better ways to proceed. This amendment empowers States to have that opportunity.

The third amendment I am going to offer, I have not spoken about on the floor to date, and I wish to take just a minute to describe what this amendment deals with. It is an amendment I plan to offer that addresses the issue of industrial hemp farming. It is cosponsored by Senator RAND PAUL and is identical to legislation in the House, which has 33 bipartisan cosponsors.

This is, in my view, a textbook example of a regulation that flunks the commonsense test. There is government regulation on the books that prevents America's farmers from growing industrial hemp. What is worse, this regulation is hurting job creation in rural America and increasing our trade deficit. When my colleagues get more information about this outlandish, outrageous restriction on free enterprise, I think most of them are going to agree the restriction on industrial hemp is the poster child for dumb regulations. The only thing standing in the way of taking advantage of this profitable crop is a lingering misunderstanding about its use. The amendment I have filed on this issue will end a ridiculous regulation once and for all.

Right now, the United States is importing over ten-million of dollars of hemp products to use in paper products, construction materials, textiles, and a variety of other goods. We are importing a crop that U.S. farmers could be profitably growing right here at home if not for government rules prohibiting it.

Our neighbors to the north can see the potential for this product. In 2010, the Canadian Government injected over $700,000 into their blossoming hemp industry to increase the size of their hemp crop and fortify the inroads they're making in U.S. markets, at the expense of our farmers. It was a very good bet. U.S. imports of hemp products have consistently grown over the past decade, increasing by 300 percent in 10 years. From 2009 to 2010, they grew 35 percent. The number of acres in Canada devoted to growing industrial hemp nearly doubled from 2011 to 2012.

I know there are going to be Members of Congress, and others who are listening to this, who are going to say all this talk about hemp is basically talk about marijuana. The fact is, while they come from the same species of plant, there are major differences between them. They have different harvest times, they're different heights, and the cultivation techniques are markedly different. And when we recognize those differences, we'll be able to focus on the benefits from producing domestically the hemp we already use.

Under this amendment, the production of hemp would still be regulated, but it would be done by the States through permitting programs, not the Federal Government. Nine States have already put legislation in place to provide for a permitting system that enforces the prohibition on marijuana and ensures that industrial hemp maintains a very low THC level—under 0.3 percent. The lowest-grade marijuana typically has 5 percent THC content. The bottom line is no one is going to get high on industrial hemp.

Hemp has been a profitable commodity in a number of countries. In addition to Canada, Australia also permits hemp production, and the growth in that sector helped their agricultural base survive when the tobacco industry dried up. Over 30 countries in Europe, Asia and North and South America currently permit farmers to grow hemp, and China is the world's largest producer. In fact, our country is the only industrialized nation that prohibits farmers from growing hemp.

Oregon is home to some of the major manufacturers of hemp products, including Living Harvest, one of the largest hemp food producers in our country. Business has been so brisk there that the Portland Business Journal recently rated them as one of the fastest growing local companies.

There are similar success stories in other States. One company in North Carolina has been incorporating hemp into building materials, reportedly making them both stronger and more environmentally friendly. Another company in California produces hemp-based fiberboard.

No country is better than ours at developing, perfecting, and expanding markets for our products. As the market grows, it ought to be domestically produced hemp that supplies that growth.

I would like to close on this topic with a couple statements by one of the leading newspapers in my State, The Bulletin. I think it would be fair to say The Bulletin would not cite itself as one of the first places one ought to look for left-wing thinking, and here is what they had to say with respect to my amendment, which they encouraged support for:

> . . . producers of hemp products in the United States are forced to import it. That denies American farmers the opportunity to compete in the market. It's like surrendering the competitive edge to China and Canada, where it can be grown legally.

The editorial then goes on to say:

> Legalizing industrial hemp does not have to be a slippery slope towards legalizing marijuana. It can be a step toward removing regulatory burdens limiting Oregon farmers from competing in the world market.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a copy of the editorial from The Bulletin.

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

[From the Bulletin Staff, June 9, 2012]

U.S. SHOULD LEGALIZE INDUSTRIAL HEMP

(Editorial)

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., has introduced a change to the farm bill to remove the federal prohibition on growing industrial hemp. Wyden's change would put an end to an unnecessary ban.

The Oregon Legislature authorized the growing of industrial hemp in 2009, but federal law still blocks hemp as an illegal crop.

Why? Federal policy does not distinguish between the varieties of cannabis. Some are good for oilseed and fiber. Some are better for smoking to get high.

Yes, both do contain the hallucinogenic compound delta–9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Industrial hemp is low in it Marijuana is high in it.

That doesn't mean the country should ban growing all of it.

Industrial hemp is versatile and can grow like crazy. It can be used for paper, clothes, rope. The seed oil can be used for a variety of things: food, paint, pharmaceuticals and more.

It's already used in Oregon and across the country. But producers of hemp products in the United States are forced to import it. That denies American farmers the opportunity to compete in the market. It's like surrendering the competitive edge to China and Canada, where it can be grown legally.

There are concerns about what legalizing hemp would mean. Would it be another headache for law enforcement?

One way to solve that, if it's a problem, is to require industrial hemp fields to be licensed and require random testing to ensure the crop is low in THC. Oregon's law said the state could seize crops that had a THC level higher than 0.3 percent.

Legalizing industrial hemp does not have to be a slippery slope toward legalizing marijuana. It can be a start toward removing regulatory burdens limiting Oregon farmers from competing in the world market.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, if this farm bill is about empowering farmers and increasing rural jobs, let's give them the tools they need to get the job done. Let's boost revenue for farmers and reduce the overhead costs for the businesses around the country that use this product. And let's put more people to work growing and processing an environmentally friendly crop with a ready market in the United States.

For all the reasons I have described, I will be urging my colleagues to support this amendment so the law can be changed and farmers are not prevented from growing a profitable crop in the future.

Even though my amendment is about growing a crop and should be clearly relevant to the farm bill, it may be blocked from getting a vote because of the Senate rules on what amendments are allowed to be offered once cloture is invoked on the bill. If I get the opportunity, I am going to bring this amendment up through the regular order. But if cloture is invoked and my amendment is not allowed, I want colleagues to know I will be back at this again until there are smarter regulations in place for industrial hemp.

In closing, let me say I don't think we can overstate the importance of the best possible farm bill. Senator STABENOW and Senator ROBERTS have, in my view, done yeomen's work in trying to build a bipartisan approach. The question now is can we use the amendment process to improve on the kind of bipartisan effort they brought to the floor.

Each of the areas I have described this afternoon—improving the Farm to School program, wringing more value and better nutritional outcomes from the SNAP program, and helping a promising hemp industry—give us a chance to attain the objectives of what I have described as the best possible farm bill, and we can do this all without spending one single dime of additional taxpayer money—not a dime of additional taxpayer money. It is my hope we can take the good work that has already been done by Senators STABENOW and ROBERTS and build on that. I hope the Senate will support the three amendments I have described this afternoon.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, first, let me thank all of our colleagues who are working with us as we move forward in putting together a package of amendments to be voted on here in the Senate. I want to thank everyone—of course my ranking member, Senator ROBERTS, but also people on both sides who are working together in good faith as we move through this process.

This morning, we did have two votes, and in the next little while we will have two more. And I do want to speak to one of those but also to just indicate again to all of our colleagues how important it is to farmers and ranchers, families, and rural communities across America that we come together and pass this farm bill.

Sixteen million people have jobs related to agriculture. I am not sure there is any one single piece of legislation we have had in front of us that actually impacted 16 million people like this one. Of course, we are very proud of the way we have come together in a bipartisan way to propose something that actually cuts the deficit by over $23 billion and creates real reforms that taxpayers and farmers have asked for, while strengthening our risk-management tools for agriculture, conservation, other jobs efforts, certainly rural development, alternative energy, and certainly our support for families with their own personal disaster when it comes to putting food on the table during an economic downturn for them.

I want to specifically take a moment, though, to speak and urge my colleagues to vote yes on a motion to table Coburn amendment No. 2353, which would repeal two of the most successful conservation programs in the history of our country, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, which we all call EQIP, and the Conservation Stewardship Program.

EQIP is on the front lines of production agriculture, helping farmers comply with regulatory pressures, and it has been very effective. It is the cornerstone of our country's commitment to voluntary, incentive-based conservation—voluntary—working with farmers, working with ranchers in a voluntary way, to partner with them to be able to provide ways to tackle environmental issues we all care about.

I would underscore the fact that what we call the farm bill is actually the largest investment we as a country make in conservation of land, air, and water on working lands—lands that are owned by the private sector, partnering, because we all have a stake in runoff and clean water issues and erosion issues and all of the other things that relate to protecting our wildlife and our wetlands for not only habitats but also for our hunters and fishermen and all of the other issues around which we celebrate what we have been able to do around conservation in this country.

EQIP really is a cornerstone of our commitment to a voluntary incentive-based conservation program. It provides a cost share to farmers to implement practices that have been absolutely proven to work to benefit our country's soil, air, and water resources.

This last year the Environmental Quality Incentive Program entered into 38,000 contracts with farmers and ranchers all across America, covering 13 million acres of land. EQIP has a number of incredible stories across the country—in Louisiana, helping farmers recover from Hurricane Katrina; in Oklahoma, helping producers implement best management practices to reduce sediment in the Mission Creek, improving water quality, helping restore fish populations. In Michigan, they have helped farmers struggling with bovine TB protect their herds and livelihoods.

So this is one of two critical conservation programs that would be repealed by this amendment. The other one is the Conservation Stewardship Program. This encourages higher levels of conservation across agricultural operations as well as the adoption of new and emerging conservation practices. CSP encourages producers to address resource concerns by undertaking additional conservation activities and improving and maintaining their current activities. And they focus on seven resource concerns as well as energy—soil quality, soil erosion, water quality, water quantity, air quality, plant resources, and animal resources—all things important not only for our farmers and ranchers but to all of us—every community, every State, all of us in the country.

This program is extremely popular. It has been very successful. This year producers enrolled 12 million acres in the program, and this brings the total to 49 million acres across the country that now have conservation practices as a result of the CSP. It provides conservation bankers with more acres than any other conservation program in the country. I strongly urge we table this amendment. I ask for a ''yes'' vote in tabling the amendment.

I would like to talk a little bit more about what we have done in a positive way in the conservation title. One of the areas of this bill I am most proud of is the work that has been done with conservation and environmental groups all across the country—in fact, we have 643 conservation and environmental groups that have said this is the right approach.

In tough economic times, when we know we do not have additional dollars, we took a look at every single page, every single program. There are 23 different programs in conservation. Every time somebody had a good idea, a program got added rather than looking at duplication, redundancy, how we can streamline and make it better for farmers, communities, better for ranchers, make it simpler and more understandable. So we decided to go back and do what every taxpayer and every citizen has asked us to do; that is, streamline, make more accountability, cut the paperwork, make things work better.

We do support flexibility. We support locally led ground-up voluntary efforts.

We increase transparency and accountability, we streamline, consolidate programs, help farmers comply with regulatory pressures, and we basically have come together. We have taken 23 different programs down to 13 and put them in three different areas and created a lot of flexibility. We want to stretch the dollars even further in four areas: working lands, easements, conservation reserve programs, and regional partnerships, which are so important to so many of us.

All across the country family farms are passed down to children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Our rapidly growing population demands our farmers and ranchers double their production over the next few decades and use fewer acres to do it, so innovation in farming is absolutely critical. But no amount of technology can make up for degraded soil or polluted water.

The farm bill's conservation programs help our producers meet their challenges and the country's challenges, ensuring that we have a safe, abundant food supply, clean water, and thriving wildlife populations for many generations to come.

It is wonderful to see the partnerships that are going on all across Michigan, all across the country. Many farmers take advantage of these voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs. In our Great Lakes region alone—I would say not only Michigan but our Presiding Officer from Minnesota certainly cares as well. We championed together so many times on the Great Lakes initiative. But in the Great Lakes region alone farmers use one form of conservation on 95 percent of the acres. On 95 percent of the acres we have conservation going on.

As we look at streamlining from 23 to 13 programs, making them more flexible and so on, we actually have been able to achieve savings of $6 billion while maintaining conservation functions, and I would argue strengthening their effectiveness as well while cutting the dollars. Nationally, there are 357 million acres of cropland, 406 million acres of forest land, 119 million acres of pasture land, and 409 million acres of rangeland under private ownership in the United States. That is a lot of land, and all of that is impacted by what we do in the conservation title of the farm bill.

We also know the challenges my farmers face in Michigan are different than those in Kansas or Oklahoma or Minnesota or Montana. We have built in enough flexibility in this new title, modernizing it, reforming it, creating flexibility to be able to meet very different needs across the country. I will briefly go through each area. We are focusing, as I said, on four different areas.

Working lands, where we have two programs that are proposed to be eliminated right now, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, which I spoke about, and CSP is in the working lands title. We also include the conservation innovation grants, which are geared to projects that offer new approaches to providing producers environmental and production benefits. Again, we look for ways to support efforts that have not been receiving ongoing funding through the past bill to be able to continue and have greater flexibility in a number of different programs.

One is critical, I believe, for America's sportsmen and sportswomen; that is, access to good recreational land. I know that is very important to my State of Michigan, very important to my family.

The Voluntary Public Access and Wildlife Incentives Program encourages farmers to open their land for recreational uses—hunting, fishing, birdwatching. Right now, 26 States are taking advantage of the program, and we continue that in the bill, which is very important.

Our second area is on easements. There are three existing conservation easement programs. We are putting them into one to protect our lands from development and keep them devoted to agricultural use as well as to keep the land for grazing. Wetland easements restore, protect, and enhance wetlands which are important to water quality, quantity, and wildlife habitat in many areas also.

We are focusing on long-term land protection. Over the last 20 years the Wetlands Reserve Program helped more than 11,000 private landowners voluntarily restore, protect, and enhance wetlands and wildlife habitat. So we are very pleased all of this is in the bill as well.

The Conservation Reserve Program has been very successful. From 2006 to 2010 the USDA estimates the Conservation Reserve Program was responsible for reducing 1.09 billion tons of sediment, 3.1 billion metric tons of nitrogen, and 613 million pounds of phosphorus from going into our waters—that is an accomplishment—from going into our Great Lakes, into our oceans, into our rivers, into our streams. These are the main contributors to many of the water quality issues we face as a country.

During the same time period, USDA estimates the Conservation Reserve Program contributed 284 million metric tons of greenhouse gas reduction. It is reducing CO_2. I would say it is equivalent to taking 55 million cars off the road for a year. Coming from the car State, I appreciate CRP doing that. We want to be able to continue to drive our automobiles, and we are proud of what we are doing around automobiles, but can you imagine that this program alone has taken enough CO_2 out of the atmosphere to equate to 55 million cars being taken off the roads?

As of 2011, CRP was enrolling just under the acreage cap of 32 million. Over the next couple of years, over 15 million acres are set to expire. We recognize not all of those will be reenrolled, but we want to make sure there is adequate room to reenroll the most sensitive acres.

As an example of the effectiveness of CRP, last year parts of Oklahoma—I have a special affinity for Oklahoma. My mother was born in Oklahoma. My grandparents' family has lived there all their lives. I am very familiar with that State. Parts of Oklahoma experienced drought worse than the Dust Bowl era of the 1930s. But we did not see dust storms like the 1930s because the voluntary conservation efforts—of the CRP in particular—worked to reduce soil erosion and keep the soil where it was supposed to be, which is on the ground.

There are huge successes we have seen because our country has made an investment in protecting our precious land and water and air. We also have established a new program called the Regional Conservation Partnerships Program which consolidates four very effective regional partnerships into one. I am very pleased we have been able to do this. There is great significance for Members in all parts of the country. We consolidate the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative, the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative, and the Great Lakes Water Erosion Sediment Program. This exemplifies many of the principles of this title.

We focus on conservation efforts that are locally led, that are voluntary, and we create more flexibility and transparency for reporting as well as making sure we have adequate resources. When we were talking to producers and a variety of partner organizations, nonprofits—again, hunters, fishermen, other organizations—they were very excited about this new regional partnership title as a section. We appreciate all of the input and the support we have received to be able to make this effective.

Let me just say in conclusion that we have a conservation title that is supported in terms of its approach by almost 650 different conservation and environmental groups all across America in every 1 of the 50 States. They have sent a strong message. They worked with us. They know times are tight. They knew we had to create savings, we had to reduce dollars, but we had to make sure we had enough flexibility to do the job people across our country want to see done in protecting our lands, our water, and our air.

This has been achieved with a tremendous amount of hard work on the part of many people. I am grateful for the work of our committee and many others. I appreciate our subcommittee chairman MICHAEL BENNET, who has been deeply involved in this as well, and the Presiding Officer from Minnesota as well. We have many people who feel very strongly. Our chairman of the Finance Committee who was on the Senate floor earlier speaking about this is another true champion around conservation. There were so many people in our committee.

I could go on and on about this, and on both sides of the aisle I might add, but if I start naming people I will probably get in trouble for missing someone. But we have strong people, strong advocates on both sides of the aisle.

I thank everybody for their wonderful work on this conservation title. I think it is an example of the great work that has been done in putting the bill together. Again, I urge colleagues to vote yes to table the Coburn amendment and the additional amendment I will talk about at another point that will be coming before us, and continue to work with us as we bring together the path forward to completing this very important bill that affects 16 million American jobs.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE MILITARY

Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts. Mr. President, I rise to speak about something very serious, which is the issue of sexual assault in the military, and in support of the Shaheen amendment which I cosponsored in the Senate Armed Services Committee markup. Today, I wrote a letter to the House majority leadership expressing my concern for this issue and asking that it be addressed immediately.

The Senate Armed Services Committee recently considered and passed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013, and it awaits full consideration of the Senate.

As we all know, our troops need the tools and resources to complete their mission. It is imperative that it gets brought up right away.

As a member of the committee, I joined with members of both sides of the aisle in supporting this amendment which would ensure that women who serve in our Armed Forces and their families are provided access to abortion services in cases of rape or incest.

Sadly, sexual assault of women servicemembers has been recently exposed as far more prevalent than anyone previously thought. As a matter of fact, the Pentagon believes such crimes are vastly underreported. There is evidence that there are as many as 19,000 assaults that are committed every year. That is as many as 50 each day.

Furthermore, women are serving in harm's way—we know that—and they are often in dangerous locations without access to safe, nonmilitary health services. Given their courageous service, they deserve our care and protection, put quite simply.

The language of the amendment is consistent with the longstanding Hyde amendment, which prevents Federal funding for abortions, except for the victims of rape or incest or when the life of the mother is at stake.

It is a simple issue: Those who are serving in harm's way who are victims of such horrific crimes should be afforded the same rights as citizens they protect and who rely on Federal funding for their health care.

Our amendment passed 16 to 10 on a bipartisan basis, as I referenced earlier, in committee, and I will continue to work with my colleagues to ensure it remains included in the version that passes the full Senate.

As I said, unfortunately, the House Armed Services Committee did not include a similar provision in their version of the bill, and I am not quite sure why.

I urge the House Members to think about the real-world implications of their actions and not block this legislation. I hope we can work together, in a truly bipartisan and bicameral basis, to ensure that our amendment language becomes law so the President may sign it as such.

Extending these provisions to our military servicewomen is the right thing to do.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

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

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

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

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

DREAM ACT

Mr. DURBIN. On June 15, 1982, 30 years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a landmark decision, Plyler v. Doe. In 1975, the State of Texas had passed a law that allowed public schools to refuse admission to children who were undocumented. The law also withheld State funds from local school districts if they were to be used for education of undocumented kids.

In the Plyler case, the Court struck down the Texas law and held that it is unconstitutional to deny public education to children on the basis of their immigration status. Justice William Brennan, who authored the opinion, wrote: ''By denying these children a basic education, we deny them the ability to live within the structure of our civic institutions and foreclose any realistic possibility that they will contribute in even the smallest way to the progress of our nation.''

The year was 1982. In the 30 years since Plyler v. Doe was decided, millions of immigrant children have received an education and become contributing members to America and society. They are today's doctors, soldiers, teachers, engineers, and they make us a better nation.

But since it was decided, Plyler has been under attack from anti-immigration forces. On the very day the decision was announced, there was a lawyer at the Justice Department who wrote a memo criticizing his superiors for not arguing support of this Texas law that was stricken by the Court.

Keep in mind at the time Plyler was decided, the Justice Department was not under the control of a Democratic President; Ronald Reagan was President. Who was the Justice Department lawyer criticizing the Reagan administration for not being tough enough on immigrant children? His name was John Roberts.

Twenty-three years later, in 2005, he was nominated to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. During his confirmation hearing, Chief Justice Roberts said he would not vote to overturn cases that are ''well-settled law.'' For example, he said Brown v. Board of Education, the Supreme Court decision that ordered desegregation of schools, was also well-settled law.

Plyler v. Doe is often called the Brown v. Board of Education of the immigrants in America. But when I asked John Roberts whether he considered Plyler to be well-settled law, he refused to answer my question. Over the years, there have been attempts to pass Federal legislation overturning this Supreme Court decision.

In 1996, Congress was considering a bill to restrict illegal immigrants. Representative ELTON GALLEGLY, a Republican from California, offered an amendment to overturn Plyler v. Doe and permit States to bar undocumented children from public schools. At the time, I was in the House. I voted against the Gallegly amendment and so did most of the Democrats.

But most Republicans voted for it and it passed. President Clinton threatened a veto if the Gallegly amendment was included in the final version of the immigration bill. The amendment was also opposed by a bipartisan group of Senators, including the late great Senator Ted Kennedy and our colleague, Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON of Texas.

As a result of this opposition, the Gallegly amendment was dropped from the final version of the bill. The latest threat to Plyler v. Doe is a spate of State laws targeting legal and illegal immigrants. On June 9, 2011, 1 year ago this week, Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley signed into law H.B. 56, the strictest immigration law in the country.

Under Alabama law H.B. 56, it is a crime for a legal immigrant to fail to carry documents proving his or her legal status at all times. Police officers in Alabama are required to check the immigration status of any individual if they have ''reasonable suspicion that he or she is undocumented.''

I am especially concerned about the provisions of the Alabama law that involve schools in enforcing immigration laws. For example, in Alabama, schools must check the immigration status of every student and report that information to the State. Schools are authorized to report students and parents they believe to be undocumented to the Federal Government.

Last year, the U.S. Justice Department and the U.S. Department of Education sent a letter to every school district in the country warning that enrollment practices that discourage students from attending school could violate Federal civil rights law. The letter reminded school districts of their obligation to provide access to undocumented students under the Supreme Court's decision in Plyler v. Doe.

Supporters of the Alabama law argue it does not prohibit immigrant children from attending public schools. But involving schools in enforcing immigration laws will clearly discourage immigrant children from attending. Last month, Tom Perez, the head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, sent a letter to the Alabama Superintendent of Education about their department's investigation of Alabama's H.B. 56.

Mr. Perez said the Justice Department has concluded that ''in the immediate aftermath of [H.B. 56's] implementation, Hispanic student absence rates tripled, while absence rates for other groups of students remained virtually flat'' and ''the rate of total withdrawals of Hispanic children substantially increased'' to 13.4 percent of all Hispanic students in Alabama schools.

Mr. Perez also said: ''Hispanic children reported increased anxiety, diminished concentration in school, deteriorating grades, and increased hostility, bullying, and intimidation.''

The author of the education provision of the Alabama law has made it clear his real goal is to overturn Plyler v. Doe. If this challenge should make it to the Supreme Court, it could find a receptive audience in the Chief Justice, who criticized Plyler v. Doe when it was decided and refused to say it was well-settled law when he appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

I think this is the wrong approach for America. Instead of challenging Plyler vs. Doe, we should be building on its legacy. Eleven years ago, I introduced the DREAM Act—11 years. The DREAM Act is a bill that would give a select group of immigrant students who grew up in America the chance to earn their way to legal status if they do one of two things: serve in America's military or at least complete 2 years of college in good standing.

These young people were brought to the United States as children. I am sure the Presiding Officer knows many of them in his home State. They grew up in this country and, thanks to Plyler v. Doe, they got a chance to go to school here. They are the valedictorians and ROTC leaders in many schools.

It wasn't their decision to come to this country. They were kids when the decision was made, and their parents made the decision. The fundamental premise of the DREAM Act is that we should not punish kids for any wrongdoing by their parents. That isn't the American way. As Senator MARCO RUBIO has said, just because the parents got it wrong, we should not hold it against the kids.

As Justice Brennan said in Plyler v. Doe, ''legislation directing the onus of a parent's misconduct against his children does not comport with fundamental conceptions of justice.''

The DREAM Act isn't just the right thing to do, it is the right thing to do for America. It would help our economy by giving these talented immigrants a chance to become tomorrow's engineers, entrepreneurs, small business owners, teachers, and doctors.

The DREAM Act would strengthen America's national security by giving thousands of highly qualified, well-educated young people a chance to serve in America's Armed Forces. It is one of the greatest levelers in America. When we decided to integrate the Armed Forces under President Harry Truman, we set the stage for the civil rights revolution in this country. When men and women in the military were recognized for their inherent worth and commitment to this Nation rather than the color of their skin, it set a standard that now guides our Nation.

Almost every week I do my best to come to the floor to tell a story of one of these young people who would qualify for the DREAM Act. Today I will tell you about Al Okere. Al was born in Nigeria in 1990. In 1991, Al's father was killed by the Nigerian police after he wrote newspaper columns criticizing the Nigerian Government. The killing of Al's father was documented in the State Department's annual human rights report.

In 1995, Al's mother fled Nigeria and brought her 5-year-old boy Al to the United States. Al's mother, because of the murder or killing of her husband, applied for asylum, but her application was denied and she was deported in 2005, when Al was 15—after 10 years in the United States.

Today Al is 21 years of age. He lived in the State of Washington. His mother's sister, who is a U.S. citizen, is Al's legal guardian and has raised him since Al's mother was deported.

Al graduated from Rogers High School, near Tacoma, WA. He is currently attending Central Washington University, where he is an honors student with a 3.5 grade point average. He is an avid basketball and football player. He is an active volunteer in his community. For example, he recently headed up a fundraising drive for the Hope Children's Hospital.

I ask a lot of these ''dreamers'' to send me letters about their view of the United States and their hope for the future. He wrote this:

> I have been in accelerated academic programs most of my educational life and hope to be a medical doctor some day, to contribute to the well-being of fellow humans. I hope to continue to emulate and walk in the great academic shoes of my late father, who earned a Ph.D degree from a university in Paris, France. My family and community support has been enormous and it gives me zeal to work hard in my studies, to be able to lend a hand to others in need, to realize a bright future.

Unfortunately, Al has been placed in deportation proceedings. Under our immigration law, his aunt, who is a U.S. citizen and his legal guardian, can't sponsor him for citizenship.

Al Okere grew up in America. He has never committed a crime. We have already invested in him. He has received his entire education, from kindergarten through college, in the United States. He didn't get any financial help in going to college from the Federal Government. He borrowed for that because he is undocumented. He had to find other sources and work his way through college. But he made it. He has a great potential to contribute to America. He doesn't remember a thing about Nigeria, and he doesn't speak their native language. Despite all that, the laws of America say that Al should be deported.

Here is what Al said about that possibility:

> I don't remember anything about my mother's country of Nigeria. I cannot even speak the language. Every experience I have had in life that I can remember has been in the United States of America. Everyone I know and care about are all here, except for my mother, who was sadly removed and remains in hiding in fear of her life.

Fortunately, the Department of Homeland Security has decided to put Al's deportation on hold. I support this decision, but I know it is only temporary, it doesn't give Al permanent legal status of any kind, and there is still a risk of deportation in the future. The only way for Al to become a citizen is for the DREAM Act to become the law of the land.

Would America be a better Nation if Al Okere were deported? Of course not. Al is not an isolated example. There are thousands of others like him, who are only asking for a chance, asking for justice.

Plyler v. Doe gave Al Okere and other bright, accomplished, and ambitious young people like him the opportunity to obtain an education in America. The DREAM Act would give them a chance to fulfill their God-given potential and become our future doctors, engineers, teachers, and soldiers.

A couple of weeks ago—a lot of these DREAM Act students keep in touch with us—one student contacted our office saying he had given up. He lived in America all his life and had been educated here. He made his way through college and was looking forward to being an engineer. He waited 11 years for passage of the DREAM Act, and it hasn't happened. He decided he had no choice but to move to Canada. So now his talents will go to Canada. I have

nothing against Canada; it is a great nation and neighbor. But why would we give up someone we have educated and trained to be a part of America?

On the 30th anniversary of Plyler v. Doe, I again ask my colleagues in both parties to support the DREAM Act. Let's give Al Okere and so many other young people like him a chance to contribute more fully to the only country they have called home. It is the right thing to do, and it will make America a stronger Nation.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN of Ohio). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I rise today because there is an epidemic hovering over America, and we ought not to stand by and let it continue.

A staggering one-third of Americans are obese a condition that can endanger health and shorten lifespan. Among our children, the situation is becoming a plague and leaving too many young people unable to participate in physical activities, such as sports or games.

I salute the First Lady, Michelle Obama, for bringing attention to this crisis by educating parents, teachers, and kids about the need to be more active and eat nutritious food, but it is going to take the involvement of this Congress. We need to protect our children, our economy, and our national security.

Our Nation's childhood obesity rate is one of the highest in the world. Here we see it, childhood obesity rates displayed worldwide: Obesity epidemic as seen among American youth. And if we look at the other major countries in the world, going from the lowest, China is at 5.2 percent, upwards to France at 14.1 percent, and then we get to America, and 31.7 percent of our children are obese or overweight. That is discouraging, very sad for the individual and for the country at large.

People who are obese are at a higher risk for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and even certain types of cancer. Obesity-related conditions kill more than 110,000 Americans every year. We do not want to see more children with diabetes. We don't want our children to be burdened with a lifetime of disease and disability.

Public health advocates have been sounding the alarm for years, but this problem has only gotten worse and this Congress and the Federal Government have largely ignored the problem. Over the last few decades, the rate of children who are obese or overweight has doubled. In 1973, we were looking at 15.4 percent. That was the percentage of obese and overweight American children. But if we look ahead only 40 years, we see the rate has gone from 15.4 percent to 31.7 percent. That is almost one-third of our childhood population. This issue has even affected our military and the statistics are shocking; 25 percent of our young men and women who want to join the military are too overweight to serve.

We need to take bold action. This farm bill is not just about making sure businesses stay profitable, it should be about keeping our citizens healthy too. We owe it to our kids and our country to learn what is causing this calamity.

That is why I filed an amendment to focus in on a particular suspected contributor to the problem. The Federal Government can and should determine whether sugary drinks are causing obesity and causing the damage that goes with it. Americans are drinking more high-sugar drinks than ever before—children and adults drink twice the amount of sugary soda than they did just three decades ago. These drinks are cheap and available everywhere—in restaurants, convenience stores, movie theaters or vending machines.

We have seen children and teenagers holding giant cups of soda or other sugary drinks. Some of these sizes are so big they look like a barrel. When a child drinks 32 ounces, takes a 32-ounce cup of soda, it is the equivalent of ingesting 41 sugar cubes. Can you imagine anyone permitting their children to devour 41 sugar cubes? Who in this body would give their child or grandchild 41 sugar cubes to eat?

The city of New York is taking a bold course of action and other communities have done their own studies and have decided to act. In Congress, we need to step up and do our part. We need to know what role sugary drinks are playing in the childhood obesity epidemic in America. My amendment would initiate a study on the impact of these drinks on obesity and human health in the United States. It would require an examination of public health proposals regarding the cost and the size of these drinks. The amendment is endorsed by organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Heart Association, the American Diabetes Association, the American Public Health Association, and the Center For Science and the Public Interest.

I reach out, I urge my colleagues to support this amendment. I ask that, once and for all, we work together to do what we can to protect our children—protect them, in this case, from the obesity epidemic. I hope we will join together to fight for the well-being of our children.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

AGRICULTURE REFORM

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, the Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2012, which the Presiding Officer from New Jersey just spoke of, in my State called the farm bill, represents the most significant reform of U.S. agriculture in decades. It is the product of months of policy discussion and late-night deliberations, guided by Chairwoman STABENOW and Ranking Member ROBERTS. It is the reason why people across the country, farmers and business owners and faith leaders and county commissioners are paying attention. The bill benefits all of us, all Americans.

Today, one in seven jobs in Ohio is related to the food and agriculture industry. To get the economy back on track, the farm bill must remain a priority in Congress. The Agriculture Committee has worked to craft a farm bill that is forward-looking and realistic. The centerpiece of the bill's deficit reduction efforts is based on a bill I authored with my colleague JOHN THUNE, a Republican from South Dakota, along with Senator DURBIN, a Democrat from Illinois, and Senator LUGAR, a Republican from Indiana. Our Aggregate Risk and Revenue Management Program proposed streamlining the farm safety net and making it more market oriented. The era of direct payments—the billions of dollars that newspaper editorial writers and constituents alike complained about, these huge farm subsidies that went mostly to large corporate farmers—the era of direct payments made annually regardless of need under this bill is over.

Instead, the new Ag Risk Coverage Program will work hand in hand with crop insurance to provide farmers the tools needed to manage risk, making payments only when farmers need them most.

The program is market oriented. It relies on market data instead of arbitrary numbers in statutes. It is more responsive to farmers' needs and more responsible to taxpayers. The bill reforms a number of longstanding, unjustifiable practices. For the first time, this farm bill ends payments to landowners who have nothing to do with farm management. It puts a firm cap on how much support any farmer can receive from the direct farm support programs every year. There are commonsense reforms that ensure the taxpayer dollars go only where they are needed.

Is there more to be done to make sure taxpayers get the most efficient, effective, and affordable farm policy possible? Of course there is. In the coming years, we will continue to improve our farm and food policy, but

this is a good start. It is good for farmers, good for taxpayers. It continues to move our Nation's food and agriculture policy in a positive direction.

The farm bill is a jobs and innovation bill. Every $1 billion in exports supports 8,400 American jobs that cannot be shipped overseas, according to the USDA. In 2011, U.S. agriculture enjoyed a trade surplus of $42 billion, $42 billion we sold more than we brought in from abroad in farm products, the highest annual surplus on record. Contrast that with the billions and billions, tens of billions, hundreds of billions of dollars in trade deficit we have in manufacturing in other parts of our economy.

There is so much room for growth, not only overseas but also at home. Bio-based manufacturing and renewable energy are two examples of the potential that American agriculture holds for U.S. economic growth and for job creation. Alongside food production, farm-based and renewable energy production, such as advanced biomass energy, can serve as the engine of the rural economy for decades to come. It is investments in agriculture such as this, such as the ones this bill maintains in research and energy and bio-based products and food production, that will enable continued creation of good-paying jobs, again that will not, that cannot be shipped overseas.

The farm bill provides economic relief to millions of Americans. Alhough we call it a farm bill, this bill is fundamentally an economic relief bill. For farmers, the bill provides financial assistance to weather tough times or adopt conservation practices that protect clean water and healthy soils and wildlife habitat. For millions of Americans, this bill helps put dinner on the table when wages are tight and families are struggling to make ends meet and keeps children from going hungry. That is why this bill is so important. I add, the Presiding Officer from New Jersey has always been such a strong advocate of these nutrition programs. We both understand that more than one-third of people who are getting SNAP, who are receiving what we used to call food stamps, are working families, people who are only making $9, $10, $11 an hour, sometimes working two jobs, and still cannot make it without some food assistance.

The bill includes resources for SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which is one of the Nation's most essential antipoverty programs. In addition to supporting people who are struggling to feed their families, SNAP supports retailers and businesses and the farmers and ranchers who grow the food.

At a time of high unemployment, SNAP participation now exceeds 44 million Americans, half of whom are children. Many of these families are working families. Half the people served by SNAP are children.

SNAP participation is expected to fall as the economy recovers. The bill continues to support SNAP with minimal modifications. It continues and increases support for commodity distribution to food banks at a time when food pantry shelves in Ohio and across the Nation are bare. But I want to be clear. I have serious concerns with the cuts, not large cuts such as the House Agriculture Committee wants to do and that Senator PAUL tried to do—very unsuccessfully—and that Congressman RYAN made with his budget from the House of Representatives—nothing even close to the tens and tens of billions of dollars they want to cut from nutrition. But I am concerned about this $4 billion cut. When compared to the $130 billion in cuts to SNAP in the Ryan budget, the modification in this bill was done carefully.

The farm bill is a deficit reduction bill, a jobs bill, an economic relief bill. It affects every American every day. I commend, again, Chairwoman STABENOW and Ranking Member ROBERTS. Their joint effort to work across party lines is to be commended.

These months of work and deliberation are at risk because some insist on debating dozens of unrelated amendments and others seek to score political points at the expense of American families and at the expense of American farmers. This is not the time to debate conceal-and-carry laws or American aid to Pakistan or the future of the Labor Relations Board. Not that any of those are not debatable or any of those aren't a place where people can have reasonable differences on public policy. But conceal and carry, American aid to Pakistan, the future of the Labor Relations Board should not be part of the farm bill.

I urge my colleagues to work together and halt the impasse that keeps us from making progress on this bill.

I am the first Ohio Senator who is a member of the Agriculture Committee in 40 years. In my first month in the Senate, I made a request to Senator REID to join the Agriculture Committee, along with other duties, because of the importance of agriculture in my State. One out of seven jobs in Ohio is related to agriculture. It is the largest business, largest industry in my State. It matters so much to Ohio.

My position on the Agriculture Committee has helped as I have done roundtables around Ohio and met with literally hundreds of farmers, including grain farmers, dairy farmers, specialty crop farmers, nursery farmers, tree farmers, experts at Ohio State in the agriculture school, and I have come prepared to help write this farm bill both back in 2007 and this year. This is a major step forward. It is something of which we can be proud.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO MARCIA HERZOG

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to acknowledge a dedicated public servant who will be retiring this month after 37 years of service to the General Services Administration. Marcia Herzog started her career with GSA in 1973, working for the Federal Supply Service. From 1982 to 1987, she moved to GSA headquarters to work with the Office of the Comptroller, then on to the Public Buildings Service and then to work for the Executive Secretariat. In 1987, Marcia joined the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs. In 1997, she assumed the role of national director for the Congressional Support Program, which she continues to hold. For these last 16 years, Marcia has worked in unison with the Senate Sergeant at Arms, the Committee on House Administration, and the House Chief Administrative Officer to oversee and ensure that district offices of both Senate and House Members are located and equipped to each Member's specification and desire. Her poise, professionalism, wisdom, and support have successfully guided the congressional service representatives of GSA, who operate in each of the 10 GSA regions of the United States, to provide the highest level of customer service when responding to congressional office needs in Member home State offices across the country. We congratulate Marcia on her diligent service to this body and offer her our heartfelt well wishes as she transitions to her next endeavor.

TRIBUTE TO McCREARY COUNTY, KENTUCKY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a very special part of my home State, the Commonwealth of Kentucky. I am speaking of McCreary County, in the southeastern region of the State. This year, McCreary County celebrates its centennial; according to the McCreary County Museum located in the heart of historic downtown Stearns, KY, the county's birthday was on March 12, 2012. One hundred years ago, Kentucky Governor James B. McCreary signed the legislation creating the county, named after himself, as the 120th and last county of the Bluegrass State, formed out of portions of Wayne, Pulaski and Whitley counties.

The people of McCreary County today have upheld the rich traditions and legacy of the hardy Kentuckians who were there for that county's founding 100 years ago. They have exemplified the very best of what southeastern Kentucky has to offer, they have kept Kentucky's history alive, and they represent the future of Kentucky and our Nation. I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in wishing the people of McCreary County the very best as they celebrate their centennial.

An article published in the McCreary County Record recently described the events of McCreary County's centennial celebration. I ask unanimous consent that said article appear in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to appear as follows:

[From the McCreary County Record, Mar. 15, 2012]

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! COUNTY MARKS 100 YEARS WITH DAY-LONG CELEBRATION

(By Janie Slaven)

WHITLEY CITY.—The past, present, and future converged Monday as McCreary County celebrated its centennial.

Festivities centered around the local courthouse, which attracted state and federal dignitaries.

Representatives for Governor Steve Beshear and U.S. Senator MITCH MCCONNELL read congratulatory letters while State Representative Sara Beth Gregory presented McCreary County Judge-Executive Doug Stephens with a resolution passed by the House on Friday.

Judge Stephens opened the ceremony with a prayer. Quoting I Chronicles, he acknowledged that McCreary County has suffered the ''curse of poverty and scourge of drugs'' but asked God to heal our land. The judge went on to praise the endurance and resilience of our citizens, saying that McCreary County is not just a spot on a map but a way of life.

''We have a rich history but we also have a rich future,'' Judge Stephens said.

To illustrate that history, the bulk of the ceremony was devoted to ''A Governor's Visit''—the dramatization of namesake Governor James B. McCreary's 1914 visit to Kentucky's latest county—by local historian Sam Perry. Through speeches from the governor (as portrayed by Jimmy Waters), first elected county judge Joseph Williams (Adam Phillips), State Rep. William B. Creekmore (Grady Wilson), and narration from former judge-executive Jimmie W. Greene; the play gave the crowd attending a lesson in who settled the Big South Fork region and what went into forging the new McCreary County from portions of Wayne, Pulaski and Whitley counties.

Following the play, Judge Stephens ceremoniously cut the first piece of the county birthday cake (prepared by Yummi Bakery)—which he presented to the oldest citizen in attendance, Fannie Morgan, who turned 100 last November. The second piece went to the youngest citizen, four-year-old Bailey Gilreath.

The crowd then gathered into the fiscal courtroom, where county officials debuted the recently refurbished portraits of 14 of McCreary County's 19 judges and judge-executives. Centennial Commission member Shane Gilreath noted that the elite group came from all walks of life. They were attorneys, social workers, farmers, miners, teachers and more.

Photographs of Mahan Renfro and Joseph Williams, which had hung in the portrait gallery and have been replaced by paintings, were presented to family members. Maxine Lawson, ''Cookie'' Joe Williams and Debbie Jo Peterson represented three generations of the Williams family. Greene, Renfro's nephew by marriage, joked that he had lobbied for a portrait to represent each of his four terms.

Deputy Judge-Executive Andrew Powell and McCreary County Museum director Amy Combs recognized the artists in attendance—including Dorothy Washam, Dale Crabtree, and Nadine Heth—before unveiling two new portraits honoring the last two judge-executives. Judge Stephens's portrait will be hung at a later date, but Blaine Phillips's portrait was hung by his wife, Kathy, and twin brother, Wayne.

Before breaking for a luncheon hosted by the McCreary County Historical Society, those attending had the opportunity to view a number of exhibits displayed throughout the courthouse's ground floor.

If the morning was devoted to our county's past, the evening focused firmly on the future. After signing a proclamation honoring the county's centennial during Monday's regular fiscal court meeting, Judge Stephens signed another in honor of the Girl Scouts' 100th anniversary. Local troops—assisted by representatives from the Daniel Boone National Forest's Stearns Ranger District (which is celebrating its 75th anniversary)—planted a sugar maple on the courthouse lawn.

If you missed Monday's celebration, you have several opportunities to obtain centennial keepsakes.

For a limited time, the U.S. Postal Service is offering a postmark commemorating the occasion. Mail order requests for the special cancellations will be available for 30 days beginning March 12.

Customers should allow at least a 2-inch-by-4-inch space in the stamp area for the postmark and have postage applied to cards or letters before mailing them—inside another envelope—to: Postmaster, McCreary County Centennial Station, 1387 North Highway 27, Whitley City, KY 42653.

The McCreary County Museum is offering a set of 12 historic postcards as well as DVDs of the day's events for $10 each. Call 376–5730 for more information.

WORLD WAR II VETERANS

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, finally, let me shift gears to another topic I care deeply about; that is, taking care of our veterans. This weekend a group of World War II veterans from Montana will be visiting our Nation's capital. With a great deal of honor and respect, I extend a hearty Montana welcome to each and every one of them.

Together, they will visit the World War II Memorial and share stories about their service. This journey will no doubt bring about a lot of memories. I hope it will give them a deep sense of pride also.

What they achieved together almost 70 years ago was remarkable. That memorial is a testament to the fact that a grateful nation will never forget what they did nor what they sacrificed. To us, they were the greatest generation. They left the comforts of their family and their communities to confront evil from Iwo Jima to Bastogne. Together, they won the war in the Pacific by conquering an empire and liberated a continent by defeating Hitler and the Nazis.

To them, they were simply doing their jobs. They enlisted in unprecedented numbers to defend our freedoms and our values. They represented the very best of us and made us proud.

From a young age I remember playing the bugle at the memorial services of veterans of the first two world wars. It instilled in me a profound sense of respect I will never forget.

Honoring the service of every generation of American veterans is a Montana value. I deeply appreciate the work of the Big Sky Honor Flight, a nonprofit organization that made this trip possible.

To the World War II veterans making the trip this weekend, I salute you. We will always be grateful, and we will never forget your service or sacrifice.

TRIBUTE TO STAN SLOSS

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, as every one of our colleagues will attest, the work we do in this Chamber is made possible by many exceptional people who do not carry an election certificate. I am speaking of the dedicated staffers who work on committees and in our personal offices.

Many of the staff members we interact with every day go on to build their own careers in political life, while others use the skills they developed here to work in rewarding ways for the private sector. Others continue in public service with nonprofit organizations or other kinds of government service. A few will make their contribution to public service by staying here as employees of the House of Representatives or the Senate. A smaller and more distinct group will develop such broad expertise in the legislative branch that they might as well carry an election certificate of their own because of the respect, esteem, and high regard in which they are held. These are the men and women whom other congressional staffers seek for their wisdom and guidance. These are the wise people whom Senators and Congressmen look upon as peers, not only because of their good counsel and uniquely honed years of experience but also because they often know more about the legislative process than legislators themselves.

Among this more and most distinct group of staff members, there is a standout, my friend Stan Sloss. I know the Presiding Officer knows Stan Sloss. Stan is marking his 14th year of service in my office but also 37 total years of work in Congress.

A native of Glenwood Springs, CO, Stan is a graduate of Amherst College and Harvard Law School. He came to Washington, DC, in the late 1960s, working first in the General Counsel's Office of the Atomic Energy Commission.

Stan's congressional career started in 1975 when he joined the staff of what was then known as the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee in the House of Representatives.

In 1977 Stan became a counsel to the new Subcommittee on General Oversight and Alaska Lands chaired by former Representative John Seiberling, an iconic past Member of the House of Representatives. In this capacity, Stan worked with both Representative Seiberling and my father, Morris Udall, who was chairman of the full Interior Committee.

Stan has had many successes, but one that I am most proud of is his work to help draft legislation that became the

Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act—key legislation setting aside more than 100 million acres of Alaska's most pristine public lands. Stan staffed hearings throughout the lower 48 States and Alaska and was one of the many key professional staff who helped shape the final legislation. The law was a milestone in conservation, protecting an area larger than the State of California and more than doubling the size of the Nation's system of national parks, wildlife refuges, wilderness, and wild and scenic rivers.

When John Seiberling retired in 1987, Stan remained on the Interior Committee staff, serving under former Representative Bruce Vento, chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands. Stan continued to work on many other laws and regulations affecting public lands and natural resources, including the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act sponsored by my father.

Stan's expertise was simply indispensable. In 1995 Stan left the Resources Committee to become the legislative director for David Skaggs, a House Member from Colorado, who benefited from Stan's years of experience and expertise with public lands issues.

I have a letter from Congressman Skaggs noting all of Stan's accomplishments and service. I ask unanimous consent to have it printed in the RECORD.

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

JUNE 13, 2012.

Hon. STAN SLOSS,
Congressional Staffer Extraordinaire, Office of Senator Mark Udall, Washington, DC.

DEAR STAN: Yes, ''The Honorable.'' You are entitled to that term of address more than most on whom it is bestowed ex officio. For you, it is has been earned per labores.

I am reluctant to contemplate your retirement—or, more precisely, to think of the Congress no longer subject to your knowledgeable instruction and deft oversight. No doubt the superlatives will flow from those who will speak in person at your party. I wish I could be there, and will count on the good Senator to read this for me.

My vocabulary is barely adequate to express my admiration, respect and gratitude for your service to Article I branch and to me personally. You are simply without peer in devotion to duty, in insistence on the highest standards of intellect and integrity, and in institutional loyalty. You have educated us with your insights into law and policy, you have inspired us by your courage and steadfastness, and you have supported us with your friendship and wry humor.

All who have had the privilege of working with you, even as we pretended that you worked for us, feel a poignant mix of deep affection and some sadness at the occasion of your retirement. To say that you will be profoundly missed barely suffices. I pray that you will draw enormous pride and satisfaction in looking back on a career of exceptional service to your country. The United States is a much better place on account of Stan Sloss. The Honorable Stan Sloss.

Godspeed, dear friend.

With great respect and affection,

DAVID E. SKAGGS,
Former Member of Congress.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. While Stan was working with Congressman Skaggs, he also dealt with contentious issues related to Rocky Flats, a former nuclear weapons site in Colorado, and the other sites in the U.S. Department of Energy nuclear weapons complex.

Stan was one of the first people I hired following my election to the House of Representatives in November of 1998. It was one of the best decisions I have ever made. I was fortunate to have someone with Stan's experience who also understood issues important to Colorado. While in my House office, Stan was instrumental in developing a number of land and environmental bills that were signed into law, including the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge Act, which converted this site and a vast expanse of open space into a wildlife habitat asset after it was cleaned up and closed. He also steered into law the James Peak Wilderness and Protection Area Act, one of the last unprotected areas along Colorado's Northern Front Range mountainous backdrop. Stan has also been my expert on fire prevention, developing legislation on forest health and wildfire response and mitigation.

But Stan's work has not just been confined to the environmental arena. His keen intellect, common sense, and sharp legal analysis have been invaluable on a wide range of issues and topics that face each and every one of us every day. He has been especially effective in tutoring many of the younger members of my staff on the inner workings of Congress, helping them learn the nuances of legislative drafting, and serving as an example of the highest standard of professionalism for congressional staff.

Like any thoughtful and accomplished lawyer, Stan is often fond of saying that he can ''argue it flat or he can argue it round,'' and his objectivity is legendary in our office. Having said that, however, I also know that beneath his always calm demeanor and his capacity to see all sides of the question, there beats the heart of a man who is passionate about doing the right thing.

Through many years of working on behalf of the people of Colorado in my House office and now my Senate office, Stan has always been a voice of wisdom, reason, and, above all, integrity. My colleagues in the Colorado congressional delegation have often looked upon Stan as their resource as well. I have never minded sharing him because his advice and guidance carry weight that inevitably makes better whatever bill or policy he has been asked to consider. I think I daresay the Presiding Officer has also had the opportunity to work with Stan and take advantage of his wisdom and insight.

Stan is a person of depth and accomplishment beyond his work in Congress. He is one of the best read people I have ever met. He is an expert on gardening, on opera, on history, and the list goes on and on. I have to say parenthetically, as a graduate of Williams College, for me to say that about an Amherst graduate probably has double weight.

Stan has an exceptional sense of humor and a dry wit, as demonstrated in the poems he often wrote making wry observations on current events which he would regularly circulate to staff. In short, he has perfected what seems to be the lost art of being polite and courteous to other people even when he disagrees with them. That, of course, is a quality we could always use a bit more of in Congress.

Stan is not only a good employee, he is also a good human being. In the rough-and-tumble world of politics, that is perhaps the highest praise to which any of us can aspire. His contributions to my offices, the offices of other Members, the House Resources Committee, and the whole Congress and ultimately the people of the United States serve as an example of a professional life that commands both respect and affection.

Just a few months ago, my staff and I celebrated Stan's 70th birthday with him, as we had his 60th and 65th birthdays in past years, and today we are honored to celebrate his retirement. My staff and I will miss Stan, it goes without saying, and we will miss working with him.

As a point of personal privilege, I want to make it clear that I know I will continue to seek his advice even after he leaves congressional service. I am excited to see what the next chapter will be for Stan. It will no doubt involve some adventure, some noble pursuits, some deep thought, and some new summits to ascend.

So please join me in thanking Stan Sloss for 37 years of exceptional work in the Congress and for his service to our country that he loves so much. We wish him well.

TRIBUTE TO SHERRIE SLICK

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I am pleased to follow my colleague from Colorado who has come to the floor to recognize a very fine public servant who has been with him and the Senate for years. I, too, today rise to speak of an Alaskan who has dedicated a quarter century to service in the Senate, working as my staff person down in Ketchikan, AK.

I would like to share a few comments with my colleagues on this occasion. It is a little bit of a happy occasion, a little bit of a sad occasion. I think my colleague from Colorado would agree that when we have someone who has dedicated so many years, we wish them well as they move forward, but their departure leaves a little bit of a hole for those of us who carry on.

Today I rise to honor Sherrie Slick, who on June 1 began her 25th year as a Senate staffer in southeast Alaska based in her hometown of Ketchikan. Sherrie plans to retire from Federal service on July 30, after, again, a quarter century of service to her State.

For Sherrie, I think her retirement is very likely a cause for joy. It is going

to give her more time to spend with her kids and her grandchildren, more time to devote to the many volunteer and civic efforts in which she is engaged in southeast Alaska. But it is going to be a sad time for myself and for Congressman DON YOUNG.

Sherrie provided guidance to the Alaska delegation in Ketchikan, Alaska's first city, through a very interesting time. It has been somewhat of a turbulent quarter century, one in which the region's former economic mainstay, which is its timber industry, has sharply contracted, during a period in which the tourism industry has significantly grown, and during a period where its prospects of supporting major mineral development I think have substantially brightened—that is a good spot for us. It has been a period when Ketchikan, which is the seventh largest entity in our State, which is the only large community that is separated from its lifeline with its airport on a neighboring island, has endured somewhat unwelcome national attention solely because they seek dependable access by bridge.

Over the years, Sherrie has responded to tens of thousands of public and media inquiries and requests for help over everything from Social Security checks and visas to immigration documents. She has listened to thousands of complaints over access to Alaska public land and to objections to many, many Federal regulations—far too many to count here. Through it all, I think it is fair to say that Sherrie has been that proverbial energizer bunny. She has more enthusiasm, more energy than many people combined. She listens patiently, and she works tirelessly to help all. She helps those southeast residents and visitors deal with Federal agencies, navigate the Federal redtape, and then on top of it, all in that extra time, she volunteers to help her community and help her State be a better place in which to live and raise a family.

Sherrie's volunteer efforts were recognized by the community when she was named Citizen of the Year back in 2005 by the Greater Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce. But her accomplishments go far beyond being named the Federal Employee of the Year, the Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce's Outstanding Chamber Emissary in 1991, its outstanding board member in 1994 and its chairman in 1996. She has also received the Ketchikan Rotary Club's Community Service Award in 1994, received the Ketchikan Federal Executive Association's Lifetime Community Service Award in 2006, received the Ketchikan Visitors Bureau Rainbird Award in 1990 and gained its Outstanding Service Award in 2006.

Ms. Slick, originally from Corvallis, Oregon, has a degree in elementary education from Oregon State University and also training in business and accounting from Linn-Benton Community College in Corvallis. She moved to Ketchikan in 1975. A mother of two, Brian and Theresa, she first worked for eight years as the office manager of the Ketchikan Credit Bureau before moving to insurance underwriting for three years. She later became the assistant sales tax auditor for the Ketchikan Gateway Borough for five years and then spent a sixth year working as the borough's planning and zoning secretary.

In June 1988, former Alaska Senator Ted Stevens, with encouragement from the state's other Senator at the time, my father, Frank Murkowski, stole Sherrie away from local government to head the Delegation's unified southern Panhandle constituent office. In addition to her legislative work, Sherrie has performed a dizzying array of volunteer services for her community and state.

Since 2004 she has been a member of the Ketchikan Pioneers Home Foundation, the state's main senior care provider. She was a board member of the Alaska State Pioneer Homes Board from 2007 to 2010, a board member of the Ketchikan General Hospital Foundation from 2008 to 2010, served as chair person of the Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce in 1996, as chairman of Ketchikan Rotary in 2000 and as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Ketchikan Federal Executive Association. She also was the Treasurer and Vice Chairman of Ketchikan Soroptimists, a member of the Executive Board of the Alaska Public Employees Association and State Treasurer of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough chapter of the State Employees Political Information Committee.

While active in local and state politics, Sherrie also was the founding board member of the Ketchikan Soccer League, the vice president of the Ketchikan Killer Whales Swim Club, the Co-Leader and Day Camp director of the local Campfire Girls program, a Boy Scouts Co-Leader and Den mother, a leader for the local junior and senior high schools' drill teams and for four years was a board member, vice-chair and chairman of the Ketchikan Theater Ballet. The latter posts allowed her to express her musical loves which include playing piano, organ, clarinet and accordion.

Sherrie, in her ''free'' time, also operated a part-time catering company and was a partner in the Alaska Cruise Line Agency, which provides lecturers to explain Alaska's history, discuss its scenery and wildlife and answer tourist questions about the state during voyages up the Inside Passage aboard commercial cruise ships. In that role Sherrie has provided factual information to thousands of visitors to the 49th State answering such questions as whether visitors to Alaska can use American stamps on their postcards. She, in that post, has been a true ambassador for the state's tourism industry.

Through it all, including organizing and staffing literally hundreds of federal official visits, congressional field hearings and volunteer fundraising events, such as those to aid breast cancer detection and treatment, Sherrie has maintained her calm, her poise and her never failing sense of humor and graciousness—not to mention her energy level. Her dedication to family, community and career is universally recognized by friends and associates.

I can't thank her enough for her service to me during my decade in the U.S. Senate, and her service to her fellow Alaskans over the past 25 years. Her intelligence, knowledge and people-pleasing skills will be sorely missed in the future. I hope that all members of the U.S. Senate will join me in wishing her well and godspeed in her retirement pursuits. She has earned all of her accolades and the true thanks of all Alaskans in the Panhandle for a job very well done.

I am pleased and delighted to have her here with her granddaughter enjoying some Washington, DC, hospitality. Again, I cannot give thanks near enough to her for all the years of service Sherrie has provided to my State.

TRIBUTE TO LORY YUDIN

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, there is a definition of ''United States Senator'' that I have always enjoyed: ''A United States Senator is a constitutional impediment to the smooth functioning of staff.'' We may laugh. But we all know that there is a lot of truth in that!

On the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, which I chair, I am blessed with one of the finest staff teams on Capitol Hill. And on that staff, Lory Yudin, our chief clerk, has set the highest standard for professionalism, expertise, and work ethic. So it is a sad day for the committee as Lory retires this week.

Actually, this is Lory's second retirement from the Senate. She originally came to work in the Senate in 1977, as a staffer for the Banking Committee, later moving to the Rules Committee, and retiring in 2001.

She was coaxed to come back to the Senate in 2009. It was a critical time for the HELP Committee, just days before the committee was scheduled to begin markup of the historic health reform bill. We were in sudden, urgent need of a new chief clerk. And not just any chief clerk. This was no time for on-the-job training. We needed a seasoned veteran who could step right in and take charge of a long and complex markup process. Long-time staffers put their heads together and came up with the answer: We need to persuade Lory Yudin to come back to the Senate.

Fortunately, Lory said yes. On her first day, she walked into a scene of disarray, with boxes, papers, and documents scattered across tables and lining hallways. Lory quickly took charge, imposing order and discipline—and, most importantly, projecting a sense of calm and competence. In short order, everything was sorted, organized, and under control. The committee was ready for one of the most

important markups in its history. As one senior staffer said about Lory's leadership at this time, ''She really rescued the committee.''

In the nearly 3 years since, Lory Yudin has become a beloved and respected chief clerk, looked up to by everyone as the quintessential Senate professional. And, of course, she has been a great friend to members and staffers alike. For younger staffers, she has been the perfect mix of mentor and mom, someone they turn to for wisdom and counsel.

Lory is very much a member of our Senate family. This is where she met her husband David, as well as so many of her lifelong friends. And while Lory has always been dedicated to her work here in the Senate, there is no question that her family has always come first, especially her son Eli. As we know, Lory is extraordinarily proud of Eli's graduation, just weeks ago, from the University of Michigan.

Today, as Lory begins the next chapter of her life, I join with the HELP Committee's Ranking Member, Senator ENZI, and all the committee's members and staffers in expressing our respect and love for Lory, and our gratitude for a job done with enormous skill and dedication. We wish Lory and her family the very best in the years to come.

HURWITZ NOMINATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, yesterday, all time was yielded back on the Hurwitz nomination, post-cloture, and the nominee was then confirmed by voice vote. I was not aware we were going to vote on the nomination by voice. Had I known, I would have requested the yeas and nays. The following Members have informed my staff that if there had been a rollcall vote, they would have voted 'nay' on final confirmation on the nomination of Andrew Hurwitz to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals:

1. Senator Chuck Grassley (R–IA)
2. Senator Orrin Hatch (R–UT)
3. Senator Mike Lee (R–UT)
4. Senator Jeff Sessions (R–AL)
5. Senator Richard Shelby (R–AL)
6. Senator Lindsey Graham (R–SC)
7. Senator Jim DeMint (R–SC)
8. Senator John Cornyn (R–TX)
9. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R–TX)
10. Senator Tom Coburn (R–OK)
11. Senator James Inhofe (R–OK)
12. Senator Mitch McConnell (R–KY)
13. Senator Rand Paul (R–KY)
14. Senator John Barrasso (R–WY)
15. Senator Mike Enzi (R–WY)
16. Senator David Vitter (R–LA)
17. Senator Pat Toomey (R–PA)
18. Senator Roy Blunt (R–MO)
19. Senator Johnny Isakson (R–GA)
20. Senator Saxby Chambliss (R–GA)
21. Senator John Thune (R–SD)
22. Senator Pat Roberts (R–KS)
23. Senator Jerry Moran (R–KS)
24. Senator Dan Coats (R–IN)
25. Senator Thad Cochran (R–MS)
26. Senator Roger Wicker (R–MS)
27. Senator James Risch (R–ID)
28. Senator Mike Crapo (R–ID)
29. Senator John Hoeven (R–ND)
30. Senator Mike Johanns (R–NE)
31. Senator Richard Burr (R–NC)
32. Senator Lamar Alexander (R–TN)
33. Senator Bob Corker (R–TN)
34. Senator John Boozman (R–AR)
35. Senator Marco Rubio (R–FL)
36. Senator Dean Heller (R–NV)
37. Senator Ron Johnson (R–WI)
38. Senator Kelly Ayotte (R–NH)
39. Senator Ron Portman (R–OH)

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

VETERANS' HEALTH CARE

• Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize a landmark moment in health care for our veterans. Today is the 25th anniversary of the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Nation's first Veterans' Community Based Outpatient Clinic, CBOC. On June 13, 1987, at the Cary Medical Center in Caribou, ME, Governor John McKernan was joined by Senators George Mitchell and William Cohen, and then-Congresswoman OLYMPIA SNOWE to cut the ribbon of the new clinic. As the first community based outpatient clinic of its kind in the United States, the Caribou clinic served as the proving ground upon which the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, has built a nationwide health care system that delivers much improved access to care for America's rural veterans. Today nearly 3.5 million veterans, approximately 41 percent of those enrolled in the VA health care system, live in rural areas, many of whom receive care at more than 800 community based outpatient clinics.

The history of the CBOC in Caribou, however, began long before the ribbon cutting, when seven Aroostook County veterans dedicated themselves to the mission of improving access to critical health care services to the veterans living in their communities. To accomplish this goal, they established the Aroostook County Veterans Medical Facility Research and Development, Inc. The initial members were Percy Thibeault, Meo Bosse, John Rowe, Ray Guerrette, Wesley Adams, Walter Corey, and Leonard Woods, Sr.

Over a span of 8 years, they committed themselves to convincing the VA to establish a veterans' health clinic in Caribou. They were joined along the way by other concerned veterans, community members, the Cary Medical Center, and a number of Maine veterans service organizations. Their initiative paid off 8 years later, and today, on the 25th anniversary of their historic accomplishment, they deserve to be recognized. Our veterans in rural areas throughout the United States benefit today from the dedication of this landmark work. CBOCs are a vital part of veteran health services today.

These exemplary seven men battled to ensure that health care services were available to every veteran living in rural areas. That battle, despite the VA's best efforts, goes on.

Rural areas are still underserved in the types of medical treatment available. In some cases CBOCs don't even have permanent physicians assigned. The Iraq and Afghan wars have created a new generation of combat veterans, many of whom have new medical needs including prosthetic medical treatments, mental health care, and extensive physical therapy needs.

I am encouraged by the VA's renewed commitment to rural health care, and the $250 million that VA is allocating for programs for rural communities. But I would urge the VA to do more, and expand one program in particular, the Access Received Closer to Home, ARCH, project. ARCH has been tremendously popular in all five of the communities where the pilot program was established. Given Caribou's history, it is especially fitting that Caribou CBOC was selected as one of the five locations.

Our veterans have sacrificed so much for our country. We owe them all that we can to ensure they receive the best care possible. The seven men who fought for the Caribou CBOC knew that, and we honor their dedication to their fellow veterans by carrying on their work.•

TRIBUTE TO PAT BRUCE

• Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Pat Bruce for being presented with the Bureau of Land Management's, BLM, ''Making a Difference'' National Volunteer Award. Mr. Bruce, a volunteer with the BLM Winnemucca District Black Rock Field Office, has been awarded for his outstanding volunteer service and leadership to preserve and maintain the Silver State's wilderness areas. I am proud to honor a Nevadan who is dedicated to giving back to our community to create a better and brighter tomorrow.

As the field project coordinator for the Friends of Nevada Wilderness, Mr. Bruce has dedicated 6 years to organizing volunteer projects within wilderness areas in the Black Rock Desert, which span over 1 million acres of BLM lands. Hiking in remote areas, Mr. Bruce maps routes and boundaries to create an assessment of current ground conditions. He is also a volunteer supervisor for nonwilderness projects which include the restoration and protection of BLM's Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area.

The Silver State is home to vast wildlands and wildlife, which are vital to the character of our State. As a life long Nevadan and an avid outdoorsman, I was raised to respect and appreciate our State's natural surroundings and abundant wildlife. I first enjoyed these great Nevada treasures with my father and have since passed that same respect and appreciation along to my children.

I understand the importance of good stewardship and appreciate Mr. Bruce's dedication to protecting and maintaining Nevada's lands. I am proud to represent him in the Senate and applaud

him for his efforts to provide future generations of Nevadans the same recreational opportunities we enjoy. Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mr. Bruce for his commitment to Nevada.●

RECOGNIZING OAKHURST DAIRY

● Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, in honor of June being National Dairy Month, I rise today to recognize Oakhurst Dairy, located in Portland, ME, for supplying New England with essential vitamins and nutrients. Through its sale of refrigerated milk and dairy products, Oakhurst is committed to producing the highest quality goods sourced from over 70 local farms throughout Maine and northern New England.

National Dairy Month began in 1937 in an effort to promote the immense benefits derived from milk and to stabilize the dairy demand during surplus production. Calcium, potassium, protein, and vitamins A and D are just a few of the indispensable nutrients found in dairy products that help reduce the risk for hypertension, osteoporosis, and certain cancers, while also helping improve weight management, muscle tissue repair, and healthy skin. Although this national campaign only lasts for the month of June, the family-owned Oakhurst Dairy is constantly working to increase awareness of the necessity of these nutrients through community integration and product innovation in northern New England.

Stanley Bennett purchased the Portland dairy farm in 1921, naming the company after a grove of Oak trees found nearby. He promised to provide only the freshest quality products to all of his customers and established the trend of supporting the local community and the environment, practices which still hold true today. Oakhurst Dairy embodies the ideals of entrepreneurialism and encourages this spirit in others by resourcing products from small local farms to create their milks, dairy creams, cheeses, and juices. These products are then distributed to a variety of retailers, including chain grocery stores, and small independent grocery stores, and to foodservice outlets such as schools and restaurants.

Oakhurst understands the importance of providing for its employees and in the 1940s became one of the first businesses in southern Maine to initiate company-paid medical insurance and deferred profit-sharing plans. Since that time, Oakhurst has been devoted to providing for the community at all levels. On the corporate level, every year Oakhurst pledges 10 percent of pretax profits to organizations supporting healthy children and a healthy environment. This company also inspires future generations by giving out numerous scholarships for academic achievements and even promotes the future of the milk industry by sponsoring 4–H dairy program awards given at agricultural fairs. On the individual level, employees are encouraged to donate their time to fundraising events for nonprofit organizations and are often found serving on local boards, dedicating their leadership skills to inspire valuable changes.

The third generation of the Bennett family has continued to keep Oakhurst thriving, which now employs nearly 240 people. In addition to its headquarters in Portland, there are three distribution facilities located in Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, each operating to guarantee healthy lives in the communities they serve. Oakhurst Dairy—continuously seeking to improve the dairy industry—has recently began fortifying their products with beneficial additives such as probiotics and Omega-3, which improve digestion, cardiovascular health, and boost immunity. In addition to product innovation, Oakhurst Dairy has made several truly outstanding achievements, including perfect scores from Federal quality and sanitation inspections, and State awards such as the 2011 Maine Restaurant Association's Allied Member of the Year and the 2010 Maine Grocers Association's Vendor of the Year.

In addition, Oakhurst Dairy insists on making green initiatives a top priority in an effort to minimize their impact on the environment. Within the last decade, the company has largely reduced carbon dioxide emissions and offset fuel oil usage by transforming nearly the entire shipping fleet into biodiesel fuel trucks and installing solar panels in several of its facilities. As a means to ensure product safety and customer satisfaction, Oakhurst became one of the first companies in the U.S. to offer financial incentives to partnering farms for abstaining from treating their cows with artificial growth hormones. Oakhurst continues this practice of avoiding growth hormone additives through their trademarked America's First Farmer's Pledge.

Oakhurst Dairy continues to flourish, even in difficult economic times, thanks to its commitment to innovation and service. Year after year, Oakhurst Dairy has cultivated a winning strategy through its tradition of public service, safeguarding the environment, and keeping New England healthy. As a strong advocate for dairy farm protection, I am proud to extend my best wishes to the entire Oakhurst Dairy operation for their continued success.●

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC–6480. A communication from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Horse Protection Act; Requiring Horse Industry Organizations To Assess and Enforce Minimum Penalties for Violations'' ((RIN0579–AD43) (Docket No. APHIS–2011–0030)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 7, 2012; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–6481. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Review Group, Office of the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Selection and Functions of Farm Service Agency State and County Committees'' (RIN0560–AG90) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 6, 2012; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–6482. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Legislative Affairs), transmitting legislative proposals and accompanying reports relative to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC–6483. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Special Compensation for Members of the Uniformed Services with Catastrophic Injuries or Illnesses Requiring Assistance in Everyday Living Fiscal Year 2012 Report Congress''; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC–6484. A communication from the General Counsel, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the Department in the position of Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 6, 2012; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–6485. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month periodic report relative to the national emergency that was originally declared in Executive Order 12938 of November 14, 1994; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–6486. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for Legislation and Regulations, Office of Public and Indian Housing, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Revision to the Section 8 Management Assessment Program Lease-Up Indicator'' (RIN2577–AC76) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 6, 2012; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–6487. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Bureau of Public Debt, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''U.S. Treasury Securities—State and Local Government Series'' ((31 CFR Part 344) (Department of the Treasury Circular, Public Debt Series No. 3–72)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 6, 2012; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–6488. A communication from the General Counsel of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Prudential Management and Operations Standards'' (RIN2590–AA13) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 6, 2012; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–6489. A communication from the Deputy Secretary, Division of Investment Management, Securities and Exchange Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Political Contributions by Certain Investment Advisers: Ban

on Third-Party Solicitation; Extension of Compliance Date'' (RIN3235–AK39) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 12, 2012; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–6490. A communication from the Secretary of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Activity Funding Level Report; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC–6491. A communication from the Secretary of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Response to Findings and Recommendations of the Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technical Advisory Committee (HTAC) during Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011''; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC–6492. A communication from the Secretary of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Management of Nuclear Construction Projects That Exceed $1 Billion: Impact on Nuclear Safety Culture''; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC–6493. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Residential Clothes Washers'' (RIN1904–AB90) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 12, 2012; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC–6494. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Idaho: Final Authorization of State Hazardous Waste Management Program; Revision'' (FRL No. 9684–6) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 12, 2012; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–6495. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Air Quality Designations for the 2008 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Several Counties in Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin; Corrections to Inadvertent Errors in Prior Designations'' (FRL No. 9682–2) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 12, 2012; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–6496. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Approval and Promulgation of Implementation Plans; State of Florida: New Source Review Prevention of Significant Deterioration: Nitrogen Oxides as a Precursor to Ozone'' (FRL No. 9687–1) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 12, 2012; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–6497. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Approval of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Wisconsin; Disapproval of 'Infrastructure' SIP with Respect to Oxides of Nitrogen as a Precursor to Ozone Provisions and New Source Review Exemptions for Fuel Changes as Major Modifications for the 1997 8-Hour Ozone and 24-Hour PM2.5 NAAQ'' (FRL No. 9685–7) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 12, 2012; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–6498. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Surrogate Foreign Corporations'' ((RIN1545–BF47) (TD 9591)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 12, 2012; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–6499. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Extension of Relief and Procedures Under Notice 2010–30 and Notice 2011–16 for Spouses of U.S. Servicemembers Who are Working In or Claiming Residence or Domicile In a U.S. Territory Under the Military Spouses Residency Relief Act'' (Notice 2012–41) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 12, 2012; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–6500. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Substantial Business Activities'' ((RIN1545–BK86) (TD 9592)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 12, 2012; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–6501. A communication from the Chief of the Trade and Commercial Regulations Branch, Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Extension of Import Restrictions Imposed on Archaeological and Ethnological Materials from Peru'' (RIN1515–AD89) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 4, 2012; to the Committee on Finance.

EC–6502. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, the report of a determination pursuant to Section 620H of the FAA, and Section 7021 of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Appropriations, 2012 (Div. I, PL. 112–74) regarding U.S. assistance (DCN OSS 2012–0837); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–6503. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, certification of proposed issuance of an export license pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (Transmittal No. DDTC 12–011); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–6504. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report prepared by the Department of State on progress toward a negotiated solution of the Cyprus question covering the period February 1, 2012 through March 31, 2012; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–6505. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to provisions of Section 7042(c) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2010, as they relate to restrictions on assistance to the central government of Serbia; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–6506. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Legislative Affairs), transmitting a legislative proposal entitled ''Transfer of Naval Vessels to Certain Foreign Recipients''; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–6507. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulatory Services, Office of the General Counsel, Department of Education, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Implementation of OMB Guidance on Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension'' (RIN1890–AA17) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 6, 2012; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–6508. A communication from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to new safety technologies and equipment that have been studied, tested, and certified for use in the mining environment; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–6509. A communication from the General Counsel, Office of Compliance, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''Safety and Health in the Congressional Workplace—Report on the 111th Congress Biennial Occupational Safety and Health Inspections''; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–6510. A communication from the Director, Office of Personnel Management, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Prevailing Rate Systems; Abolishment of Montgomery, Pennsylvania, as a Nonappropriated Fund Federal Wage System Wage Area'' (RIN3206–AM62) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 12, 2012; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–6511. A communication from the Director, Office of Personnel Management, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Political Activity—Federal Employees Residing in Designated Localities'' (RIN3206–AM44) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 12, 2012; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–6512. A joint communication from the Chairman and the Acting General Counsel, National Labor Relations Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Office of Inspector General Semiannual Report for the period of October 1, 2011 through March 31, 2012; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–6513. A communication from the Chairman and Members of the Federal Labor Relations Authority, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Office of Inspector General Semiannual Report for the period of October 1, 2011 through March 31, 2012; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–6514. A communication from the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Semiannual Report from the Office of the Inspector General for the period from October 1, 2011 through March 31, 2012; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–6515. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General Semiannual Report for the period of October 1, 2011 through March 31, 2012; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. HARKIN for the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Deborah J. Jeffrey, of the District of Columbia, to be Inspector General, Corporation for National and Community Service.

*Erica Lynn Groshen, of New York, to be Commissioner of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, for a term of four years.

*Larry V. Hedges, of Illinois, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences for a term expiring November 28, 2015.

*Susanna Loeb, of California, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences for a term expiring March 15, 2016.

*Kamilah Oni Martin-Proctor, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2014.

*Sara A. Gelser, of Oregon, to be a Member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2014.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota):

S. 3288. A bill to provide for the conveyance of certain cemeteries that are located on National Forest System land in Black Hills National Forest, South Dakota; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. KERRY (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY):

S. 3289. A bill to expand the Medicaid home and community-based services waiver to include young individuals who are in need of services that would otherwise be required to be provided through a psychiatric residential treatment facility, and to change references in Federal law to mental retardation to references to an intellectual disability; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. VITTER (for himself, Mr. DEMINT, Ms. AYOTTE, Mr. COBURN, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. LEE, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. RISCH, Mr. JOHNSON of Wisconsin, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. JOHANNS, Mr. INHOFE, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. WICKER, Mr. COATS, Mr. ENZI, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. THUNE, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. CRAPO, and Mr. MCCONNELL):

S. 3290. A bill to prohibit discrimination against the unborn on the basis of sex or gender, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. ROCKEFELLER:

S. 3291. A bill to prohibit unauthorized third-party charges on wireline telephone bills, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mrs. MCCASKILL (for herself, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. KYL, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. RISCH, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. COATS, Mr. DEMINT, Mr. VITTER, Mr. ENZI, Mr. WICKER, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. TOOMEY, Mr. JOHNSON of Wisconsin, Mr. GRAHAM, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. COBURN, and Mr. MCCAIN):

S. 3292. A bill to require the United States International Trade Commission to recommend temporary duty suspensions and reductions to Congress, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 387

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 387, a bill to amend title 37, United States Code, to provide flexible spending arrangements for members of uniformed services, and for other purposes.

S. 1316

At the request of Mr. ENZI, the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1316, a bill to prevent a fiscal crisis by enacting legislation to balance the Federal budget through reductions of discretionary and mandatory spending.

S. 1454

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1454, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for extended months of Medicare coverage of immunosuppressive drugs for kidney transplant patients and other renal dialysis provisions.

S. 1461

At the request of Mr. NELSON of Florida, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. AYOTTE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1461, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to clarify the Food and Drug Administration's jurisdiction over certain tobacco products, and to protect jobs and small businesses involved in the sale, manufacturing and distribution of traditional and premium cigars.

S. 1507

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1507, a bill to provide protections from workers with respect to their right to select or refrain from selecting representation by a labor organization.

S. 1512

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. KOHL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1512, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and the Small Business Act to expand the availability of employee stock ownership plans in S corporations, and for other purposes.

S. 1884

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1884, a bill to provide States with incentives to require elementary schools and secondary schools to maintain, and permit school personnel to administer, epinephrine at schools.

S. 1935

At the request of Mrs. HAGAN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1935, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in recognition and celebration of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the March of Dimes Foundation.

S. 1956

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mrs. HUTCHISON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1956, a bill to prohibit operators of civil aircraft of the United States from participating in the European Union's emissions trading scheme, and for other purposes.

S. 2027

At the request of Mr. BENNET, the names of the Senator from Maine (Ms. SNOWE) and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2027, a bill to improve microfinance and microenterprise, and for other purposes.

S. 2066

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2066, a bill to recognize the heritage of recreational fishing, hunting, and shooting on Federal public land and ensure continued opportunities for those activities.

S. 2165

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2165, a bill to enhance strategic cooperation between the United States and Israel, and for other purposes.

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2165, supra.

S. 2205

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2205, a bill to prohibit funding to negotiate a United Nations Arms Trade Treaty that restricts the Second Amendment rights of United States citizens.

S. 2374

At the request of Mr. BINGAMAN, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. COATS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2374, a bill to amend the Helium Act to ensure the expedient and responsible draw-down of the Federal Helium Reserve in a manner that protects the interests of private industry, the scientific, medical, and industrial communities, commercial users, and Federal agencies, and for other purposes.

S. 2515

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Ms. LANDRIEU) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2515, a bill to promote the use of clean cookstoves and fuels to save lives, improve livelihoods, empower women, and combat harmful pollution by creating a thriving global market for clean and efficient household cooking solutions.

S. 3202

At the request of Mrs. MURRAY, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3202, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that deceased veterans with no known next of kin can receive a dignified burial, and for other purposes.

S. 3204

At the request of Mr. JOHANNS, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3204, a bill to address fee disclosure requirements under the Electronic Fund Transfer Act, and for other purposes.

S. 3228

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3228, a bill to require the President to provide a report detailing the sequester required by the Budget Control Act of 2011 on January 2, 2013.

S. 3235

At the request of Mr. PRYOR, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3235, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require, as a condition on the receipt by a State of certain funds for veterans employment and training, that the State ensures that training received by a veteran while on active duty is taken into consideration in granting certain State certifications or licenses, and for other purposes.

S. 3237

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) was added as a cosponsor of S. 3237, a bill to provide for the establishment of a Commission to Accelerate the End of Breast Cancer.

S. RES. 176

At the request of Ms. MIKULSKI, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 176, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the United States Postal Service should issue a semipostal stamp to support medical research relating to Alzheimer's disease.

S. RES. 489

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the names of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO), the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI), the Senator from Texas (Mrs. HUTCHISON) and the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 489, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate on the appointment by the Attorney General of an outside special counsel to investigate certain recent leaks of apparently classified and highly sensitive information on United States military and intelligence plans, programs, and operations.

S. RES. 492

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. KOHL) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 492, a resolution designating June 15, 2012, as ''World Elder Abuse Awareness Day''.

AMENDMENT NO. 2160

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2160 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2196

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2196 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2197

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2197 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2199

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the names of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2199 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2202

At the request of Mr. BENNET, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2202 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2216

At the request of Mr. TOOMEY, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2216 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2219

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the names of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) and the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2219 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2224

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2224 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2232

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the names of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2232 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the names of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2232 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, supra.

AMENDMENT NO. 2240

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2240 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2247

At the request of Mr. TOOMEY, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. SNOWE) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2247 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2248

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2248 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2257

At the request of Mr. SANDERS, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2257 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2287

At the request of Mr. CARPER, the names of the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. HAGAN) and the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2287 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2289

At the request of Mr. COBURN, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2289 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2295

At the request of Mr. UDALL of Colorado, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2295 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2299

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2299 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2306

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. LIEBERMAN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2306 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an

original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2311

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2311 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2367

At the request of Mrs. HAGAN, the names of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2367 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2370

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the names of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CONRAD) and the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2370 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2382

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the names of the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) and the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2382 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2395

At the request of Mr. AKAKA, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2395 intended to be proposed to S. 3240, an original bill to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. KERRY (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY):

S. 3289. A bill to expand the Medicaid home and community-based services waiver to include young individuals who are in need of services that would otherwise be required to be provided through a psychiatric residential treatment facility, and to change references in Federal law to mental retardation to references to an intellectual disability; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, each year nearly 3 million youth receive mental health services to address a range of issues including depression, severe mental illness, and suicide prevention. When youth with mental health needs are treated early, with the most appropriate care for their situation, they are more likely to have positive outcomes during both their childhood and their adult life.

I have worked with my colleague Senator GRASSLEY on a bipartisan bill that will expand the Medicaid 1915(c) waiver to provide an option to serve children and adolescents with intensive home or community-based treatment services in lieu of being treated as inpatients in a psychiatric residential treatment facility. There are currently nine States participating in a 1915(c) waiver demonstration focused on children and adolescents, which expires in September of this year. Data has shown that the youth served through this demonstration waiver have had positive outcomes, have been able to stabilize, and have had significant improvement in mental and behavioral health. The waiver gives States more flexibility to offer the most appropriate mental health services for children on Medicaid. Without access to intensive home or community-based services, these children could otherwise be institutionalized. The waiver expansion will allow more States the opportunity to provide cost-effective care that best meets their children's mental health needs.

In addition, this bill officially removes the outdated term ''mentally retarded'' from the Social Security Act and replaces it with the phrase ''intellectually disabled''. In 2010, the President enacted the bipartisan Rosa's Law which removed the words ''mentally retarded'' from federal health, education and labor laws. This bill takes the necessary step of removing this obsolete term from a significant portion of the U.S. Code.

I would like to recognize Youth Villages, which has been integral to the development of this legislation. More than 30 organizations are supportive of this bill, including the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Association of People with Disabilities, American Psychiatric Association, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Child Welfare League of America, First Focus Campaign for Children, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Council on Independent Living, and the Arc of the United States.

I look forward to continued progress in improving mental health treatment options for our youth and ask all of my colleagues to support this important legislation.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 2404. Mr. VITTER (for himself and Mr. LEE) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2405. Ms. MURKOWSKI submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2406. Mr. REID proposed an amendment to amendment SA 2391 proposed by Mr. REID to the bill S. 3240, supra.

SA 2407. Mr. REID proposed an amendment to amendment SA 2406 proposed by Mr. REID to the amendment SA 2391 proposed by Mr. REID to the bill S. 3240, supra.

SA 2408. Mr. WYDEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2409. Mr. KOHL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2410. Mr. THUNE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2186 submitted by Mr. COBURN (for himself and Mr. DURBIN) and intended to be proposed to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2411. Mr. UDALL of New Mexico submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2412. Mr. UDALL of New Mexico submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2413. Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. LIEBERMAN, and Mr. MERKLEY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2414. Mr. PRYOR (for himself, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. REED, Mr. NELSON of Florida, and Mrs. MCCASKILL) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2415. Mr. PRYOR (for himself and Mr. WICKER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2416. Mr. PRYOR (for himself and Mr. BLUNT) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2417. Mr. UDALL of New Mexico (for himself and Mr. BINGAMAN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2418. Mr. LIEBERMAN (for himself and Mr. REED) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2419. Mr. DEMINT submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2420. Mr. INOUYE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2421. Mr. PAUL (for himself, Mr. INHOFE, and Mr. GRAHAM) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2422. Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mrs. BOXER, and Mr. KYL) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 3240, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 2404. Mr. VITTER (for himself and Mr. LEE) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of the bill, add the following:

SEC. 122____. MINIMIZATION OF IMPACT OF ENDANGERED SPECIES LISTINGS AND DESIGNATIONS ON AGRICULTURAL LAND.

Section 4 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1533) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(j) MINIMIZATION OF IMPACT OF ENDANGERED SPECIES LISTINGS AND DESIGNATIONS ON AGRICULTURAL LAND.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Before any action is taken to list a species or designate critical habitat under this Act, the Secretary shall—

''(A) consult with the Secretary of Agriculture to identify all private agricultural land and land maintained by the Forest Service that could be adversely impacted by the listing or designation; and

''(B) prepare a report that describes the economic impacts of the listing or designation on land used for agricultural activities.

''(2) ECONOMIC ANALYSES.—In conducting economic analyses on the impact of the listing of species, or designation of critical habitat, described in paragraph (1), the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, shall—

''(A) conduct, and make available to the Secretary of the Interior and the public, separate economic analyses for—

''(i) private agricultural land; and

''(ii) land maintained by the Forest Service;

''(B) give landowners an opportunity for comment on the proposed listing or designation—

''(i) to obtain the input of the landowners; and

''(ii) to provide landowners the same opportunity to comment as other affected parties;

''(C) use sound and proven economic analysis tools in conducting the analyses, listing species, and designating habitat under this Act; and

''(D) make available on a public website—

''(i) a description of the total economic impact on agricultural land from all actual and potential listings and designations under this Act; and

''(ii) a map of all locations in the United States that are proposed for critical habitat designations.

''(3) ACTUAL NOTICE.—In listing species or designating habitat under this Act, the Secretary of the Interior shall, to the maximum extent practicable, provide actual notice to affected landowners and other parties.

''(4) APPEALS.—Before a species is listed or habitat is designated under this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall make available to affected landowners and other parties a description of all options that are available to appeal or obtain compensation from the listing or designation (including administrative and judicial options) against the Federal Government.

''(5) TRESPASSING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—If any person enters private land without the consent of the landowner to promote the purposes of this Act, any data obtained during or as a result of the trespass shall not be considered—

''(i) to be the best available science; or

''(ii) to meet the scientific quality standards issued under section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, 2001 (Public Law 106–554; 114 Stat. 2763A–153) (commonly referred to as the 'Data Quality Act').

''(B) AERIAL SURVEILLANCE.—No science that is produced as a result of aerial surveillance of private land without the consent of the landowner shall be considered to meet the scientific quality standards described in subparagraph (A)(ii).''.

SA 2405. Ms. MURKOWSKI submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In lieu of the matter proposed to be inserted, insert the following:

TITLE XIII—RECREATIONAL FISHING, HUNTING, AND RECREATIONAL SHOOTING

SEC. 13001. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the ''Recreational Fishing and Hunting Heritage and Opportunities Act''.

SEC. 13002. DEFINITIONS.

In this title:

(1) FEDERAL PUBLIC LAND.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), the term ''Federal public land'' means any land or water that is—

(i) owned by the United States; and

(ii) managed by a Federal agency (including the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service) for purposes that include the conservation of natural resources.

(B) EXCLUSIONS.—The term ''Federal public land'' does not include—

(i) land or water held or managed in trust for the benefit of Indians or other Native Americans;

(ii) land managed by the Director of the National Park Service or the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service;

(iii) fish hatcheries; or

(iv) conservation easements on private land.

(2) HUNTING.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), the term ''hunting'' means use of a firearm, bow, or other authorized means in the lawful—

(i) pursuit, shooting, capture, collection, trapping, or killing of wildlife; or

(ii) attempt to pursue, shoot, capture, collect, trap, or kill wildlife.

(B) EXCLUSION.—The term ''hunting'' does not include the use of skilled volunteers to cull excess animals (as defined by other Federal law).

(3) RECREATIONAL FISHING.—The term ''recreational fishing'' means—

(A) an activity for sport or for pleasure that involves—

(i) the lawful catching, taking, or harvesting of fish; or

(ii) the lawful attempted catching, taking, or harvesting of fish; or

(B) any other activity for sport or pleasure that can reasonably be expected to result in the lawful catching, taking, or harvesting of fish.

(4) RECREATIONAL SHOOTING.—The term ''recreational shooting'' means any form of sport, training, competition, or pastime, whether formal or informal, that involves the discharge of a rifle, handgun, or shotgun, or the use of a bow and arrow.

SEC. 13003. RECREATIONAL FISHING, HUNTING, AND RECREATIONAL SHOOTING.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to valid existing rights, and in cooperation with the respective State and fish and wildlife agency, a Federal public land management official shall exercise the authority of the official under existing law (including provisions regarding land use planning) to facilitate use of and access to Federal public land for recreational fishing, hunting, and recreational shooting except as limited by—

(1) any law that authorizes action or withholding action for reasons of national security, public safety, or resource conservation;

(2) any other Federal law that precludes recreational fishing, hunting, or recreational shooting on specific Federal public land or water or units of Federal public land; and

(3) discretionary limitations on recreational fishing, hunting, and recreational shooting determined to be necessary and reasonable as supported by the best scientific evidence and advanced through a transparent public process.

(b) MANAGEMENT.—Consistent with subsection (a), the head of each Federal public land management agency shall exercise the land management discretion of the head—

(1) in a manner that supports and facilitates recreational fishing, hunting, and recreational shooting opportunities;

(2) to the extent authorized under applicable State law; and

(3) in accordance with applicable Federal law.

(c) PLANNING.—

(1) EFFECTS OF PLANS AND ACTIVITIES.—

(A) EVALUATION OF EFFECTS ON OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE IN RECREATIONAL FISHING, HUNTING, OR RECREATIONAL SHOOTING.—Federal public land planning documents (including land resources management plans, resource management plans, travel management plans, and energy development plans) shall include a specific evaluation of the effects of the plans on opportunities to engage in recreational fishing, hunting, or recreational shooting.

(B) OTHER ACTIVITY NOT CONSIDERED.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—Federal public land management officials shall not be required to consider the existence or availability of recreational fishing, hunting, or recreational shooting opportunities on private or public land that is located adjacent to, or in the vicinity of, Federal public land for purposes of—

(I) planning for or determining which units of Federal public land are open for recreational fishing, hunting, or recreational shooting; or

(II) setting the levels of use for recreational fishing, hunting, or recreational shooting on Federal public land.

(ii) ENHANCED OPPORTUNITIES.—Federal public land management officials may consider the opportunities described in clause (i) if the combination of those opportunities would enhance the recreational fishing, hunting, or shooting opportunities available to the public.

(2) USE OF VOLUNTEERS.—If hunting is prohibited by law, all Federal public land planning document described in paragraph (1)(A) of an agency shall, after appropriate coordination with State fish and wildlife agencies, allow the participation of skilled volunteers in the culling and other management of wildlife populations on Federal public land unless the head of the agency demonstrates, based on the best scientific data available or applicable Federal law, why skilled volunteers should not be used to control overpopulation of wildlife on the land that is the subject of the planning document.

(d) BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT AND FOREST SERVICE LAND.—

(1) LAND OPEN.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management or the Forest Service (including a a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System, land designated as a wilderness study area or administratively classified as wilderness eligible or suitable, and primitive or semiprimitive areas, but excluding land on the outer Continental Shelf) shall be open to recreational fishing, hunting, and recreational shooting unless the managing Federal public land agency acts to close the land to such activity.

(B) MOTORIZED ACCESS.—Nothing in this paragraph authorizes or requires motorized access or the use of motorized vehicles for recreational fishing, hunting, or recreational shooting purposes within land designated as a wilderness study area or administratively classified as wilderness eligible or suitable.

(2) CLOSURE OR RESTRICTION.—Land described in paragraph (1) may be subject to closures or restrictions if determined by the head of the agency to be necessary and reasonable and supported by facts and evidence for purposes including resource conservation, public safety, energy or mineral production, energy generation or transmission infrastructure, water supply facilities, protection of other permittees, protection of private property rights or interests, national security, or compliance with other law, as determined appropriate by the Director of the Bureau of Land Management or the Chief of the Forest Service, as applicable.

(3) SHOOTING RANGES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subparagraph (C), the head of each Federal public land agency may use the authorities of the head, in a manner consistent with this title and other applicable law—

(i) to lease or permit use of land under the jurisdiction of the head for shooting ranges; and

(ii) to designate specific land under the jurisdiction of the head for recreational shooting activities.

(B) LIMITATION ON LIABILITY.—Any designation under subparagraph (A)(ii) shall not subject the United States to any civil action or claim for monetary damages for injury or loss of property or personal injury or death caused by any recreational shooting activity occurring at or on the designated land.

(C) EXCEPTION.—The head of each Federal public land agency shall not lease or permit use of Federal public land for shooting ranges or designate land for recreational shooting activities within including a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System, land designated as a wilderness study area or administratively classified as wilderness eligible or suitable, and primitive or semiprimitive areas.

(e) REPORT.—Not later than October 1 of every other year, beginning with the second October 1 after the date of enactment of this Act, the head of each Federal public land agency who has authority to manage Federal public land on which recreational fishing, hunting, or recreational shooting occurs shall submit to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate a report that describes—

(1) any Federal public land administered by the agency head that was closed to recreational fishing, hunting, or recreational shooting at any time during the preceding year; and

(2) the reason for the closure.

(f) CLOSURES OR SIGNIFICANT RESTRICTIONS OF 1,280 OR MORE ACRES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Other than closures established or prescribed by land planning actions referred to in subsection (d)(2) or emergency closures described in paragraph (3), a permanent or temporary withdrawal, change of classification, or change of management status of Federal public land or water that effectively closes or significantly restricts 1,280 or more contiguous acres of Federal public land or water to access or use for recreational fishing or hunting or activities relating to fishing or hunting shall take effect only if, before the date of withdrawal or change, the head of the Federal public land agency that has jurisdiction over the Federal public land or water—

(A) publishes appropriate notice of the withdrawal or change, respectively;

(B) demonstrates that coordination has occurred with a State fish and wildlife agency; and

(C) submits to the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate written notice of the withdrawal or change, respectively.

(2) AGGREGATE OR CUMULATIVE EFFECTS.—If the aggregate or cumulative effect of separate withdrawals or changes effectively closes or significant restrictions affects 1,280 or more acres of land or water, the withdrawals and changes shall be treated as a single withdrawal or change for purposes of paragraph (1).

(3) EMERGENCY CLOSURES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in this title prohibits a Federal public land management agency from establishing or implementing emergency closures or restrictions of the smallest practicable area of Federal public land to provide for public safety, resource conservation, national security, or other purposes authorized by law.

(B) TERMINATION.—An emergency closure under subparagraph (A) shall terminate after a reasonable period of time unless the temporary closure is converted to a permanent closure consistent with this title.

(g) NO PRIORITY.—Nothing in this title requires a Federal agency to give preference to recreational fishing, hunting, or recreational shooting over other uses of Federal public land or over land or water management priorities established by other Federal law.

(h) CONSULTATION WITH COUNCILS.—In carrying out this title, the heads of Federal public land agencies shall consult with the appropriate advisory councils established under Executive Order 12962 (16 U.S.C. 1801 note; relating to recreational fisheries) and Executive Order 13443 (16 U.S.C. 661 note; relating to facilitation of hunting heritage and wildlife conservation).

(i) AUTHORITY OF STATES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in this title interferes with, diminishes, or conflicts with the authority, jurisdiction, or responsibility of any State to manage, control, or regulate fish and wildlife under State law (including regulations) on land or water within the State, including on Federal public land.

(2) FEDERAL LICENSES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), nothing in title section authorizes the head of a Federal public land agency head to require a license, fee, or permit to fish, hunt, or trap on land or water in a State, including on Federal public land in the State.

(B) MIGRATORY BIRD STAMPS.—This paragraph shall not affect any migratory bird stamp requirement of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (16 U.S.C. 718a et seq.).

SA 2406. Mr. REID proposed an amendment to amendment SA 2391 proposed by Mr. REID to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. _____. ELIMINATION OF CERTAIN WORKING LANDS CONSERVATION PROGRAMS.

(a) CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM.—Subchapter B of chapter 2 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3838d et seq.) is repealed.

(b) ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM.—Chapter 4 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3839aa et seq.) is repealed.

SA 2407. Mr. REID proposed an amendment to amendment SA 2406 proposed by Mr. REID to the amendment SA 2391 proposed by Mr. REID to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. 12_____. FUNDING.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or any amendment made by this Act, each amount made available by this Act or an amendment made by this Act that is funded through direct spending (as defined in section 250(c) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985(2 U.S.C. 900(c))) shall be considered to be an authorization of appropriations for that amount and purpose.

SA 2408. Mr. WYDEN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

SEC. 12_____. YOUNG AND BEGINNING FARMER AND RANCHER LOAN FUND AND PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Part D of title IV of the Farm Credit Act of 1971 (12 U.S.C. 2203 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"SEC. 4.22. YOUNG AND BEGINNING FARMER AND RANCHER LOAN FUND AND PROGRAM.

"(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

"(1) ELIGIBLE BORROWER.—The term 'eligible borrower' means an agricultural producer who, as determined by the Secretary—

"(A) is not more than 35 years old;

"(B)(i) has experience of at least 3 years in operating a farm or ranch; but

"(ii) has not more than 10 years of total farming or ranching experience;

"(C) for the immediately preceding complete taxable year had an average adjusted gross farm income (as defined in section 1001D of the Farm Security Act of 1985 (7 U.S.C. 1308–3a) of not more than $250,000;

"(D) meets the creditworthiness standards of the Farm Service Agency; and

"(E) has received, or commits to obtain, a minimum quantity of training in agricultural production and financial management.

"(2) FUND.—The term 'Fund' means the Young and Beginning Farmer and Ranchers Loan Fund established by subsection (b).

"(3) FUNDING INSTITUTION.—The term 'funding institution' means an entity that, during the immediately preceding taxable year—

"(A) was part of the Farm Credit System;

"(B) was subject to regulation by the Farm Credit Administration; and

"(C) had net income resulting from tax-exempt earnings on real estate lending.

"(4) SECRETARY.—The term 'Secretary' means the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Administrator of the Farm Service Agency.

"(b) YOUNG AND BEGINNING FARMER AND RANCHERS LOAN FUND.—

"(1) ESTABLISHMENT OF FUND.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—There is established in the Treasury of the United States a fund to be known as the 'Young and Beginning Farmer and Ranchers Loan Fund', to be administered by the Secretary, to be available without fiscal year limitation and not subject to appropriation.

"(B) USE OF FUNDS.—Amounts in the Fund may be used by the Secretary for—

"(i) the costs of making loans to eligible borrowers for use as collateral toward the purchase of farm or ranch land in accordance with subsection (c);

"(ii) the provision of training in agricultural production and financial management to eligible borrowers; and

''(iii) the making of grants to States under subsection (d).

''(C) RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER AUTHORITIES.—The authority and funding for loans described in subsection (c) shall be in addition to any other authority of the Secretary for providing such loans to eligible borrowers.

''(2) TRANSFERS TO FUND.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Fund shall consist of—

''(i) such amounts as are transferred to the Fund by funding institutions under subparagraph (B);

''(ii) such amounts as are received from any payment made with respect to any loan made from the Fund; and

''(iii) appropriations equivalent to the taxes received in the Treasury under section 4968 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

''(B) TRANSFERS.—Not later than an annual date determined by the Secretary, each funding institution shall be required to—

''(i) transfer into the Fund an amount equal to 10 percent of the dollar value of the tax-exemption of the institution under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 for the immediately preceding taxable year as determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, or

''(ii) provide such evidence as the Secretary determines necessary to show that such institution loaned at least such amount to eligible borrowers during such preceding taxable year at an interest rate specified in subsection (c)(4).

''(3) PROHIBITION.—Amounts in the Fund may not be made available for any purpose other than a purpose described in paragraph (1)(B).

''(c) LOAN PROGRAM.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry out a loan program under which eligible borrowers may apply for loans for use as collateral toward the purchase of farm or ranch land.

''(2) USE OF LOAN.—An eligible borrower may use a loan under this subsection in conjunction with other loans made by—

''(A) the Farm Service Agency;

''(B) an institution that is part of the Farm Credit System; or

''(C) a bank or credit union that is subject to safety and soundness examination by an agency of Federal or State government, including the Farm Service Agency.

''(3) AMOUNT.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The total amount that an eligible borrower may borrow under this subsection is $300,000.

''(B) INDIVIDUAL LOAN MAXIMUM.—The total amount of any 1 loan under this subsection shall not exceed the lesser of—

''(i) the lesser of—

''(I) 10 percent of the appraised value of the land to be purchased; and

''(II) 10 percent of the purchase price of the land; and

''(ii) $250,000.

''(4) INTEREST RATE.—A loan under this subsection shall have an interest rate equal to the lesser of—

''(A) 1.5 percent; and

''(B) the then current cost of funds to the Department of the Treasury for obligations with a 10-year maturity.

''(5) REPAYMENT.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The repayment of a loan under this subsection shall be amortized over a 30-year period, with a balloon payment due for the entire unpaid balance of the loan due on the earlier of—

''(i) the date that is 20 years after the date on which the loan is made; or

''(ii) the date on which the land is sold.

''(B) DEFAULT.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—If an eligible borrower fails to use the land subject to a loan under this subsection for an agricultural use for a minimum usage period as determined by the Secretary, the loan shall be considered in default and become due and payable.

''(ii) SALE OF LAND.—Subject to subparagraph (C), if an eligible borrower sells or otherwise disposes of an interest in the land subject to a loan under this subsection without the prior permission of the Secretary, the loan shall be considered in default and become due and payable.

''(C) DEATH OR DISABILITY.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—If an eligible borrower dies or becomes disabled, a loan under this subsection may be assumed by another eligible borrower, including an immediate family member of the original borrower who has been involved in the agricultural operation, as determined by the Secretary.

''(ii) NO ASSUMPTION OF DEBT.—If no eligible borrower is able or willing to assume the loan, the loan shall be due and payable—

''(I) in the case of death of the original borrower, not later than 18 months after the date of death; and

''(II) in the case of disability of the original borrower, not later than 18 months after the determination of disability by an appropriate agency.

''(6) COLLATERALIZATION.—Notwithstanding applicable State law, the total amount of indebtedness of an eligible borrower in relation to the purchase of land subject to a loan under this subsection shall be fully collateralized in an amount that does not exceed the appraised value of the land being purchased, so that all creditors involved in financing the purchase of the land are considered secured creditors.

''(d) GRANTS TO STATES.—

''(1) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the grants made available under this subsection is to develop State-based local farm and food-product economies to revitalize rural and urban communities, promote healthy eating, create jobs, and support economic growth by making local farm and food products more available locally.

''(2) PROGRAM.—The Secretary shall use not less than one-fourth of the amounts available in the Fund each fiscal year to make grants to States to assist in the development of local farm economies, including the creation of new markets for local farm products, such as the sale of fresh produce by local agricultural producers to schools.

''(3) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to receive a grant under this subsection, a State shall—

''(A) submit to the Secretary a plan that describes—

''(i) the manner in which the State intends to use the grant funds to support small and beginning agricultural producers who are starting or expanding operations to supply local and regional markets as part of a strategy to rebuild and reinvest in rural areas; and

''(ii) which agency of the State will carry out the plan; and

''(B) agree to submit to the Secretary reports at such intervals and containing such information as the Secretary determines to be necessary to ensure that the State is using the grant funds in accordance with the purpose of this subsection.

''(4) OVERSIGHT.—The Small Farms and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Council shall oversee the program in consultation with the Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers established under section 5(b) of the Agricultural Credit Improvement Act of 1992 (7 U.S.C. 1929 note; Public Law 102-554)

''(e) REPORTS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall submit regular programmatic reports on the status of the Fund and the program under this section to the Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers established under section 5(b) of the Agricultural Credit Improvement Act of 1992 (7 U.S.C. 1929 note; Public Law 102-554). .

''(2) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 60 days after the end of each fiscal year beginning with fiscal year 2013, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate, the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate, and the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives a report on the operation of the Fund during the fiscal year.

''(3) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (2) shall include, for the fiscal year covered by the report, the following:

''(A) A statement of the amounts deposited into the Fund.

''(B) A description of the expenditures made from the Fund for the fiscal year, including the purpose of the expenditures.

''(C) Recommendations, developed in consultation with the Advisory Committee described in paragraph (1), for additional authorities to fulfill the purpose of the Fund.

''(D) A statement of the balance remaining in the Fund at the end of the fiscal year.

''(f) REPORTS ON LENDING DATA BY FUNDING INSTITUTIONS.—The Farm Credit Administration shall—

''(1) require each funding institution to annually aggregate and report all lending data by individual eligible borrower, and

''(2) annually report this lending activity to the Secretary and Congress.''.

(b) EXCISE TAX ON FAILURE TO TRANSFER REQUIRED AMOUNT TO YOUNG AND BEGINNING FARMER AND RANCHERS LOAN FUND.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new subchapter:

''Subchapter H—Failure to Transfer Required Amount to Young and Beginning Farmer and Ranchers Loan Fund

''Sec. 4968. Failure to transfer required amount to Young and Beginning Farmer and Ranchers Loan Fund.

''SEC. 4968. FAILURE TO TRANSFER REQUIRED AMOUNT TO YOUNG AND BEGINNING FARMER AND RANCHERS LOAN FUND.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—If a funding institution fails to transfer any portion of the amount required to be transferred to the Young and Beginning Farmer and Ranchers Loan Fund under section 4.22(b)(2)(B)(i) of Farm Credit Act of 1971 on the date such transfer is due, there is imposed on such date a tax equal to such portion.

''(b) FUNDING INSTITUTION.—For purposes of this section, the term 'funding institution' has the meaning given such term by section 4.22(a)(3) of such Act.''.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of subchapters for chapter 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''SUBCHAPTER H—FAILURE TO TRANSFER REQUIRED AMOUNT TO YOUNG AND BEGINNING FARMER AND RANCHERS LOAN FUND''.

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this subsection shall apply to failures occurring after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SA 2409. Mr. KOHL submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ___. TAX SUBSIDIES FOR MEMBERS OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES.

Section 36B(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(4) ELIGIBILITY FOR MEMBERS OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Members of agricultural cooperatives that were in existence on March 23, 2010, shall be considered to be enrolled in a qualified health plan if—

''(i) such members purchase their health insurance coverage—

''(I) through their agricultural cooperative rather than through an Exchange; or

''(II) from a health care cooperative organized to provide health care coverage for agricultural producers and agribusinesses; and

''(ii) the agricultural cooperative health plan meets all the minimum benefit requirements of a qualified health plan.

''(B) DEFINITION.—For the purposes of this subsection, the term 'members of agricultural cooperatives' means farmers and agribusiness owners who meet membership criteria of the legally established agricultural cooperatives in which they are enrolled, in addition to their spouses and dependents, and their employees, their spouses and dependents.''.

SA 2410. Mr. THUNE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2186 submitted by Mr. COBURN (for himself and Mr. DURBIN) and intended to be proposed to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 2 of the amendment, strike line 21 and insert the following:

erage level selected by the producer.

''(C) APPLICATION.—

''(i) STUDY.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary, in consultation with the approved insurance providers, shall carry out a study to determine the effects of the limitation described in subparagraph (B) on—

''(I) the overall operations of the Federal crop insurance program;

''(II) the number of producers participating in the Federal crop insurance program;

''(III) the amount of premiums paid by participating producers;

''(IV) any potential liability for approved insurance providers;

''(V) any crops or growing regions that may be disproportionately impacted;

''(VI) program rating structures;

''(VII) creation of schemes or devices to evade the impact of the limitation; and

''(VIII) underwriting gains and losses.

''(ii) EFFECTIVENESS.—The limitation described in subparagraph (B) shall not take effect unless the Secretary determines, through the study described in clause (i), that the limitation would not—

''(I) increase the premium amount paid by producers with an average adjusted gross income of less than $750,000;

''(II) result in a decline in the availability of crop insurance services to producers; and

''(III) increase the costs to the Federal government to administer the Federal crop insurance program established under this subtitle.''.

SA 2411. Mr. UDALL of New Mexico submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 652, between lines 12 and 13, insert the following:

''SEC. 3707. FRONTIER COMMUNITIES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

''(a) DEFINITION OF FRONTIER COMMUNITY.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation with the Director of the Bureau of the Census and the Administrator of the Economic Research Service, shall promulgate regulations to define, for purposes of this section, the term 'frontier community'.

''(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The definition of 'frontier community' shall be based on a weighted matrix that uses population density, distance in miles and travel time in minutes from the nearest significant service center or market, and such other factors as the Secretary determines to be appropriate.

''(3) IDENTIFICATION.—The Secretary shall work with State executives, officials of nonmetropolitan local governments, and officials of federally recognized Indian tribes, as appropriate, to identify communities that qualify as 'frontier communities' based on the weighted matrix.

''(4) RECONSIDERATION PROCESS.—The Secretary shall establish a reconsideration process under which a community that has not been designated as a 'frontier community' may petition for designation.

''(b) RESERVATION OF FUNDS FOR FRONTIER COMMUNITIES.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall reserve an amount of not less than 3 percent of all funds made available for a fiscal year for programs of the rural development mission area that provide grants, loans, or loan guarantees to communities, for the costs of making grants, loans, or loan guarantees to frontier communities in accordance with those programs and this section.

''(2) REQUIREMENTS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B) and notwithstanding any other provision of this title, in making a grant, loan, or loan guarantee to a frontier community using funds reserved under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall apply the terms and conditions of the applicable rural development program.

''(B) EXCEPTIONS.—The Secretary—

''(i) in the case of grants and regardless of cost-sharing requirements in the underlying program, may make available a grant of up to 100 percent Federal cost share to frontier communities;

''(ii) for purposes of scoring grant applications, may not consider whether a frontier community belongs to a regional partnership; and

''(iii) may not impose a minimum grant or loan amount requirement.

''(3) INSUFFICIENT APPLICATIONS.—If funds reserved under paragraph (1) remain available due to insufficient applications after the end of the 180-day period beginning on the date on which the funds are reserved, the Secretary shall use the funds for the purposes for which the funds were originally made available.

''(c) CAPACITY BUILDING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND PROJECT PLANNING.—

''(1) DEFINITION OF ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—In this subsection, the term 'eligible entity' means—

''(A) an association of counties;

''(B) a council of State and local governments;

''(C) a cooperative;

''(D) an Indian tribe (as defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b));

''(E) a public agency;

''(F) a community-based organization, intermediary organization, network, or coalition of community-based organizations that does not engage in activities prohibited under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; or

''(G) a similar entity, as determined by the Secretary.

''(2) GRANTS.—The Secretary shall make available to eligible entities grants to facilitate greater capacity for frontier communities to plan projects and acquire and manage loans and grants made available through rural development programs of the Department and other funding sources.

''(3) PRIORITY.—In considering grant applications under this subsection, the Secretary shall give higher priority to an eligible entity that, as determined by the Secretary—

''(A) demonstrates an existing relationship with the frontier community intended to be served by the eligible entity; and

''(B) is a local organization or government entity.

''(4) RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall reserve an amount of not more than 5 percent of all funds made available for programs of the rural development mission area for a fiscal year to make grants in accordance with this subsection.

''(B) INSUFFICIENT APPLICATIONS.—If funds reserved under subparagraph (A) remain available due to insufficient applications after the end of the 180-day period beginning on the date on which the funds are reserved, the Secretary shall use the funds for the purposes for which the funds were originally made available.

SA 2412. Mr. UDALL of New Mexico submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 751, strike line 23 and insert the following:

''SEC. 3915. COMMUNITY LAND GRANT-MERCEDES.

''(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

''(1) Spanish and Mexican community land grant-mercedes are part of a unique and important history in the southwest United States dating back to the 1600s and becoming incorporated into the United States through the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Limits, and Settlement between the United States of America and the Mexican Republic, signed at Guadalupe Hidalgo February 2, 1848, and entered into force May 30, 1848 (9 Stat. 922) (commonly referred to as the 'Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo');

''(2) the years following the signing of that treaty resulted in a significant loss of land originally belonging to the community land grant-mercedes due to manipulations and unfulfilled commitments;

''(3) the community land grant-mercedes that are recognized as political subdivisions are in need of increased economic opportunities; and

''(4) the rural development programs of the Department of Agriculture are an appropriate venue for addressing the needs of the community land grant-mercedes.

''(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) COMMUNITY LAND GRANT-MERCEDES.—The term 'community land grant-mercedes' means a political subdivision of a State that is part of the United States and is located on land that was granted by the government of Spain or the government of Mexico to—

''(A) a community, town, colony, or pueblo; or

''(B) a person for the purpose of founding or establishing a community, town, colony, or pueblo.

''(2) LAND GRANT COUNCIL.—The term 'land grant council' means an agency of a State government established by law—

''(A) to provide support to land grants-mercedes; and

''(B) to serve as a liaison between land grant-mercedes and other State agencies and the Federal government.

''(c) PROGRAM.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—In addition to any other funds made available for similar purposes, the Secretary shall use funds set aside under paragraph (3) to provide grants to community land grant-mercedes and land grant councils for the purpose of carrying out economic and community development initiatives under—

''(A) the water and waste disposal systems for rural communities program under section 3501;

''(B) the Special Evaluation Assistance for Rural Communities and Households (SEARCH) program under section 3501(e)(6);

''(C) the community facility grant program under section 3502;

''(D) the program of rural business development grants under section 3601(a)(3)(A);

''(E) the program of rural business enterprise grants under section 3601(a)(3)(B);

''(F) the rural microentrepreneur assistance program under section 3601(f)(2); and

''(G) the rural community development initiative.

''(2) FEDERAL SHARE.—Notwithstanding any other requirement of the programs described in paragraph (1), the Secretary shall make available to community land grant-mercedes grants under those programs at a Federal share of up to 100 percent.

''(3) SET ASIDE.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, of amounts made available for a fiscal year for rural development programs of the Department of Agriculture, $10,000,000 shall be used to carry out this section.

''SEC. 3916. REGULATIONS.

SA 2413. Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. LIEBERMAN, and Mr. MERKLEY) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 1003, strike lines 16 through 25 and insert the following:

able; and'';

(ii) in subparagraph (B)—

(I) by inserting ''(except ferns)'' after ''floricultural'';

(II) by inserting ''(except ferns)'' after ''ornamental nursery''; and

(III) by striking ''(including ornamental fish)'' and inserting ''(regardless of production method and including ornamental fish, but excluding tropical fish)''; and

(iii) by adding at the end the following:

''(D) AQUACULTURE CROPS.—The Secretary shall not exclude an aquaculture crop from the definition of eligible crops under this paragraph solely because the aquaculture crop is not planted or seeded in a container, wire basket, net pen, or any other similar device that is designed for the protection and containment of seeded aquacultural species.'';

SA 2414. Mr. PRYOR (for himself, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. REED, Mr. NELSON of Florida, and Mrs. MCCASKILL) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of the bill, add the following:

SEC. 122___. CRITERIA AND NOTICE FOR CLOSURE OR RELOCATION OF LOCAL OFFICES OF DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

(a) CRITERIA.—Prior to selecting State, county, or field offices of the Farm Service Agency, the Under Secretary for Rural Development, or the Natural Resources Conservation Service (referred to in this section as a ''covered office'') for closure, the Secretary shall consider—

(1) the cost saved from closing each covered office;

(2) the driving distance between each covered office and the closest covered office;

(3) the number of citizens served;

(4) after an evaluation of the workload of each covered office, the overall workload of the covered office;

(5) the average number of employees staffed in each covered office during the preceding 5-calendar year period;

(6) the number of covered offices within each county; and

(7) in the case of local offices of the Farm Service Agency—

(A) the total number of reported planted acres covered by each office; and

(B) the total number of reported livestock covered by each office.

(b) PUBLIC DISCLOSURE.—Prior to the closure of a covered office, the Secretary shall publish in the Federal Register—

(1) a list of covered offices that are proposed to be closed; and

(2) a description of the formula used to select the covered offices for closure.

(c) CONGRESSIONAL DISCLOSURE.—Not later than 3 days before public disclosure under subsection (b), the Secretary shall submit the information described in subsection (b) to—

(1) the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives;

(2) the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives;

(3) the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate;

(4) the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate;

(5) each Member of the Senate representing the State in which a covered office proposed to be closed is located; and

(6) the Member of the House of Representatives who represents the Congressional district in which a covered office proposed to be closed is located.

(d) PUBLIC MEETING AND NOTICE.—The Secretary may not close a covered office unless—

(1) not later than 30 days after the Secretary proposes to close the covered office, the Secretary holds a public meeting regarding the proposed closure in the county in which the covered office is located; and

(2) after the public meeting described in paragraph (1) but not later than 90 days before the date on which the Secretary approves the closure of the covered office, the Secretary submits to each Committee and Member described in subsection (c) notice of the proposed closure of the covered office.

(e) PRESENCE AFTER CLOSURE.—The Secretary shall ensure that employees of the Department of Agriculture—

(1) maintain a presence in counties without a covered office by frequently and consistently sending to the affected counties employees of the same agency for consultation; and

(2) use any remaining office of the Department of Agriculture in an affected county as a location for maintaining a presence in the affected county.

SA 2415. Mr. PRYOR (for himself and Mr. WICKER) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

In section 1203(b)—

(1) strike ''The Secretary'' and insert the following:

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary''; and

(2) add at the end the following:

''(2) PERMITTED EXTENSIONS.—The Secretary may extend the term of a marketing assistance loan (including the loan rate) for any loan commodity if—

''(A) at the time the marketing loan is due—

''(i) the loan commodity is stored in a county for which—

''(I) a natural disaster is declared by the Secretary under section 321(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1961(a)); or

''(II) a major disaster or emergency is designated by the President under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.); or

''(ii) the port used to ship the loan commodity is closed or restricted pursuant to a Coast Guard regulation;

''(B) the loan commodity is stored in the county described in subparagraph (A)(i);

''(C) the marketing loan is extended not more than 90 days;

''(D) the request for the extension is approved by the applicable State Director of the Farm Service Agency on an individual basis; and

''(E) the extension does not extend the term of the marketing assistance loan beyond July 31 of the applicable crop year.''.

SA 2416. Mr. PRYOR (for himself and Mr. BLUNT) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 880, strike lines 5 through 15 and insert the following:

SEC. 9001. DEFINITIONS.

Section 9001 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (7 U.S.C. 8101) is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (4) and inserting the following:

''(4) BIOBASED PRODUCT.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The term '''biobased product''' means a product determined by the Secretary to be a commercial or industrial product (other than food or feed) that is—

''(i) composed, in whole or in significant part, of biological products, including renewable domestic agricultural materials and forestry materials ; or

''(ii) an intermediate ingredient or feedstock.

''(B) INCLUSION.—The term 'biobased product', with respect to forestry materials, includes forest products that meet biobased content requirements, notwithstanding market maturity.'';

(2) by redesignating paragraphs (9), (10), (11), (12), (13), and (14) as paragraphs (10), (11), (12), (13), (15), and (16), respectively;

(3) by inserting after paragraph (8) the following:

''(9) FOREST PRODUCT.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The term 'forest product' means a product made from materials derived from the practice of forestry or the management of growing timber.

''(B) INCLUSIONS.—The term 'forest product' includes—

''(i) pulp, paper, paperboard, pellets, lumber, and other wood products; and

''(ii) any recycled products derived from forest materials.''; and

(4) by inserting after paragraph (13) (as so redesignated) the following:

''(14) RENEWABLE CHEMICAL.—The term 'renewable chemical' means a monomer, polymer, plastic, formulated product, or chemical substance produced from renewable biomass.''.

SA 2417. Mr. UDALL of New Mexico (for himself and Mr. BINGAMAN) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 988, between lines 22 and 23, insert the following:

(A) in paragraph (1), by inserting ''and veteran farmers and ranchers'' after ''ranchers'';

On page 988, line 23, strike ''(A)'' and insert ''(B)''.

On page 988, line 26, strike ''(B)'' and insert ''(C)''.

On page 989, lines 9 and 10, strike ''$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2013 through 2017'' and insert ''$150,000,000, to remain available until expended''.

On page 989, line 19, strike ''and'' after the semicolon.

On page 990, line 3, strike the period and insert ''; and''.

On page 990, between lines 3 and 4, insert the following:

(5) in subsection (e)(5)(A), by inserting ''and veteran farmers and ranchers'' after ''ranchers'' each place it appears in clauses (i) and (ii).

On page 990, between lines 13 and 14, insert the following:

(c) REPORTS.—

(1) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the head of the Office of Advocacy and Outreach of the Department of Agriculture shall submit to Congress a report describing the extent and means of compliance by the Office with the recommendations of the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of the Agriculture contained in the audit report entitled ''Controls over the Grant Management Process of the Office of Advocacy and Outreach – Section 2501 Program Grantee Selection for Fiscal Year 2012'', numbered 91011–0001–21, and dated May 18, 2012.

(2) SUBSEQUENT REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the head of the Office of Advocacy and Outreach shall submit to Congress a follow-up report describing the extent and means of compliance by the Office with the control measures contained in the audit report described in paragraph (1) relating to the grant management process of the Office with respect to program grantee selection under section 2501 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 2279).

SA 2418. Mr. LIEBERMAN (for himself and Mr. REED) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 196, strike lines 3 through 16 and insert the following:

''(g) WILDLIFE HABITAT INCENTIVE PRACTICE.—

''(1) DEFINITION OF ELIGIBLE LAND.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding section 1240A, in this subsection, the term 'eligible land' has such meaning as the applicable State conservationist, in consultation with the State technical committee, shall establish, in accordance with subparagraph (B).

''(B) REQUIREMENTS.—

''(i) RESTRICTION.—The definition of 'eligible land' shall include only non-Federal land.

''(ii) DEADLINE.—An initial definition under subparagraph (A) shall be established not more than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

''(iii) REVIEW.—Each definition of 'eligible land' shall be reviewed by the applicable State technical committee not less frequently than once each year.

''(2) PAYMENTS.—The Secretary shall provide payments under the program for conservation practices that support the restoration, development, and improvement of wildlife habitat on eligible land, including—

''(A) upland wildlife habitat;

''(B) wetland wildlife habitat;

''(C) habitat for threatened and endangered species;

''(D) fish habitat;

''(E) habitat in riparian areas and waterways;

''(F) habitat on pivot corners and other irregular areas of a field; and

''(G) other types of wildlife habitat, as determined by the Secretary.''.

SA 2419. Mr. DEMINT submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. _____. DEFINITION OF FOOD.

Section 3(k) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2012(k)) is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: '', except that a food, food product, meal, or other item described in this subsection shall be considered a food under this Act only if the Secretary determines that the food, food product, meal, or other item is necessary for essential nutrition''.

SA 2420. Mr. INOUYE submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 1009, after line 11, add the following:

SEC. 12207. VARIANCE FOR GEOGRAPHICALLY ISOLATED SHELL EGG PRODUCERS.

Chapter IV of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 341 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''SEC. 424. VARIANCE FOR GEOGRAPHICALLY ISOLATED SHELL EGG PRODUCERS.

''(a) SHELL EGG VARIANCE.—A State without a shell breaking facility may request a variance from part 118 of title 21, Code of Federal Regulations (or any successor regulations) on behalf of egg producers located in such State. Such request shall describe the variance requested and present information demonstrating that the variance does not increase the likelihood that the shell eggs for which the variance is requested will be contaminated with Salmonella Enteritidis, and that the variance provides a similar level of public health protection as the requirements of the regulations under part 118 of title 21, Code of Federal Regulations (or any successor regulations).

''(b) ACTION ON VARIANCES.—

''(1) TIMING.—The Secretary shall review a request for a variance within a reasonable timeframe.

''(2) APPROVAL OF VARIANCES.—The Secretary may approve a variance in whole or in part, as appropriate, and may specify the scope of applicability of a variance to other similarly situated persons.

''(3) DENIAL OF VARIANCES.—The Secretary may deny a variance request if the Secretary determines that such variance is not reasonably likely to ensure the safety of shell eggs and is not reasonably likely to provide the same level of public health protection as the requirements of part 118 of title 21, Code of Federal Regulations (or any successor regulations). The Secretary shall notify the person requesting such variance of the reasons for the denial.

''(4) MODIFICATION OR REVOCATION OF A VARIANCE.—The Secretary, after notice and an opportunity for a hearing, may modify or revoke a variance if the Secretary determines that such variance is not reasonably likely to ensure that the shell eggs will test negative for Salmonella Enteritidis and is not reasonably likely to provide the same level of public health protection as the requirements of part 118 of title 21, Code of Federal Regulations (or any successor regulations).''.

SA 2421. Mr. PAUL (for himself, Mr. INHOFE, and Mr. GRAHAM) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

Strike subtitle A of title IV and insert the following:

Subtitle A—Nutrition Assistance Block Grant Program

SEC. 4001. NUTRITION ASSISTANCE BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—For each of fiscal years 2014 through 2021, the Secretary shall establish a nutrition assistance block grant program under which the Secretary shall make annual grants to each participating State that establishes a nutrition assistance program in the State and submits to the Secretary annual reports under subsection (d).

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—As a requirement of receiving grants under this section, the Governor of each participating State shall certify that the State nutrition assistance program includes—

(1) work requirements;

(2) mandatory drug testing;

(3) verification of citizenship or proof of lawful permanent residency of the United States; and

(4) limitations on the eligible uses of benefits that are at least as restrictive as the limitations in place for the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.) as of May 31, 2012.

(c) AMOUNT OF GRANT.—For each fiscal year, the Secretary shall make a grant to each participating State in an amount equal to the product of—

(1) the amount made available under section 4002 for the applicable fiscal year; and

(2) the proportion that—

(A) the number of legal residents in the State whose income does not exceed 100 percent of the poverty line (as defined in section 673(2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2), including any revision required by such section)) applicable to a family of the size involved; bears to

(B) the number of such individuals in all participating States for the applicable fiscal

year, based on data for the most recent fiscal year for which data is available.

(d) ANNUAL REPORT REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than January 1 of each year, each State that receives a grant under this section shall submit to the Secretary a report that shall include, for the year covered by the report—

(A) a description of the structure and design of the nutrition assistance program of the State, including the manner in which residents of the State qualify for the program;

(B) the cost the State incurs to administer the program;

(C) whether the State has established a rainy day fund for the nutrition assistance program of the State; and

(D) general statistics about participation in the nutrition assistance program.

(2) AUDIT.—Each year, the Comptroller General of the United States shall—

(A) conduct an audit on the effectiveness of the nutritional assistance block grant program and the manner in which each participating State is implementing the program; and

(B) not later than June 30, submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report describing—

(i) the results of the audit; and

(ii) the manner in which the State will carry out the supplemental nutrition assistance program in the State, including eligibility and fraud prevention requirements.

(e) USE OF FUNDS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—A State that receives a grant under this section may use the grant in any manner determined to be appropriate by the State to provide nutrition assistance to the legal residents of the State.

(2) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—Grant funds made available to a State under this section shall—

(A) remain available to the State for a period of 5 years; and

(B) after that period, shall—

(i) revert to the Federal Government to be deposited in the Treasury and used for Federal budget deficit reduction; or

(ii) if there is no Federal budget deficit, be used to reduce the Federal debt in such manner as the Secretary of the Treasury considers appropriate.

SEC. 4002. FUNDING.

(a) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section—

(1) for fiscal year 2014, $44,400,000,000;

(2) for fiscal year 2015, $45,500,000,000;

(3) for fiscal year 2016, $46,600,000,000;

(4) for fiscal year 2017, $47,800,000,000;

(5) for fiscal year 2018, $49,000,000,000;

(6) for fiscal year 2019, $50,200,000,000;

(7) for fiscal year 2020, $51,500,000,000; and

(8) for fiscal year 2021, $52,800,000,000.

(b) DISCRETIONARY SPENDING LIMIT ADJUSTMENT.—Section 251(c) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 901(c)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (3), by striking the figure and inserting ''$1,110,400,000,000'';

(2) in paragraph (4), by striking the figure and inserting ''$1,131,500,000,000'';

(3) in paragraph (5), by striking the figure and inserting ''$1,153,600,000,000'';

(4) in paragraph (6), by striking the figure and inserting ''$1,178,800,000,000'';

(5) in paragraph (7), by striking the figure and inserting ''$1,205,000,000,000'';

(6) in paragraph (8), by striking the figure and inserting ''$1,232,200,000,000'';

(7) in paragraph (9), by striking the figure and inserting ''$1,259,500,000,000''; and

(8) in paragraph (10), by striking the figure and inserting ''$1,286,800,000,000''.

(c) DISCRETIONARY CAP ADJUSTMENT FOR NEW PROGRAM SPENDING.—Section 251A(2) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 901a(2)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (B)(ii), by striking the figure and inserting ''$554,400,000,000'';

(2) in subparagraph (C)(ii), by striking the figure and inserting ''$565,500,000,000'';

(3) in subparagraph (D)(ii), by striking the figure and inserting ''$576,600,000,000'';

(4) in subparagraph (E)(ii), by striking the figure and inserting ''$588,800,000,000'';

(5) in subparagraph (F)(ii), by striking the figure and inserting ''$602,000,000,000'';

(6) in subparagraph (G)(ii), by striking the figure and inserting ''$616,200,000,000'';

(7) in subparagraph (H)(ii), by striking the figure and inserting ''$629,500,000,000''; and

(8) in subparagraph (I)(ii), by striking the figure and inserting ''$642,800,000,000''.

SEC. 4003. REPEALS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Effective September 30, 2013, the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.) is repealed.

(b) REPEAL OF MANDATORY FUNDING.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, effective September 30, 2013, the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.) (as in effect prior to that date) shall cease to be a program funded through direct spending (as defined in section 250(c) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 900(c)) prior to the amendment made by paragraph (2)).

(2) DIRECT SPENDING.—Effective September 30, 2013, section 250(c)(8) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 900(c)(8)) is amended—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by adding ''and'' at the end;

(B) in subparagraph (B), by striking ''; and'' at the end and inserting a period; and

(C) by striking subparagraph (C).

(3) ENTITLEMENT AUTHORITY.—Effective September 30, 2013, section 3(9) of the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 (2 U.S.C. 622(9)) is amended—

(A) by striking ''means—'' and all that follows through ''the authority to make'' and inserting ''means the authority to make'';

(B) by striking ''; and'' and inserting a period; and

(C) by striking subparagraph (B).

(4) OTHER DIRECT SPENDING.—Effective September 30, 2013, section 1026(5) of the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 (2 U.S.C. 691e(5)) is amended—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by adding ''and'' at the end;

(B) in subparagraph (B), by striking ''; and'' at the end and inserting a period; and

(C) by striking subparagraph (C).

(c) RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAW.—Any reference in this Act, an amendment made by this Act, or any other Act to the supplemental nutrition assistance program shall be considered to be a reference to the nutrition assistance block grant program under this subtitle.

SEC. 4004. BASELINE.

Notwithstanding section 257 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 907), the baseline shall assume that, on and after September 30, 2013, no benefits shall be provided under the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.) (as in effect prior to that date).

SA 2422. Mrs. FEINSTEIN (for herself, Mrs. BOXER, and Mr. KYL) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 3240, to reauthorize agricultural programs through 2017, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

Strike section 2207 and insert the following:

SEC. 2207. CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS AND PAYMENTS.

Section 1240H of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3839aa–8) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)(2), by striking ''2012'' and inserting ''2017''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

''(c) REPORTING.—Not later than December 31, 2013, and every 2 years thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate and the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives a report on the status of projects funded under this section, including—

''(1) funding awarded;

''(2) project results; and

''(3) incorporation of project findings, such as new technology and innovative approaches, into the conservation efforts implemented by the Secretary.''.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on June 13, 2012, at 10 a.m. to conduct a committee hearing entitled ''A Breakdown in Risk Management: What Went Wrong at JPMorgan Chase?''

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

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Environment and Public Works be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on June 13, 2012, at 10 a.m. in Dirksen 406 to conduct a hearing entitled ''Hearing on the nomination of Allison Macfarlane and re-nomination of Kristine L. Svinicki to be Members of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.''

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

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on June 13, 2012.

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

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on June 13, 2012, at 2:45 p.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the

Senate on June 13, 2012. The Committee will meet in room 418 of the Senate Russell Office Building, beginning at 10 a.m.

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

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Special Committee on Aging be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on June 13, 2012, at 2 p.m. in room 562 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building to conduct a hearing entitled ''Empowering Patients and Honoring Individual's Choices: Lessions in Improving Care for Individuals with Advanced Illness.''

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

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Taylor Ibrahim, an intern in Senator PAUL's office, be granted floor privileges for the remainder of the day.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that two detailees from my office, Herrick Fox and Benjamin Thomas, be granted the privilege of the floor for the remainder of debate on S. 3240, the Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act.

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

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a fellow in Senator SANDERS' office, Rebecca French, be granted floor privileges for the duration of consideration of S. 3240, the Agricultural Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012.

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

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, JUNE 14, 2012

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, June 14; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; that the majority leader be recognized and that following any leader remarks, the first hour be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the second half.

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

PROGRAM

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, we continue to work on an agreement on amendments to the farm bill. We hope such an agreement can be reached. Votes are possible during tomorrow's session, and we will notify Senators when they are scheduled.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it adjourn under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 7:03 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, June 14, 2012, at 9:30 a.m.