

well. But I also wish now we could do what we could in these closing hours. We have been guaranteed 30 hours of debate—we have used probably about 5—that we look at how we can bring this debate to a close in an agreed-upon way on both sides of the aisle so we can then move on to the budget debate of fiscal year 2014.

I am sorry, I did not know the Senator from Kansas was here. We will not recess until the Senator has a chance to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Maryland, my chairwoman.

I spoke last night on an amendment I have continued to ask be made in order on this continuing resolution. As I indicated last night, we are going to spend in excess of \$1 trillion in this bill, and I am hoping that my amendment, and perhaps others, could be made in order yet during this postclosure 30-hour period of time.

One of the concerns that has been raised is whether, if my amendment were adopted, this would create difficulties in the House of Representatives for the final passage of the continuing resolution. I am pleased to be on the floor, particularly with the chairwoman being here, the Senator from Maryland, to indicate that I now have indications from the Speaker's Office that they would have no objection to the amendment I continue to offer, that I hope will be made in order, that I hope a vote will be taken on related to the air traffic control towers.

Also in the period of time since I last spoke, we have numerous Members of the Senate who have now joined as cosponsors of this amendment. The number is now 14 Democrats and 12 Republicans. The number continues to grow. And I have had a number of conversations with particularly Democratic Members of the U.S. Senate who indicate to me: Why can't your amendment be made in order?

So I am hoping, as Members of the Democratic Caucus and the Republican Conference meet during this 12:30 lunch period, that perhaps there is still an opportunity for this issue to be resolved.

I would indicate once again that, while I listened to the suggestion of the majority leader this morning that we move to the budget during this 30-hour postclosure timeframe, in the absence of some agreement related to this amendment, I will object to moving to the budget until the 30 hours expire.

I also have indicated publicly that I will object to the next 30 hours—the next opportunity in which unanimous consent is requested as we get back to the base bill. It is not my nature to be an obstructionist. This is an amendment that matters greatly. It has been determined by the Parliamentarian to be germane and, in my view, ought to be made in order.

Just as the chairwoman talked about bipartisan efforts, this is one that clearly is bipartisan and apparently bicameral. So I am hoping to utilize the rights as a Member of the Senate to see that there still is an opportunity for this amendment to be considered. I would say that the reason this matters so much in this timeframe is that I am of the view, and I think it is shared by many, in the absence of this amendment being adopted and included in this continuing resolution, and the continuing resolution being passed, that the control towers will be eliminated on April 7, and there will be little if any opportunity for the Appropriations Committee then to restore funding to, in a sense, a program that no longer exists.

There are many of the topics I share with my colleagues here about the consequences of the sequester. I am willing to work with them to see that we move money from one place to another to solve that problem. In the absence of that happening, there is still an opportunity for the Appropriations Committee and ultimately the Congress in the appropriations process to solve those problems. But should April 7 come, the 179-plus contract towers are eliminated. Then it seems highly unlikely to me that any appropriations process would include money for a program that is no longer in existence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I appreciate the tenacity and persistence of the Senator from Kansas in being an advocate for his constituents. I would hope that during this noon hour—I can give no promises. There are leadership concerns on both sides of the aisle. But we have to acknowledge the Senator is a real fighter for what he believes in. We admire that. How that gets translated will be subject to further discussion during this noon hour.

RECESS

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 2:15 for the respective party conferences to discuss important issues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:32 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND FULL-YEAR CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2013—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for up to 7 minutes.

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

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, we have been listening to our good friend from Kansas concerning this contract air traffic control tower amendment. I think there is no better example to use when talking about a bureaucracy taking something that everybody wants, that is very inexpensive, and using that to try to force people to do something that should never have happened.

In terms of the contract air traffic control towers, this is not just a rural issue. This is something that can happen all around. It happens that I have six in my State of Oklahoma and up in Kansas I believe they have five, but the fact is this is a major safety issue. We have a huge, bloated bureaucracy in the FAA. Yet we are saying we have to close a handful of towers and let people be uncontrolled. I know a little about that; it is what I did for a living. It is totally outrageous.

So we have an amendment, Senator MORAN and I, to redirect the money within the FAA budget. There would be no additional cost. It would rescind \$23.8 million from FAA facilities and equipment. Now, I ask, are facilities and equipment more important than actually having an active control tower in these congested areas? Also, it would take \$26.2 million from FAA research and development. Well, I can assure you this is more significant, and no one looking at this would rationally say it is not. So I encourage my good friend from Kansas to pursue this.

Similar to this is something that I, along with several Democrats—the primary one being KAY HAGAN—am concerned about, and that is what has happened in terms of a decision that was made by the Secretary of Defense to take out the tuition assistance. This is a very small amount of money for our troops who are over there serving now.

This is kind of interesting because I was a product of the draft. My service was not voluntary when I was in, and I thought a total voluntary force would not be effective. As I found out, it was. Well, one of the main reasons people do sign up—a lot of people say: Yes, I want to serve my country. A lot say: Yes, I want a career in the Army, Navy, Marines, or Air Force. However, they also want to advance themselves. They want an education, and in many cases, the only way they can get one is to have this tuition assistance program.

I can recall being over in the mess halls in Afghanistan and actually out in the field in Afghanistan where we have some 200,000 Army troops there now who are participating in this program. This is not an expensive program. All we want to do is make sure we give what was taken away from those individuals who are trying to better themselves, trying to better their lives, perhaps work toward a career in the military.

Stop and think about the amount of money that could come out of, say,

some of the green initiatives. How many people know that our Navy was forced to pay \$29 a gallon for 450,000 gallons of fuel when you can buy it on the market for \$3? All these things. Do we have any business having a bio-refinery built by the Federal Government? These are all things in this budget, and any one of them would be far more than the assistance we are giving our troops for their tuition.

We are circulating a letter that draws attention to this, and we have Democrats and Republicans—just about even—saying: Mr. Secretary of Defense, go ahead and rescind that. We have a lot of waste we need to get rid of, but this is not waste. Our troops' preparation for the future is not a waste of our taxpayer money.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

THE BUDGET

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, our national debt currently stands at nearly \$17 trillion. It is difficult to believe it has reached that level. What is more difficult to believe is that there is anyone in this country who can look at that number and not feel a sense of urgency to address our Nation's spending and debt problems. Yet, as we begin to debate the first budget resolution in over 4 years, it seems there are many in this very Chamber who seem to think the size of our debt is no big deal. If you take a good look at the budget we are debating this week, there is really no other conclusion to draw. The raw overall numbers make a pretty convincing case that the authors of this budget see no real need to change course when it comes to our debt.

The budget before us maintains our current unsustainable spending and debt trajectory. It doesn't balance, not at any point. Its goal is to grow government, not jobs and the economy. Under this budget, the national debt would increase by more than \$7 trillion over the 10-year window; that is, if we are lucky. In 2023 the debt would be over \$24 trillion and rising rapidly. How can anyone bring a budget such as this to the floor—one that massively increases our debt without even a faint attempt to reach balance at any time—and claim to be fiscally responsible?

But that is not all. I haven't even gotten to the worst part yet. True enough, this budget will do some pretty irresponsible things, but the real story is what this budget doesn't do. Everyone knows the main drivers of our national debt are our entitlement programs—Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. That fact has been confirmed by the Congressional Budget Office, the programs' boards of trustees, and every serious economist or analyst who has spent longer than 5 minutes looking over our Nation's finances. Over the next 10 years, we will spend \$6.8 trillion on Medicare, \$4.4 trillion on Medicaid, and \$11.2 trillion on Social Security, for a combined total of

\$22.4 trillion. That is trillion with a "t."

Medicare by itself is extremely problematic. While the percentage of workers paying into Medicare has been in decline for over a decade, 10,000 seniors join the program each and every day. According to the budget we are debating this week, Medicare will account for \$504 billion this year alone. Now, that comes out to about \$1.4 billion a day. Over the next 10 years, Medicare spending will increase by over 70 percent, according to the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission's most recent report. By the end of that time, we will be spending more every year on Medicare than on our entire national defense. Even President Obama, who has generally been reticent to consider real changes to Medicare, has admitted that absent reform, the program will be bankrupt within 10 years.

The story is not any better with Medicaid. In 2013, once again according to the very budget we are debating, Federal spending on Medicaid will account for about \$265 billion, and if you include what States are spending on Medicaid, that is \$450 billion. That is \$1.2 billion a day for just this one program. Over the next 10 years, Federal Medicaid spending as a share of the U.S. economy is set to grow by 37 percent, according to OMB. By 2020, 84 million people—nearly one out of every four Americans—will be dependent on Medicaid.

With Social Security, we have a problem, facing more than \$20 trillion in unfunded liabilities over the long term. In the short term, the disability insurance trust fund within Social Security is projected to be exhausted by 2016. That means that in about 3 years, the disability insurance benefits will, by law, have to be cut by 21 percent. All combined Social Security trust funds will be exhausted by 2033, at which time all Social Security benefits will have to be cut by 25 percent.

So it isn't just that we are spending a lot of money on these programs, it is that these programs are structurally unsustainable. That is why the Director of the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has referred to our health care entitlements as our "fundamental fiscal challenge." It is why the Social Security Board of Trustees, which includes a number of high-ranking officials in the Obama administration, has said with regard to Social Security that "legislative action is needed as soon as possible."

Entitlement reform is not an option, it is a necessity. It is not a matter of politics, it is a matter of math. America's social safety net is coming apart at the seams, and if these programs are going to be there for future generations, they need serious structural reforms. If we do that now, it will be much easier than if we wait too much longer.

This isn't new information. It isn't privileged or classified. Anyone paying attention to our Nation's fiscal situa-

tion is aware these challenges exist. So what do the authors of the Senate budget propose that we do about it? The answer, unfortunately, is nothing.

Here is a perfect illustration—the Murray budget entitlement plan. We are going to have \$22.4 trillion at the end of 10 years. Well, let me just say for a second that if you look at that chart, you will see, as I have stated, that we are projected to spend a total of \$22.4 trillion on Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security over the next 10 years. That is the red bar on the chart. All total, the Democrats' budget would reduce Medicare spending by \$46 billion and spending on Medicaid by \$10 billion. It would make no changes whatsoever to Social Security.

Adding those numbers together, the Democrats would reduce entitlement spending by only \$56 billion over the next 10 years or by 0.2 percent. That is the yellow bar, if you can see it, right here on the chart. You heard that right, Madam President. The budget resolution before us would reduce entitlement spending by two-tenths of 1 percent over the 10-year budget window.

Here is the Murray entitlement spending versus the baseline. If you look at this next chart, you can see the path in entitlement spending over the next 10 years in blue. It is the upper line here. That is Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security spending, all combined, with no changes to our budget. The Murray budget spending path for entitlements is in red. It is this little sliver right here. That is the Murray budget. See the difference? The answer, of course, is that you cannot. Put simply, this budget ignores our unsustainable entitlement spending and allows it to continue on a path that will bankrupt these programs.

The Democratic majority has opted to continue to look the other way as our entitlement programs collapse under their own weight. This is simply irresponsible, and it is an insult to middle-class Americans who rely on these programs and want to keep them protected.

In January 2009, President Obama, when speaking on entitlements, said:

... what we have done is kick this can down the road. We're now at the end of the road, and we're not in a position to kick it even further.

With this budget, the Democrats are refusing to even acknowledge that there is even a can that needs to be kicked. The budget doesn't even pay lipservice to the need for reforms in our entitlement spending. It ignores the problem entirely.

Indeed, if you read the documents accompanying this resolution, you will find nothing even suggesting there are any problems with these programs. Instead, you will find a multitude of statements accusing Republicans of wanting to "weaken" Social Security, "dismantle Medicare," or make "Draconian cuts to Medicaid."

There is a lot of talk about keeping promises but literally no mention of

how these promises can or will be paid for. And there is no recognition that this budget sets in place benefit cuts of over 20 percent for disabled American workers in a few short years, while watching other threads of the social safety net fray as trust funds become exhausted. Anyone supporting this budget will be sending a clear message to younger generations of Americans, which is that they don't really care whether the safety net will be there for them.

This budget is further evidence of what has become a key difference between Republicans and Democrats. Over the last 2 years, Republicans have united around the principle of entitlement reform. We put forward plans that make tough, and sometimes politically difficult, decisions in order to preserve programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security for future generations. Republicans haven't chosen this path out of political convenience, that is for sure. This is simply what the reality of our fiscal situation demands. Rather than acknowledging this same reality, Democrats have opted to attack and vilify any Republican who even suggests that changes to these programs are necessary. They have continued the same talking points of the past, claiming that all of our Nation's fiscal problems can be solved simply by asking the so-called rich to pay a little more in taxes. All the while, according to Democrats, there do not need to be any substantive changes to entitlements. They have pursued this course even as our debts continue to mount along with the evidence that suggests their approach simply is not working.

The budget we are debating this week is proof not only that the Democrats are more interested in politics than solutions but also that their policies simply won't work in the real world. This budget would do all the things Democrats say they want to do to grow the government. It would raise taxes by as much as \$1.5 trillion. And, once again, it would leave Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security just as they are. Yet, in the end, this budget never balances.

Under this budget, our Nation's debt would continue to grow, making it more difficult to respond to real crises or emergencies in the future. In the end, our entitlement programs would continue on their path to bankruptcy, and we would end up with an even bigger government that we cannot pay for.

The Washington Post editorial page, not typically known for being overly critical of the Democrats' policies, assessed this budget, saying:

Partisan in tone, and complacent in substance, [the budget] scores points against Republicans and reassures the party's liberal base—but deepens these senators' commitment to an unsustainable policy agenda.

The editorial concluded by saying that this budget

... gives voters no reason to believe that Democrats have a viable plan for—or even a

responsible public assessment of—the country's long-term fiscal predicament.

I couldn't have said it better myself. The American people have waited for over 4 years for the Senate Democrats to produce a budget. After all that time, we now finally have on paper their blueprint for America's future. Unfortunately for the American people, the blueprint does not address our Nation's most pressing fiscal challenges. Instead, it would continue an unsustainable status quo in terms of both policy and politics. This budget will not grow the economy and jobs; it will grow the Federal Government. This budget will never attain balance; it just taxes more and spends more. This budget will not reduce our debt; it buries the middle class even further in debt. This budget will not preserve the safety net for future generations; it allows entitlement programs to perish.

That being the case, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to reject this budget and demand a more responsible plan for our country. We need to do better around here.

Admittedly, we need to have both parties working together. We used to do that. I used to be part of that; I wouldn't mind being part of that again. But we have got to find some way of getting together and getting these fiscal problems under control. We can't continue to grow the Federal Government, and we can't continue to ignore the structural defects of Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare that are eating us alive and are going to really eat us alive over the next 10 years, and there isn't a thing in this budget that does anything to solve this problem.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MIKULSKI. 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. MIKULSKI. Madam President, we are waiting for the two party conferences to conclude and for the majority leader to come to the floor and kind of talk about the path forward. Let me outline the pending business here.

We are now continuing the 30 hours mandated under cloture on the continuing funding resolution. Other Senators have come to the floor and spoken quite passionately about the budget that Senator MURRAY and Senator SESSIONS have worked on. I am eager to get to that discussion, too, because it will be about the fiscal funding for 2014 and the path ahead.

The way we get to the budget is to finish the bill I have pending. The methodology for getting to that is for yielding back the 30 hours. So if you want to get to the budget—which I really want to—let's yield back the time under the 30 hours. Right now it is scheduled to expire sometime after

midnight. We can talk about talk, we can talk about bills, or we can actually move expeditiously to conclude the continuing funding resolution. Because, remember, when we finish our business on the continuing funding resolution, it must return to the House for them to say yea or nay to our substitute which we are sending back.

I know we are waiting for the leaders to come. We have had great cooperation on both sides of the aisle. I am very appreciative of the cooperation I have received within the Democratic caucus and the cooperation from the other side, which we too have done. But if you want to get to the budget, let's yield back time on the continuing funding resolution.

I know the Democratic leadership will be here momentarily and others are waiting for what the leader has to say. In the meantime, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. AYOTTE. 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. AYOTTE. Madam President, I rise today to address some comments that were made. I came to the floor earlier to talk about \$380 million of funding for the MEADS Program, which is the missile to nowhere. I sought, and continue to seek, to offer an amendment to the continuing resolution and the appropriations bill before the Senate right now to strike that funding, and then to transfer the funding from this missile to nowhere to the operations and maintenance fund so that our troops can use the money for important needs they have, especially in light of sequestration.

My colleague from Illinois, Senator DURBIN—for whom I certainly have great respect—came to the floor earlier to counter what I had to say. In fact, the Senator from Illinois said essentially that the U.S. taxpayers have truly invested in this program, and he suggested that if we were to cancel funding for this missile to nowhere, we would be incurring damages, or that our allies who have entered into this MEADS Program with us—under the agreements we have entered into, our allies—in particular the Germans and the Italians—would be able to seek damages from us, so, therefore, we would incur damage costs by terminating it.

I want to point out, first of all, not just in my view, this is wrong based on the plain language of the memorandum of understanding we have with our allies.

In fact, I go back to first-year contracts class in law school. When you have an agreement with someone, you start with the language of your agreement and the language of the contract. The language of the contract of the

memorandum of understanding we have on the MEADS Program in 2005 with Germany and Italy says very clearly:

The responsibilities of the participants will be subject to the availability of funds appropriated for such purposes.

So a first-year contract student would know that if we do not appropriate funds for the missile to nowhere, then we will not have legal obligations to our allies. In fact, that is essentially what the Department of Defense said to us when they wrote in a report to Congress about this with regard to the 2013 funding.

Please understand the history of this. In 2012, in the Defense authorization, the defense committee said very clearly: This is it. We are not going to fund a program anymore that is not going to get us a result. We are not going to waste taxpayer dollars anymore. So understand, this is the end of our obligation.

As a result, the Department of Defense said clearly to the Senate Armed Services Committee:

[I]f Congress does not appropriate FY 2013 funding, the U.S. DOD [Department of Defense] would take the position that the FY 2012 funds represent the U.S. DOD's final financial contribution under the MOU. The U.S. DOD would also take the position that failure to provide FY 2013 funding would not be a unilateral withdrawal from the MOU . . .

So contracts 101, very clearly, if we cut off the appropriations for the missile to nowhere and make sure that this fund goes to actually something our warfighters need and can use, we will not be subject to a claim by our allies because we expressly protected the taxpayers in the 2005 MOU that was entered into.

In addition, I will say that there is another portion of the agreement itself. Section 5 of the 2005 MOU states that our maximum commitment from the United States had to be \$2.3 billion. Yet between 2004 and 2011, we have already spent \$2.9 billion on a missile to nowhere that we are not going to get a result from. So not only do we have no responsibility because we clearly put in that if we did not appropriate for this, then we would not have further responsibilities under the MOU, but in addition to that, we have already paid \$2.9 billion, and the MOU says our responsibility is only \$2.3 billion.

So I come to the Senate today to say, with great respect to my colleague from Illinois, his claim that somehow terminating this contract is going to subject the United States to damages is wrong and is not supported by the plain language of the agreement, and we should not continue to fund a missile to nowhere.

I will end with this. If you look at the history of this MEADS Program, what has happened? The House Armed Services Committee said in 2013—excuse me, the 2013 authorization: End funding for this program—zero. The Senate Armed Services Committee

said: End funding for this program. It is a missile to nowhere. Zero. The House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee said: End funding for this; We are not going to appropriate for this. Zero.

The only committee that has appropriated for this is the Senate Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations, and if we stop that appropriation, we can end the missile to nowhere. That is what my amendment is about. That is why I hope we will have an amendment and a right to be heard on the continuing resolution. I wish to make sure money goes into the operations and maintenance fund so it can be used for our troop needs during a difficult time in addressing sequestration.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, yesterday the Senate invoked cloture on the appropriations bill we have been working on for several weeks. Now what we are doing is burning, wasting 30 hours postcloture. During the postcloture time, each Senator has the right to speak for 1 hour. It is obvious there are 100 of us, so we all can't speak. Senators who do not like the bill and want to express their views as to why it is a bad bill, they get 1 hour.

This is truly a waste of time. It always is a waste of time, but it is a waste of time now because we have so much important work to do. Next in line is the budget resolution. We have heard speeches over here. Oh, gee, have we heard speeches. We need the Democrats to do a budget. No one mentions, but that is OK—no one mentions we did not have a budget resolution; we had President Obama sign a law that took care of our budget problems. But we want to satisfy the Republicans and we want to get to that budget debate.

I talked this morning about what a terrific job Chairman MURRAY has done on this bill. It has been outstanding. But the budget is here by virtue of a law that was passed. There is 50 hours permitted for debate on the budget. Then we can have a lot of amendments after all debate time is over.

Republicans said let's do the budget debate and we say let us do it. Why should we sit around here and look at each other and do nothing? My friend, the ranking member of the Budget Committee, the junior Senator from Alabama, said let's do it after Easter. We are going to do this. We are going to do this before we go home for Easter. If we want to use the whole 60 hours, we will start the debate on the budget sometime Thursday morning and we will have 50 hours and a lot of votes. If that is what they want to do, we can do that, but why put the Senate through that? Why put the Senate through wasting 60 hours?

I wish to make clear to all Senators that we are going to continue working on this, the CR and the budget resolution, until we complete them. When we come back, we have lots of stuff to do.

We have gun legislation. We have the WRDA bill, which I am told is going to be reported out of that committee, Environment and Public Works, on a bipartisan basis led by Senators BOXER and VITTER.

That is a strange, unusual marriage, but I am happy to hear that. It is an important bill.

We have to do immigration. We have to do appropriations bills. We have a lot to do. The Senate will not leave—the third time I am telling everyone here—for Easter-Passover recess until we complete the budget. If that means because of the delay in this bill we wasted 60 hours, we will be voting here Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday—whenever we have to do it. My hope would be that we can complete this appropriations measure and move on to the budget resolution this afternoon. But the least we should be able to do is begin debate on the budget. The least we should be able to do is the debate. We have been through these lots of times, some of us, and a budget.

During the first 50 hours, not much is going to happen unless there is an agreement that the time for voting will not be counted against 50 hours. If there is no agreement there, there will be no amendments. What I would like to do is have amendments offered during the 50 hours and have whatever the time is for voting, which is usually 10 or 15, sometimes 20 minutes, that will be counted against the 50 hours. But if we do not do that, then what we will have is just 50 hours of PATTY MURRAY and JEFF SESSIONS talking to each other and whoever wants to join in the conversation.

I hope we can begin debate on this. I have a couple unanimous consent requests. I have alerted the Republicans I would be doing this.

I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding cloture having been invoked on the Mikulski-Shelby substitute, the following amendments be in order: Mikulski-Shelby No. 98, as modified with the changes that are at the desk; and Pryor-Blunt No. 82, this deals with food inspectors, meat inspectors, an important amendment that these two Senators feel strongly about as do a number of us; that no other first-degree amendments to the substitute or the underlying bill be in order; that no second-degree amendments be in order to any of the amendments listed above prior to the vote; and that there be 30 minutes equally divided between the two leaders or their designees prior to votes in relation to the amendments in the order listed; that upon disposition of the Pryor-Blunt amendment No. 82, the Durbin second-degree amendment to the Toomey amendment be withdrawn—that is amendment No. 115; that the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the Toomey amendment, No. 115; that all amendments, with the exception of the substitute, be subject to a 60-affirmative-vote threshold; and upon disposition of the Toomey amendment, the Senate proceed to vote on

the Mikulski-Shelby substitute amendment, as amended; that if the substitute amendment, as amended, is agreed to, the cloture motion on the underlying bill is withdrawn and the Senate proceed to vote on passage of the bill as amended.

That is my request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MORAN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

Mr. MORAN. Let me ask the majority leader if the two amendments listed in his unanimous consent, No. 98 and No. 82, are considered, then following that we would move to final action on the bill—on the substitute as potentially amended; is that accurate?

Mr. REID. That is correct.

Mr. MORAN. While I am not opposed, certainly, to the Pryor-Blunt amendment—I am a sponsor of that amendment—because that would then waive the 30 hours and move to final action, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. I have objected to the unanimous consent request, and in addition to my concern that while there are amendments that are fine with me if they are made pending and brought before the floor for a vote, I would object because we would move to final action; but I also would object because the amendment I have offered in regard to control towers is not included in the unanimous consent request.

Mr. REID. I am glad the Senator clarified that because it sounded as if he did not have an objection to this, and I was going to say he could still have his 30 hours, but I got his objection.

I ask unanimous consent notwithstanding cloture having been invoked, at 4 o'clock today it be in order for the Senate to begin consideration of S. Con. Res. 8, the budget resolution for fiscal year 2014; that any time used for consideration of S. Con. Res. 8 during the postcloture period on H.R. 933 also count toward postcloture time on H.R. 933; further, that on Tuesday, March 19, at a time to be determined by the majority leader after consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 933.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I object.

Mr. REID. Madam President, this is one of the amazements of the American people. There is nothing—nothing going to happen during how many hours is left in the 30 hours—nothing. Why, logically, would anyone have an objection to going ahead with the budget resolution? We are looking at each other—not very often, because nobody is on the floor. It is things such as this that are going to cause the Senate to have to reassess all these rules.

Right now we accomplish so little. I am disappointed in my friend, for whom I have the greatest respect, my friend from Kansas, whom I know and knew in the House very well. He is a fine person. I like him a lot. I know how strongly he feels about this. But strong positive or negative feelings should not stop the progress of what we are trying to do to help the country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, it will not be long—of course it might be longer than it appears to be, but at least this week we were supposed to be considering the budget resolution and hopefully before the week is out we will. It has been 4 years since the Senate has passed a budget. The Senate deficit majority has been devoid of leadership on this matter. While American families and businesses compile a budget each and every year, the Senate deficit majority has shirked its responsibility, producing a budget has even been called “foolish,” by the Democratic majority leader.

After years of record deficits and debt, I think the American people disagree with the fact that the Senate has not taken up a budget for the last 3 years, even though the law requires every year for the Senate to adopt a budget. Thankfully, this year it looks as if we are going to have this debate and adopt a budget.

While we are about to debate a budget resolution, a few hours or a few days away, the President has not even proposed his budget for consideration. The Budget Committee, of which I am a member, did not hear from a single administration witness in preparation of this budget that the Senate will be working on. That is a new historical low, for which the Obama administration can take credit. House Budget Chairman RYAN has produced a budget. Chairwoman MURRAY produced a budget. It is quite remarkable that the President has yet to submit a budget, even though the law requires it be done by February 4.

The President plans to release his budget the week of April 8, 2 months overdue. This will be the first time a President has failed to submit a budget until after the House and the Senate have acted.

Once again, on fiscal issues, the President is leading from behind. He set a new low for fiscal responsibility. During the past 4 years, we spent well beyond our means. The gross Federal debt has increased by \$6 trillion as a result. Unless we change course, we will add another \$9 trillion over the next 10 years. The gross debt is now and maybe by then will still be larger than the U.S. economy. It is approaching levels where economists agree deficits and debts are causing slower economic growth.

During the past 4 years, we witnessed President Obama's theory of economic stimulus. We saw massive expansion of government and deficit spending.

President Obama and the Democratic leadership in Congress pushed spending up to 25 percent of the economy in recent years and an \$800 billion stimulus bill was a big part of that. That bill was pushed through in the name of economic growth. It was supposed to keep unemployment below 8 percent. It did not keep unemployment below 8 percent because, in fact, the legislation written was more an appropriations bill than a stimulus bill.

It didn't create the sustainable job growth it was supposed to. It was one big ineffective spending bill. The economic growth it was supposed to stimulate never materialized. Now we are dealing with a deficit and debt caused by that failed stimulus bill.

Despite this failure, the President and the Senate deficit majority seem even more fixated on growing the government. According to the economic policies of President Obama, the government needs to grow even bigger to help our economy. It is not going to work. The overriding belief of the administration is that economic growth will only come through private wealth confiscation that supports an even bigger and more intrusive government.

If government just gets a little bigger and a little more involved in every facet of our economy and of our lives, that will surely increase the economic prosperity of Americans, right? Of course not. The problem is raising taxes only extracts private capital from job creators and small businesses. Small businesses happen to be where 70 percent of the new jobs are created. So if we want to create new jobs, why would we take capital out of a sector where job creation can occur and bring it to the government where it is spent wastefully by often inefficient and bloated bureaucracies? The higher taxes are robbing the unemployed of needed jobs. The government they support does not create economic growth or self-sustaining jobs.

This 4-year spending binge we have been on has led to deficits that crowd out private investment which would otherwise be used to grow the economy and create jobs. The government doesn't create self-sustaining jobs; the government only creates government jobs. The private sector creates jobs. Wealth is created in the private sector. It is the responsibility of the government to create an environment for job growth and opportunity—opportunity for entrepreneurs who then create jobs.

Instead of raising taxes, what this country needs is more taxpayers. We get more taxpayers by reducing the unemployment, and we do that by keeping money in the private sector. Besides that, the government can provide this environment by instituting the rule of law, protecting property rights and a patent system. There are many other things I could probably mention as well. The government consumes wealth. It does not create wealth through economic freedom. Entrepreneurs and individuals are free to innovate and prosper.

This budget fails to recognize these simple principles. The budget presented by the deficit majority makes no effort to reduce the deficits, reduce spending, balance the budget, or grow the economy. Instead, this budget seeks to grow government by taxing more and spending more. It is time we all recognize that government exists to serve the needs of the people rather than people serving the needs of their government. There are some who believe government is the only creator of economic prosperity. If others have achieved success, by default they must be the cause of others' hardships. This type of class warfare—demagoguery, as it is—is harmful to America and our future. It seeks to divide America.

The budget presented by the deficit majority is partisan business as usual. It would tax success by adding another \$1 trillion. It increases government spending, it ignores the subject of our health care entitlements, and this whole approach is simply not good for advancing America's economy. It places no priority on ever bringing our budget into balance. The deficit majority speaks at length about growing the economy and creating a middle class. Their budget is perfectly backward. It does nothing to address economically harmful deficits and debt or the drag it creates on the economy, and it includes as much as \$1.5 trillion in job-killing tax hikes.

The majority claims this revenue can be collected without harming the economy by closing loopholes. The fact is that regardless of how it is described, a \$1.5 trillion tax increase will affect the middle class, harm the economy, and not create jobs. A \$1.5 trillion tax hike—while economic growth is slow and unemployment remains at 7.7 percent—is a reckless formula and will further devastate the economy. Even worse, the tax increases will not be used to balance the budget. Higher taxes support even higher spending.

This is a typical tax-and-spend budget. This budget was crafted as if we don't even have a spending problem or a debt crisis. This budget assumes everything is just fine and everything will work out if we simply proceed forward on the current path of tax and spend. This budget represents a missed opportunity. Don't take my word for it. Editorial writers across the country have made similar statements about this budget.

A Washington Post editorial called it a complacent budget plan. They wrote that the majority budget fails to recognize the long-term fiscal problems:

Partisan in tone and complacent in substance, it scores points against Republicans and reassures the party's liberal base—but deepens these senators' commitments to an unsustainable policy agenda.

In short, this document gives voters no reason to believe that Democrats have a viable plan for—or even a responsible public assessment of—the country's long-term fiscal predicament.

The Chicago Tribune had a similar description in their editorial. They described it as a deficit of ambition:

The Democrats, unfortunately, are feigning fiscal responsibility instead of practicing it. What is needed is a lot more ambition than the Murray plan reflects.

If Democrats don't like the Republican plan for balancing the budget, they should produce their own.

Finally, a USA Today editorial referred to the budget as a namby-pamby budget that underwhelms at every turn:

The Murray budget neither balances the budget nor reins in entitlements. Its one-to-one ratio of spending to tax increases might sound balanced, but the spending cuts are not actual reductions. They are merely reductions in the expected rate of growth.

All this makes the Murray budget barely a Band-Aid.

And that one-to-one ratio that is quoted in the USA Today editorial reminds me—and let me explain this—of where they raise \$1 of taxes for \$1 of cuts, which reminds me of the President's own position on that which he stated just before the election in his meeting with the Des Moines Register editorial board and suggested that we raise taxes \$1 and cut expenditures \$2.50.

How do we go—just before the President is elected—from a \$2.50 reduction for every \$1 increase to a one-to-one ratio now? I hope when the President submits his budget on April 8 that he sticks to that ratio of \$2.50 to \$1.

I am sure we will hear the term “progrowth” applied to this budget when we hear from people speaking on the other side of the aisle. The only thing it can mean is growth in the size and scope of the Federal Government and growth in the national debt. We will also hear the term “balanced.” Please don't be fooled. The deficit majority is not speaking about a balanced budget. Their understanding of balance is higher taxes and higher spending.

This budget does not tackle runaway spending. It raises taxes, not to balance the budget but to spend more and more. This budget will grow the government, harm economic growth, and increase the debt. After 4 years of contemplating a budget resolution, I would have expected a more fiscally responsible budget. The American people deserve much better.

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

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. 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. LEAHY. Mr. President, what is the parliamentary situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is considering H.R. 933 postcloture.

Mr. LEAHY. Thank you.

Mr. President, I couldn't help but think, watching the debate, that it has been more than 2 weeks since we had

an all-too-familiar stalemate in Congress that prevented the passage of commonsense legislation. As a result, it triggered the across-the-board budget cuts better known as sequestration.

When these automatic budget cuts first became a possibility, everybody said that no Congress would be irresponsible enough to allow them to go into place. Well, in the weeks leading up to sequestration, we heard almost daily from Federal agencies, defense contractors, and Members from both sides of the aisle about how harmful these cuts would be.

Notwithstanding the talk about how ridiculous it is to let them go forward, the deadline for sequestration has come and gone. Now the focus appears not to be upon the wide swath of harm that is beginning to descend on communities across the Nation but instead on the closure of White House tours and whether we are going to have the Easter egg roll. Come on.

I hope the American public and I hope the press and everybody else will focus on how serious these cuts are. In fact, to simply accept and avoid fixing these indiscriminate and harmful cuts is irresponsible. They are slowly being implemented, and they have already begun to affect our States and communities.

I was up in Vermont this weekend for 3 days, and I was all over the State. Everywhere I went—just as I do every day—I heard from Vermonters about the consequences for their jobs, for their children, for their communities.

I have heard from Vermont families who have begun to plan for the furloughs that will hit their family budgets; through no fault of theirs—these are hard-working, honest Vermonters—but because Congress has failed to act.

I have heard from community organizations about the difficult decisions they will have to make in the weeks ahead. It should alarm everyone that reductions are expected, for example, in the number of children being served by Head Start.

I have heard from young scientists at the University of Vermont who have already been denied research grants because of sequestration.

Vermonters facing already high rents are facing a 7-year wait for section 8 housing assistance. Until the sequester is resolved, housing authorities in Vermont will not be granting any new rental vouchers, and hundreds of Vermonters are going to lose this vital lifeline.

To put it in reality, at my home in Vermont, overnight we had 8 or 9 inches of snow. During the next 24 hours, we had another 8 or 9 inches. Once it got past 15 inches, we actually had schools close. This is very unusual. But think of the people who do not have housing, what that is doing to them. It is an unfortunate, needless reality.

I have heard about the impact sequestration is having on our military families in Vermont, as some members

of the National Guard prepare for furloughs. These are Guard members who have been called up and are willing to serve in Iraq and Afghanistan, putting their lives on the line for America, but now they prepare for furloughs and reductions in staff who provide services to their families. Then we have the elimination of the Army tuition assistance program that serves veterans—a promise we made to our men and women in uniform when they were willing to stand up and go into combat for America.

These are the impacts felt in the small State of Vermont so far. We haven't yet seen the consequences for Vermont schools and how sequestration will affect students and teachers. We haven't yet felt the true impact on funding for the grants that support our law enforcement people, our job search assistance, the Meals on Wheels programs, or those programs that provide lifesaving vaccines.

Members have filed amendments to the spending bill we are currently debating to attempt to insulate and protect programs that impact their States most, but they want to do it at the cost of other States. We need to stop looking at how we can save just a single program and get back to the table and negotiate a sensible, balanced approach that addresses deficit reduction in a responsible way and not on the backs of the most vulnerable Americans. We cannot simply cut our way out of this deficit.

We created the situation partly by putting two wars on the Nation's credit card. This morning it was estimated that the war in Iraq is going to cost \$2 trillion. It is the first war in our Nation's history where we went to war and said: We don't have to pay for it. We will just borrow the money.

Vietnam and Korea were very unpopular wars. Yet we still passed the taxes to pay for them. In Iraq—although it is going to be over in a matter of weeks and we don't have to pay for it 10 years later—thousands of Americans were killed and wounded, to say nothing about our allies and tens of thousands—hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, and we are stuck with a \$2 trillion bill and growing, all on borrowed money.

The only people who pay the price in that war for America are the brave men and women who serve there and their families. They pay a huge price. We don't have a draft, so most families didn't get touched by it. Certainly a lot of people have made a lot of money on that war. They didn't pay a price. And the people, including people who were in the administration at the time who lied to the Congress about what was there—weapons of mass destruction, a connection with 9/11, things they knew were untrue—they simply lied about it, and we ended up having that war. There is \$2 trillion.

Do not tell me now—the same people who voted for that war—do not stand here and tell me how we have to take

the money out of medical research in America to pay for it, how we have to take the money out of educating our children to pay for it, how we have to take the money out of seniors who need help to pay for it, how we have to take the money out of repairing our bridges and roads in America to pay for it.

My answer to them is you voted for that; you should be willing to pay for it.

We have already reduced the debt by \$2.5 trillion, with the vast majority of those savings coming from spending cuts. The American people want and expect us to take a balanced approach. They know it is not wise to protect endless corporate loopholes and tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans instead of investing in our schools, our factories, our roads, and our workers.

I think of the billions of dollars we spend on roads and bridges, for example, in Iraq and Afghanistan. As one Vermonter said: Yes, we spend billions to build roads and bridges in Iraq and Afghanistan, and then they blow them up. Build them here in the United States—in Vermont or West Virginia or Oklahoma. We Americans will take good care of them.

There is a simple bottom line: Putting our fiscal house in order, which we should do, has to go hand in hand with targeted, commonsense steps to promote economic growth, create jobs, and strengthen the middle class—all things President Obama and Democrats in both Houses of Congress are eager to do. But we need some cooperation from the other side of the aisle. We need cooperation. Putting on mindless autopilot the crucial decisions about what should be our budget and growth priorities is a terrible and dishonest way to treat the American people. It is a recipe for economic dysfunction. It threatens tangible harm to millions of families and for communities across the Nation.

Difficult decisions are in front of us. Every single Member of the Senate should go back and read their campaign promise of: Oh, of course, I will face up to difficult questions. Really? We are stalled here. People want to filibuster rather than face difficult questions, but we have to face them. We cannot punt them. We in Congress need to put aside talking points and turn to the task of replacing these harmful autopilot cuts with sensible and balanced budget decisions. Instead of slogans, let's have some substance. The American people expect more from Congress, and they certainly deserve a lot more from Congress.

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

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 15 minutes.

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the important budget debate we will have this week here in the Senate. We hope to get on that soon. We are disposing of some of last-year's budget work before that. But I think this is an important moment for the Senate because it has been 4 years since we did this; 2009 was the last time the Senate acted on a budget. During the time which has lapsed, we have added \$6 trillion to our national debt. I would like to think as we get into this budget debate, we could do something about that. Unfortunately, the budget that is going to be put before us by the Senate Democrats doesn't do anything to address the debt.

I think perhaps the reason we are finally doing a budget here is because there was a No Budget No Pay Act passed earlier this year which required that a budget be passed. It was moved by the House of Representatives and drew attention to the fact that the Senate hadn't for 4 years done a budget, and suggested that before the Senate get paid, it actually ought to do its work and pass a budget. So we are here now for the first time in 4 years.

Unfortunately, the budget that has been proposed by the chair of the Senate Budget Committee fails to balance the budget and instead means more taxes, more spending, and more debt. That is a formula we have heard before.

If you look at the last several years, we have added \$6 trillion of debt since President Obama took office. We have seen tax increases already of about \$1.7 trillion if you combine the tax increases associated January 1 with the fiscal cliff, and then couple that with the tax increases that were included in the President's health care bill—\$1.7 trillion in new taxes, \$6 trillion in new debt, a runup in spending unlike anything we have seen in recent history. So you would think, given the fact that we have seen debt, spending, and taxes go up over the past several years, we would actually get a budget that is finally focused not on growing the government but on growing the economy. But the Senate Democratic budget does exactly that—it grows the government, not the economy.

Their proposal contains more of the same big spending and big government policies that have led to a dismal average economic growth rate of just eight-tenths of 1 percent over the past 4 years. That has been the economic growth on average for the first 4 years of President Obama's first term, eight-tenths of 1 percent. Less than 1 percent is what the economy has grown over that time period.

A better approach when it comes to putting forward a budget would be to advance a budget that actually is focused on growing the economy, not the

government. Over the next few days we are going to have an opportunity to debate and improve this budget proposal on the Senate floor. I look forward to that debate.

As it stands today, the Senate Democrats' budget increases spending by 62 percent over the next decade; it raises taxes by \$1.5 trillion—and that is in addition to the \$1.7 trillion in tax increases we have already seen enacted under President Obama. Even with the enormous tax increase, the Senate Democrats' budget would result in \$7.3 trillion in new debt over the next decade. So you have a 62-percent increase in spending, you have \$1.5 trillion in new taxes, and a \$7.3 trillion debt, in addition to the debt we hand down to our children and grandchildren.

The amazing thing about that, even with this enormous tax increase, is the budget would never balance, which begs the question: What is balanced about a budget that never balances?

You hear the Democrats come here on the floor of the Senate and talk about, We need a balanced approach. The President of the United States gets up all the time and talks about, We need a balanced approach. What is balanced about a budget that never balances? That is a fundamental question I would expect the American people to ask.

In contrast, the House Republicans will be enacting a budget this week through the House of Representatives. Hopefully, eventually something like it will get enacted. But it balances in 10 years. I think 10 years is a responsible, reasonable timeline to achieve a balanced budget, and I think most Americans who balance their budgets month in and month out would agree with that proposition.

The budget put forward by Senate Democrats also fails to target waste, fraud, and inefficiencies across the Federal Government. For each of the past 2 years, the Government Accountability Office has outlined hundreds of billions of dollars of wasteful and duplicative spending throughout the Federal Government. The Federal Government is a \$3.6 trillion enterprise, and there is plenty of waste to target and reform—low-hanging fruit most would agree is a complete waste of taxpayer dollars—but Senate Democrats have failed even to make an attempt at reining in this waste with their budget plan.

Budgets are a reflection of values. As Vice President BIDEN once said:

Show me your budget, and I will tell you what you value.

It seems from the Senate Democrats' budget that they value the same big spending and big government policies of the past 4 years that have prolonged this period of slow economic growth and high unemployment.

In contrast, the budget proposed by the Republicans in the House would balance the budget in 10 years—again, something I believe we ought to be able to do—and it grows the economy. It

starts by cutting wasteful spending, which is not an extreme proposition and something we ought to be able to do.

The House Republican budget also reforms our broken Tax Code to promote economic growth, which will mean more jobs, better pay, and more opportunities for hard-working Americans and middle-class families.

The House budget also recognizes that if Washington fails to take action, Medicare and Social Security are headed toward bankruptcy in the not too distant future.

I commend my colleagues in the House for the vote that they will have this week, and for recognizing that reality, that our seniors across this country and those who are nearing retirement age and those of younger generations of Americans are not going to be protected when it comes to the programs that someday they will rely upon if we don't make the changes and the reforms that are necessary to align those programs with the present and future demographics of this country. So the House budget strengthens those priorities.

The budget debate for fiscal year 2014 that we are going to have on the Senate floor this week presents an opportunity, an opportunity to solve our fiscal challenges, to move past the job-destroying policies of the past few years, and to grow the economy.

As I said earlier, average economic growth under this President has been 0.8 percent—eight-tenths of 1 percent—of the overall share of the economy. This is a reflection of the negative impacts high levels of spending and high annual deficits have had during President Obama's tenure.

Unfortunately, the proposal that will be before the Senate this week only continues and doubles down on those policies. In fact, there is evidence this is the opposite of what we should be doing.

Harvard Professors Alberto Alesina and Sylvia Ardagna have studied economies around the world and various fiscal adjustments that have taken place in some of these countries. They found targeted spending cuts have led to economic expansions, while tax increases have been recessionary.

According to these Harvard economists:

Spending cuts have a positive effect on private investment while increases to taxes . . . hurt investment through the labor market and firms' profitability.

The evidence is there. Growing the government will not solve our economic challenges. If that were true, we would have a much stronger economy today, because with the massive health care plan that passed a few years ago, with the trillion-dollar stimulus program that was put into place early on during the President's first term, and all the additional runup in discretionary spending that we have seen, we still have slow growth, high unemployment, massive amounts of debt, and

many Americans who are struggling with their own personal economies and lower take-home pay.

The focus should be on growing our economy. That starts with passing a budget that cuts spending and reforms the Tax Code in a way that promotes economic growth.

Again, I believe there is a better approach out there. The House of Representatives has put forth one. It is unfortunate that the Senate Democratic budget fails to address the long-term spending and economic problems facing this country and, instead, focuses once again on growing government.

In fact, the Washington Post editorial board had this to say of the Democrats' budget proposal:

In short, this document gives voters no reason to believe that Democrats have a viable plan—or even a responsible public assessment of—the country's long-term fiscal predicament.

Failure to act and solve our fiscal challenges could result in another damaging credit downgrade, thanks to the out-of-control spending, and such a downgrade would have a very negative effect on the American people. A credit downgrade would drive up interest rates across the board on everything from student loans to home mortgages. That means it would be more expensive to buy a home or a car, to send a child to college, or to pay down personal debt.

So as we get ready to debate the majority's proposed budget for fiscal year 2014 on the floor this week, I hope the Senate will take an honest look at the relationship between spending and economic growth. We need to put the Federal Government on a stable fiscal path in order to create the kind of economic certainty and the economic conditions we need to grow our economy and to create jobs.

The majority's budget goes in the opposite direction. It grows government instead of growing the economy. We need to be talking about a budget here in the Senate whose primary focus is to grow the economy, not to grow the government.

So this will give us a chance over the course of the next few days to present two very different visions for the future of this country: one that is based upon higher spending, higher taxes, more debt, and one that is focused on putting in place a responsible spending plan that protects and saves important programs such as Social Security and Medicare, that reforms our Tax Code in a way that encourages and promotes economic growth, and that puts policies in place that will actually get this economy growing and expanding again, get more Americans back to work, and increase the standard of living and the quality of life for future generations of Americans.

We can't do that if we can continue to borrow and spend like there is no tomorrow, and that is precisely what the Democrats' budget would do.

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. BEGICH. 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. BEGICH. Mr. President, I was not planning to come down here. I was at several meetings. As we all have in our offices, I have the screen view of the floor to figure out what action might be occurring or not occurring. I kept looking. The floor was empty. The floor was empty. And I know that earlier this afternoon, the majority leader asked that we get on the budget so it is not an empty zone here.

I know people sitting up there behind me are wondering what is happening. What is happening is, the way these procedures work, which are ridiculous, you sit around and burn up time, let the clock just tick, tick, with no action because for some reason some people think this is strategic. It is not. It is what people are fed up with in this country.

The leader came down and said: Let's get on with the budget. I come down, it seems every day or so, and see the charts of how many days the budget hasn't passed or how many days we have not had a budget. Here we come and offer to get onto the budget, and the other side objects. It is probably the most frustrating thing for me to see and for my constituents to see in the conference room.

They say: What is happening on the floor?

And I have to say: Nothing, because they are not allowing us to get to the budget.

They complained for the last 2½ or 3 years, we never get to a budget. Here we have a chance. The budget will have lots of amendments and a lot of debate. Some have said: Let's wait until after Easter. I am not waiting until after Easter. I know it is tough for people because they want to get back and fundraise and all the other stuff they do, but, you know what? They wanted us to get to the budget, and we are ready to get to the budget. Let's get to the budget and have this debate.

But here we are. The camera is on me, one person, but the room is empty. It is amazing. The people behind me, quietly sitting up there observing because they are not allowed to say anything, are wondering what is going on, as are many of my constituents.

As a former member of the Budget Committee, I can tell you budgets are not easy. This budget—it doesn't matter where you may be on it—starts to cut the budget, starts reducing the deficit, and starts dealing with it. I am happy to debate it. I am not sure where I am going to be at the end of the day on this budget, but I am happy to debate it. Anytime today would be good. But instead, what people want to do, through a parliamentary procedure, is

just burn off hours. So people sit around waiting for the time to end. Then we come down and debate.

Mr. President, I know you are new. I am kind of new but not as new as you are, and it is probably what you hear back home, as I still do today, the frustration level at how this place operates. Here we are. We had a chance earlier this morning—earlier this afternoon to move forward on the budget, and they objected because they didn't want the two times between the CR and the budget—I know this is a little process thing, a little wonky—to simultaneously run. The fact is, we could have done that because obviously they care so much about the budget? They are not down here.

Maybe if we get to the budget, they would come down and talk about their objections, as I have. I said publicly that I am going to look at the budget that has come forward. I want to make sure there are enough cuts in there, make sure they are real cuts that last a long time because we have to get this budget under control, this deficit under control. We want to make sure we continue to move this economy forward with the right kind of sustainable budget over the long haul. I am happy to debate it. I am looking forward to it. My poor staff didn't know I was coming down here, and I said I am coming down anyway and walked down the hall and got frustrated because we could be doing this.

Here is what is going to happen. I can see it already. Come Thursday, we will be in a mad dash around here, turning around, working double time—which is fine—rushing amendments. Instead, we could have a deliberative process right now—right now on the budget. That is what we should be doing. That is what the American people want. That is what Alaskans tell me every day: Debate it and debate the issues.

I am anxious. Maybe we will ask again to get consent by the other side to get on with the budget, but they have already objected to that. I am shocked. I think the American people would be shocked. But no one is down here, so it is hard not to be shocked when there is no debate.

I wanted to come down here in a little bit of frustration and make my point heard, that we have a chance—we could have had a chance earlier today to start this budget debate. We did not. Now we are just waiting for the clock to tick. It is really somewhat embarrassing, as someone said in the Senate, that I came here to get stuff done, not to sit around waiting for time to run out because people want to use the process to drag on their political desires rather than what we should be doing here: getting on with getting this economy moving, making sure jobs are created, and doing everything we can to get the budget under control and make sure the long-term sustainability of the government continues.

I thank the Chair for the indulgence, allowing me a couple of minutes down

here to maybe rant and complain about a process that I thought was going to start at 2:30—and yet nothing. My guess is that they will not consent. They will burn the time. The American people will get frustrated. Then we will finally get into the debate, it will be rushed instead of having a long, good, positive deliberation.

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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WARREN). The Senator from Washington.

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

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

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, Republicans have spent the last 2 years attacking Democrats for "not bringing up a budget resolution in the Senate," despite the fact—I would add—that we had the Budget Control Act which took the place of the budget and the fact that those attacks were not very persuasive to the American people. Nonetheless, Republicans invested a lot of time, energy, and money pushing for a budget for a very long time. They could not agree amongst themselves on a lot of things, but they at least agreed the Senate should pass a budget.

The Senate Budget Committee has now passed a progrowth budget resolution out of committee which was strongly supported by every Democrat and every Independent on the committee from the moderates to the progressives. They took a balanced approach that put jobs and the economy first. It tackles our debt and deficit responsibly and keeps the promises we all made to our seniors, families, and our communities.

Democrats know we are on the right side of this issue when it comes to policy. We know we are on the right side when it comes to what the American people want. We know our budget resolution reflects the values and priorities of the vast majority of the American people, and we are looking forward to a debate. We are confident that when we lay out our balanced and responsible approach and the House lays out their extreme approach—which actually doubles down on the failed and rejected policies of the past—the contrast will be clear and the American people will continue to stand with us as we work toward a balanced and bipartisan deal.

The reason I am here is because I am so disappointed we cannot start this debate and move the process so we can offer amendments and get going. This is an issue the American people want to hear about and deserve to hear about. Senators should be able to come to the floor so they can debate and offer amendments. Based on what I heard from Republicans over the last 2 years, I thought they wanted this debate too.

So I am kind of surprised we are here running the clock on a continuing resolution. There is no one out here, no one talking, and we are twiddling our thumbs waiting for the clock to run out on time. We could be here having the debate the Republicans called on us to have so we can move it forward. We could do it tonight, tomorrow, Thursday, and probably be done by Thursday or Friday. Because of this delay, we now get to wait and watch the time run out until Thursday night.

We will be here Friday, Saturday, and Sunday doing this debate. I am sure our Republican colleagues will say: We should be doing this during the week when everybody is watching. We are here and ready to go. We want to have this debate. We want to have this discussion. I want to hear what they have to say. I would hope they want to hear what we have to say and then vote on a budget and move it out. But, no, we are here waiting, time running out, once again.

We are proud of our budget. We are ready to debate. I would hope our Republican colleagues would say: Yes, it is time to debate. Let's move this budget forward. We have been talking about it forever. Let's move this forward, and let's get this budget process going.

I am ready as chair of the Budget Committee. I know we as Democrats are ready to go. Let's yield back the time. Everyone knows what the end is going to be. Let's get it done. Let's get moving. Let's have the debate that is critically important to every family, every community, and to the future.

Thank you, Madam President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, let me thank the chair of the Budget Committee, my friend and colleague from the State of Washington, Senator MURRAY, for her remarks and, even more, for her excellent work on putting together a terrific budget. That may be the reason our colleagues want to delay.

For 4 years, they have had a great time saying: You don't have a budget. You don't have a budget.

It was perhaps the only thing they had to say because the actual confines of their budget are so far away from what the American people want, they couldn't get into the details. After all, nobody wants to end Medicare as we know it. Nobody, as in the Ryan budget, wants to reduce taxes dramatically on the wealthiest Americans—39 percent to 25 percent—and then take away deductions for middle-class people, good deductions that make sense, such as the mortgage deduction, the charitable deduction, the retirement deduction, and the health care deduction. No, no one wants to do that. And no one wants to eat our seed corn—cut money dramatically for things such as investment in education, in infrastructure, and in scientific research—in

order to cut taxes on the very wealthy or keep existing narrow loopholes open, deductions for moving businesses overseas, stuff for the oil companies. They don't want to debate that, I guess. But now we have a budget because of the leadership of the chair of the Budget Committee and the members of her committee.

By the way, this is not a small group of Democrats. It runs from our most liberal Members to our most conservative Members, all united around a budget that is fiscally responsible. It meets the Simpson-Bowles restraints, the budget targets, it invests in jobs and the economy, and it closes loopholes and preserves the middle class's ability to grow and proceed.

So we now are in this 30-hour thing. We could actually be debating a budget while those 30 hours tick by. We don't have to be sitting here doing nothing. One of our colleagues said he would like to debate the budget 2 weeks from now. Why is he putting things off? Well, I guess if I had their budget and looked at it compared to our budget, that is what I would want to do, but that is not fair and it is not right.

So I just came to the floor to join my colleague from Washington in pleading with our colleagues: Let's have a real debate on the budget. The lines are sharply drawn. Our budget and their budget contrast. Let the American people hear the debate and decide what they like. We are pretty confident they will like ours better. They no longer have the talking point that we don't have a budget. Instead, they are now preventing us from actually talking about our budget. It is not fair. It is not fair, and it doesn't really help the process.

I know there are some Members on the other side of the aisle who have some objections to the CR in certain areas. We are all hurt by the CR, by the way, I would say to my colleagues. If we want to get rid of things such as the horrible things that are happening in the air traffic towers, vote on our budget. We do not do sequestration. We undo sequestration, and it might pave the way to doing more things this year. But to sit here and let the clock tick makes no sense.

One thing I can tell my colleagues: I know my good friend HARRY REID, and we are not going to kick the budget can down the road for 2 weeks. We will be here, whether it has to be Saturday night and Monday and Tuesday. We will be here. So they may as well let us debate the budget. There is 50 hours. We can have a nice, full, open debate and then do our votes.

It is a logical request. I don't think there is any good argument against it. I haven't thought of one.

I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle—we would say, Mr. Republican leader, Mr. Republicans, let's debate the budget. Tear down the wall of not debating, and let us show our budget, you show yours, and let the American people decide.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I wish to add my words to those eloquently spoken by our Budget Committee chairman PATTY MURRAY and by one of our leaders here, the able Senator from New York, Mr. SCHUMER.

We have been waiting for hours and hours. I can only imagine what the public thinks when they look down on this floor and absolutely nothing is happening.

I came down here not knowing my friend and colleague was going to be here. I guess we both had the same sense of it, that we had to explain to the American people why this is happening. There is only one reason: Republicans are stalling and stalling and stalling and filibustering and filibustering and filibustering. But they are not doing a talking filibuster; they are just letting the clock tick. They are filibustering a very important bill to keep this government open. They say they want to keep the government open and they don't want to shut down, so why not get that vote done with?

Senator MIKULSKI has led us, in a beautiful way, with Senator SHELBY, in a very bipartisan fashion—let's vote on that bill, keep the government open, and, as Senator MIKULSKI said, show the country we can work together and get to the one thing the Republicans have been saying not for months but for years; that is, a budget.

The truth is, instead of doing a budget, we did the Budget Control Act, so of course we did a budget. As a matter of fact, the Budget Control Act was actually in many ways more specific than a budget.

But setting that aside, they went out on the campaign trail and attacked Democrats: Where is your budget? Where is your budget? Well, guess what. Under the able leadership of my friend from Washington Senator MURRAY, there is a budget, and it is well done, and it has strong deficit reduction and strong investments. It is balanced in a way the Ryan plan is not. It saves Medicare where he destroys it. It invests in education and infrastructure where he destroys that. His budget is a wrecking ball. Our budget, under the able leadership of Senator MURRAY, is an optimistic path to our future, not the pessimistic, painful plan Mr. RYAN put forward in the name of the Republican Party.

Now the people are witnessing a filibuster. It is possible that we could end it, but I will tell my colleagues this: We are trying for some friendship and comity across the aisle right now. We want to keep the government open.

The Senator from Kansas stood here last night and said the reason he is filibustering—he never used that word, but the reason he is insisting that we spend 30 more hours, 40 more hours, 50 more hours on this last year's business, which is last year's appropriations bill, is because he demands to have a vote

on his amendment, about which he feels very strongly. It has to do with making sure the sequester doesn't hit our air traffic control towers, meaning they can stay open. I agree with the Senator from Kansas; we should keep those air traffic control towers open. But I want to say to him—and maybe we have a chart here, if I can get to it—I want to say to my friend who isn't here who is leading the filibuster that this is where we are.

We want to restore those air traffic controllers. But I will tell my colleagues what I want to restore in addition to the air traffic controllers and the towers—he is right—I want to restore Head Start for 70,000 children. I want to restore 10,000 teacher jobs. I want to restore 7,200 special education teachers who are working with kids who desperately need help. I want to restore the title I funds that impact 1 million kids. I want to make sure we can conduct 424,000 HIV tests that are administered by the CDC. How does it make us a better country when people don't know if they are HIV positive and they spread that virus? How about the 25,000 breast and cervical cancer screenings that are not being done? These are the consequences of the sequester, in addition to the terrible consequences to the FAA.

I was here when the Republicans shut down the FAA, if my colleague remembers that. They shut it down, but suddenly they care about it. Good. I am glad they care about it. I care about it too. I haven't talked about the 804,000 outpatient visits to Indian health centers or 2,100 food inspections that are going to save lives. These are not happening because of sequester: 4 million meals served to seniors; 600,000 women and children who are not getting nutrition assistance because of sequester; national science grants cut, 1,000 of them; and \$902 million cut from loans to our small businesses, which are the job creators; and even 1,000 FBI agents and other law enforcement personnel.

So, yes, I say to my friend who is not here who is leading the filibuster, the Senator from Kansas—I hope he comes and shows up—I hear him. I feel the pain he feels for his State. I have a list I won't bore my colleagues with that just shows the cuts to my State. It is painful. But how do we solve it? Not by amendment after amendment after amendment on a must-pass bill that the House has said to keep simple or the government shuts down—not that way but by turning to the Democratic budget, where Senator MURRAY and colleagues on her committee have restored those cuts, and they have found other ways to cut, better ways to cut, sensible ways to cut.

So I call on my friends on the other side of the aisle: If you want to wait 10 hours, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80 hours, it is your call. We will be here. We will be here. But we are not going to put off the passage of the budget. It is too important. We will be here until it is done.

I yield back the remainder of my time. I thank my colleague Senator MURRAY so much for her leadership.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I wish to thank the Senator from California, the Senator from New York, and the Senator from Alaska, who was here just a short time ago expressing the same frustration.

We are ready to go. We have a budget, and we want to debate it. We believe, when the American public sees the values in our budget and what we are fighting for to make sure the middle class has an opportunity, that we balance our budget in a responsible way and work to manage our debt in a responsible way, that we can do that and build on the promise of hope that this country has always had, we are going to have a solid budget passed. We want to get started.

Where are our Republican colleagues on this empty floor? They are filibustering. They are counting down the hours so that sometime late Thursday night we can finish the continuing resolution after silence, silence, and more silence. It will pass. It has to pass. They all know that. We all know that. None of us love it, but we all recognize the situation we are in. We are ready to move to the budget tonight, tomorrow morning, have the debate, full and open, do the amendment process, or we are going to be doing it Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Fine with us. We are ready to do it.

But for all of our Republican colleagues who said we do not have a budget, we do have a budget. We are ready to debate it. We are ready to talk about it. We are proud of it. We are ready to go. I would just ask our Republican colleagues, yield back the time, vote the way we are going to vote—everybody knows how they are going to vote at this point—give us an opportunity to get on the budget and to move it forward in a responsible way because at the end of the day, the clock is ticking on our country as well. We have families who want to know whether they are going to be able to have the ability to send their kids to college or pay their mortgage. We have communities that want to know whether section 8 housing is going to be there for families who are struggling today. We have men and women in our military today who are wondering whether they are going to be furloughed. We have military hospitals that are telling soldiers who are coming home in the next few months that they may have to wait for appointments because of the furloughs that are taking place.

We are ready to move the budget. We are ready to get the country moving again. We are ready to get past this managing by crisis and shutdown and CRs and all these things and get back on the right path, but we cannot do it when there is a filibuster going on on the floor and we are not allowed to

bring up our budget for debate and we are sitting here ticking off the clock in an empty, silent Senate.

I urge our colleagues to allow us to move forward on this. We are ready to go.

I yield the floor and 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. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, all across America people are calling their cable providers and they are asking if they can get a refund for C-SPAN coverage of the Senate. There seems to be some concerns that there is no serious debate underway, no serious votes being taken, and the hours just continue to flow by.

I can understand the frustration of the American public watching this Chamber. We are going through a 30-hour interval. The Senate is kind of designed on 30-hour intervals, and this is the 30-hour interval before we enter the next 30-hour interval in the hopes that we will ultimately get to a vote. Does it have to be this way? Of course not. It should not be this way.

I understand the depth of feeling some Senators have about a variety of issues, and they have come to the floor to express them. In fact, I even agree with some of their positions. But there comes a point where you have to say: All right, I did not win my battle today. I am not going to get my day in court. Let's at least go on with the business of the Senate because, you see, we have an important responsibility ahead of us.

Senator MURRAY just spoke before me. She is chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. She has a Herculean task, and she is up to it. In fact, she has shown herself to be a very able leader of the Budget Committee in producing a budget proposal for the next fiscal year. It is a balanced proposal. It is one that I think is sensible.

I have some background in this, at least by way of avocation. Having been a member of the Simpson-Bowles Commission, I sat through a year of committee hearings and debates that led to a vote on a proposal to reduce the budget deficit. So I have heard some of the arguments that have been made on both sides. I then joined a bipartisan group of Senators, the so-called Gang of 8, and we sat down to try to do the same, and we spent over a year doing exactly that. So I kind of know where this comes down.

My approach to this—an approach that is being followed by Senator MURRAY with her proposed Democratic budget resolution—is, yes, the deficit is a serious problem, the debt of America is a serious problem. When you borrow 40 cents of every \$1 you spend, it is

unsustainable. So we have to deal with that issue and deal with it honestly. But first and foremost, let's do it in a fashion that builds the American economy, that creates good-paying jobs. If you want to find your way out of a deficit, put people to work first. When they are paying taxes as opposed to drawing benefits, that really tips the scales in the right direction in dealing with the deficit.

So what the Murray budget does, the Democratic budget resolution will do is make investments in what does produce jobs in America, and it is very obvious.

Education. Who is going to argue with that one? Is there a person standing in the Senate who did not rely on their own education and training to progress in life? And didn't you tell your son and daughter the same thing when they were making their life choices? Stay in school. Get a good education. So education is an investment. It is part of the Democratic budget resolution.

Secondly, the notion of research and innovation. One of the most heart-breaking parts of sequestration to me was when we took \$1.6 billion away from the National Institutes of Health. That is the organization that does the medical research to find new cures, new vaccines, new medical devices so people can survive when they have a diagnosis that could be fatal, to make sure children have a chance at a full life. We are cutting that in the name of budget deficit reduction, and that is troubling.

The third area is infrastructure. I spent the entire day with contractors from my State of Illinois, people who represent road builders, for example, bridge builders. They believe—and I do too—that investment in infrastructure pays off over generations. We just had a meeting on the waterway system, the Mississippi River, which is such an important part of national commerce. We need to improve the dams and the locks on the Mississippi and the adjoining rivers, such as the Illinois.

So the Murray budget deals with investments—investments to build the economy, investments to spark economic growth—but then it goes on to seriously reduce the deficit. The goal in this, of course, is to not only meet but surpass the goal of the Simpson-Bowles budget commission in terms of deficit reduction. The way Senator MURRAY does it, of course, is in a balanced approach, which includes spending cuts, which must be part of it, as well as revenue. I think that is the sensible approach to it.

Unfortunately, on the other side, the argument is made that we just cannot raise any more revenue. I know better. Anyone who has taken a close look at the Tax Code in America realizes that we literally forgive tax obligations of over \$1 trillion a year in our Tax Code, some of them very worthy—the deduction for a home mortgage, for example; deductions for charitable contribu-

tions, for example. These things are worthy of our Tax Code. But there are other things that cannot even be explained. Why in the world would we put in our Tax Code a provision which says that if an American business wants to move jobs overseas, we will give them a tax break to do it? I do not think so. That should be a decision, if they make it, with no encouragement from our Tax Code. Rather, let's encourage businesses to stay in the United States.

Similarly, Senator CARL LEVIN of Michigan has really made a concerted effort to investigate and expose the offshore tax havens that cost us over \$300 billion a year in taxes owed to the United States. People who park their money in faraway places with strange-sounding names end up escaping tax liability. Why do we let that happen? The average family across America, the average business across America cannot escape and does not even try to escape this liability. Yet we built into the Tax Code these Cayman Islands, little fiascos in Bermuda and all the other places they head to. We could put an end to that in a hurry and bring revenue back to the United States to reduce the deficit.

So what Senator MURRAY and the Budget Committee talk about is generating revenue to reduce the deficit and making spending cuts.

In addition, Senator MURRAY and the Budget Committee will face the entitlement issues. They are important. If you just left the entitlements without change, the cost of health care would lead us to further bankruptcy in America. They are addressing it, as we should. While protecting the integrity of the programs, they are finding ways to save money to reach the goal.

Wouldn't this be a great debate to have on the floor of the Senate, to have that budget resolution before us, to actually have some votes on amendments? Well, it would be. But, unfortunately, because of the objection of several Republican Senators, we cannot get to it. So the clock is continuing to turn. We are watching hours slip away, and now we are facing the possibility of a weekend session because one or two Senators do not want us to bring this matter to a vote. That is unfortunate. It may be their right to exercise that kind of power in the Senate, but it is not fair. It is not fair to this institution or to the American people who count on us to do more than just waste time on the Senate floor. They count on us to use our time to solve problems.

So I urge my colleagues on the Republican side who are holding up these votes, who are engaged in this filibuster, for goodness' sake, let's move on, let's vote on the continuing resolution, and let's start the debate, the important debate on the budget resolution. Let's get this done.

For the longest time, we were preached to by Members on the other side about no budget resolution. I even heard a speech today by my friend from

Texas, the senior Senator, talking about how derelict we have been in not bringing up a budget resolution. We want to. We are being stopped by Republican Senators. They are the ones who will not let us bring this to a vote. I hope they will change their minds, and soon. I would like to spend next week back in Illinois and with my family, as most Senators would, during the Passover and the Easter seasons. More importantly, I would like to get my job done before that happens. To do that, we ought to be working on the floor right now. Instead of an empty floor, it should be a floor filled with Senators debating the issues and voting on them. I think that is what we were elected to do, and I think the people watching on C-SPAN would like to see some activity on the Senate floor.

Madam President, I yield the floor and 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. COATS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. COATS. Madam President, I was puzzled earlier today when the Senate majority leader came to the floor to propose a unanimous consent request that we move forward with this continuing resolution. He is right, we should move forward with this. But I was puzzled by the fact that he said we have been standing around here looking at each other and we are not doing anything. We have not done anything on the Senate floor for the past 36 hours while we are trying to figure out who has the right to offer an amendment and whether that amendment will be agreed to in part of this unanimous consent request limiting the time. The problem here is that we came to the Senate believing each Senator had the right to offer an amendment. That is what we are here to do, debate that amendment, then take a vote on that amendment and pass the amendment. It is not a question of I will not offer my amendment unless it passes. Let's debate it, see how each of us votes, and then go forward.

But the majority leader has essentially said he would decide how many amendments will be offered and which amendments will not be offered, denying Senators the opportunity to bring their amendment to the floor. There is an objection to the majority leader's request to move forward, because Senators have been denied that opportunity. That is not what the Senate is all about. That is not what people elected us to do. We have been in an empty Chamber talking to no one, or at best to each other, and not moving forward with funding this government for the next 6 months in this fiscal year. We are all ready to go forward, but we wish to have the right, particularly as the minority, to offer our

amendments to this resolution which provides for this funding. I do not know how I am going to vote on all of these, because on some of them I am not sure what would be brought forward. But we are here to evaluate those, to make our best judgment, to vote our yeas or nays, to be able to explain to the people back home why we voted that way.

Apparently the majority leader has problems with some of these proposed amendments. Maybe he does not want his Members to have to vote on them because it is a tough vote politically. Well, what are we here for? We are not here to find consensus on everything that goes forward. We have different points of view. We will not always have consent to pass everything that is brought forward. We ought to be debating that. There are different visions here about how we ought to go forward. The solution to the problem of moving forward and getting this spending bill in place, which we obviously have to do, is to simply give Members the opportunities to propose their amendments, debate, vote on them, and move on.

Over these last 36 hours, how many of these amendments could we have been debating and voting on? We probably could have cleared out all of the amendments that were proposed by various Members in half that time or much less. And that is why we are here. We are a divided government, so there are going to be two sides to each issue. Standing around and having one person, the majority leader, decide whether he will subject his Members to a vote because he thinks that might put them in a difficult political situation. His side can offer their amendments, we can offer our amendments. Hopefully, we are offering amendments for the good of the country and not for some political gain or "gotcha" amendments. But nevertheless, that is the right of a Senator, to offer whatever amendment he or she deems best in his or her own estimation.

We are sitting here facing a serious debt crisis. Some have said this debt crisis isn't here yet so we have more time to deal with it. I reject that. If \$16.7 trillion in debt isn't a crisis, I don't know what is. And at the rate we are going here in Washington, we don't have more time to waste.

But don't take my word for this. Just last week, we had a hearing in the Joint Economic Committee on the debt crisis. In the hearing, we found widespread agreement from witnesses across the ideological spectrum on a variety of issues, including the vital importance of dealing with our long-term debt in a timely fashion and reforming health and retirement security programs to rein in spending and preserve much-needed benefits. I am going to relate some of their testimony, because I think it's important to establish that there is some consensus here on how to move forward. Former Senator and former Senate chairman of the Budget Committee, Judd Gregg,

who now serves as the co-chair of the Campaign to Fix the Debt, stated this:

On our current path, this nation goes bankrupt.

A similar statement to the one made by Judd Gregg, a Republican, was made by a Democrat, Erskine Bowles, who headed up the President's own fiscal commission, former Governor Bowles and former Chief of Staff to former President Clinton. He said about the looming debt crisis:

This is the most predictable financial crisis in the history of the country.

That was several years ago and nothing has gotten better since then. We just careen closer and closer to that tipping point. Senator Gregg says on our current path this Nation goes bankrupt. He also noted that mandatory spending is the primary driver of the debt when he said:

Unfortunately, all of the measures put in place have ignored smart entitlement reforms to control spending over the long-term and comprehensive tax reforms to make the tax code more efficient.

We have all heard that before from people all across the political spectrum. There is a growing consensus these elements must be addressed if we are to address our long-term debt problem.

Douglas Holtz-Eakin, former Director of the Congressional Budget Office, noted:

The level and projected growth of federal debt is a drag on current U.S. economic growth and a threat to future prosperity. . . . the Nation, despite claims to the contrary, remains on a damaging debt pathway.

Dr. Holtz-Eakin countered arguments that reducing the debt is not urgent because the crisis is a distant threat by pointing out the following:

. . . the U.S. is already paying an economic price for the excessive federal debt.

He was referring to terms of slow job creation and growth. He went on to say:

The obvious conclusion is that additional deficit reduction is needed to avoid debt-driven economic stagnation.

He called for the following action:

. . . a strategy that shifts the focus of spending control to the needed entitlement reforms and shifts the debate on taxes away from harmful higher marginal tax rates in favor of pro-growth tax reform.

Alice Rivlin, the first Director of the Congressional Budget Office and co-chair of the Debt Reduction Task Force for the Bipartisan Policy Center as well as a former resident of Indiana, insisted on the importance of a long-term budget plan that will halt the projected rise in debt. She said:

The prospect of debt growing faster than the economy for the foreseeable future reduces consumer and investor confidence, raises a serious threat of high future interest rates and unmanageable Federal debt service, and reduces likely American prosperity and world influence.

She stressed in her testimony the urgent need to act now to get the Federal debt under control before events overtake us.

A sense of urgency was unmistakably present during this hearing. We read about it in the paper every day. We read about it from columnists and hear it on the radio and television: Why can't you get together and get this thing solved and resolved so we can move forward? You are holding down the growth of the economy. You are keeping people out of work. We are at stagnant growth—half our historic average coming out of a recession.

We all know a significant percent of the money we spend here has to be borrowed from China, Saudi Arabia, from foreign entities. This is no way to sustain and maintain a healthy fiscal situation in this country.

Our final witness at the hearing, Simon Johnson, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, called for significantly more long-term debt reduction than has been contemplated in many of the proposals thus far, suggesting that the U.S. should aim at a national debt in the range of 40 percent to 50 percent of GDP.

Let me repeat that. Simon Johnson said that more long-term debt reduction than has been contemplated in many of the proposals so far needs to be looked at, suggesting the United States should aim at a national debt in the range of 40 to 50 percent of GDP rather than our current 90 to 100. When discussing how much time we have to act, Dr. Johnson said:

We have no idea . . . We should start now.

We absolutely should start now. We should be spending each day here working on a long-term debt reduction plan, because unlike the haphazard, rushed legislation we have seen over the past few years, a real, credible, long-term fiscal plan cannot happen overnight. It requires bold spending reforms. It must include a way to restructure programs like Medicare and Social Security so we can prevent them from going bankrupt and preserve benefits for current and future retirees.

Let me state that again. Those of us who have stood up and taken a stand on dealing with these so-called political suicide issues—Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security—are saying we need to do something now to prevent these programs from becoming insolvent, to prevent benefits from having to be reduced or massive tax increases on the next generation to be imposed in order to keep them solvent. We want to deal with that now so we don't undermine these programs.

Those who say we should not touch Medicare are not being truthful with current and future beneficiaries of that program. The same is true for Social Security. They are saying, we don't want to make the tough decision now to address some of these problems and make sensible reforms. We will be gone when this comes undone. What they are saying to people is that we are going to turn our heads to the plight of future beneficiaries, and even to current beneficiaries of these programs by not doing anything.

It is time we worked together to find a solution to this. I think there is a consensus that comprehensive tax reform—an area that I believe both sides can find common ground. Comprehensive tax reform is absolutely essential, as our witnesses all stated, to providing the growth element so this country and this economy can begin to grow. Additional revenue will come in from a more prosperous nation and from a greater rate of growth, and that will help us reduce our deficit spending, it will help us move toward a balanced budget, and keep us from continuing the plunge into more debt and more deficit.

Comprehensive tax reform is the best way to reduce the debt, grow the economy, and make America more competitive. Grow the economy—not more government. That is what makes us more competitive and puts more people back to work. That is what puts us on a path to American prosperity.

These things will not be easy. It will require time and it will demand political will courage. So let's get moving. The Senate majority leader needs to stop wasting time, allow Members to offer and vote on amendments so we can get to regular business of the Senate done and focus on the larger priority—growing this economy. Your Members, our Members—ones we like, ones we don't like. We are sent here to make the tough choices, to make our yes or our no and represent people back home. That is what the Senate is all about.

So instead of standing here speaking to an empty Chamber and letting the clock run down so these amendments can be closed out and never offered under this bill, we should be debating these issues. In doing so, we can get to the point where we will have our final vote and, hopefully, we will be funding the government going forward. It is called regular business and that ought to be our focus.

Growing this economy and strengthening it for future generations is the challenge before us. It is the challenge of our time. We need political will and courage and boldness to go forward, but it is absolutely essential for the future of this country. I suggest that instead of standing around doing nothing, we begin to address these issues.

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

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes as if in morning business.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I noted last week the Republican

leader came to his desk and spoke about the budget and described our Democratic budget as a leftwing manifesto.

We have done \$1.8 trillion in spending cuts already. We raised \$600 billion—one-third of that—in revenue by restoring the Clinton-era tax rates for families earning over \$450,000 a year. So in the balance between spending cuts and new revenues, it is already 3 to 1 in favor of spending cuts. In our budget, we propose to fill the gap of the remainder with 50 percent spending cuts and 50 percent revenue and that is a leftwing manifesto.

The Republican budget changes Medicare into a voucher program. The Republican budget cuts nondefense discretionary spending to levels lower than at any time since OMB started keeping track a half century ago. The Republican budget would set annual domestic spending at rates lower than 1962, when there were no Pell grants at all, when 30 percent of American seniors lived in poverty. But that is not extreme. A Democratic budget that is 50-50 spending cuts and revenues, that is a leftwing manifesto.

The Democratic budget has \$975 billion in new spending cuts and it has \$975 billion in new revenue in order to close that budget gap 50-50. That means, including the deficit reduction we have already done of \$1.8 trillion, we will be, in total, at \$4.3 trillion in deficit reduction, which is probably just a little bit over the target that most of the experts have given us to hit. About \$2.8 trillion of the \$4.3 trillion will come in spending cuts, \$600 billion has come in new tax revenue, and \$975 billion will come from loopholes, for a total of \$1.6 trillion coming from new revenues. Some leftwing manifesto, \$1 trillion more in spending cuts than revenue at a time when billionaires in America are paying lower tax rates than brick masons. If that is a leftwing manifesto, then the leftwing needs to fire its manifesto writers. That is some pretty high rhetoric.

We know where the word "manifesto" comes from, of course. It comes from the Cold War and the Communists—50 percent spending cuts, 50 percent revenue—and the rhetorical hint is that we Democrats with our budget are a bunch of Commies. That is high rhetoric indeed, and it is not coming from some fringe Senators in their rank and file. This is the Republican leader of the Senate.

In the face of the obvious facts of the balance of our budget, why might the rhetoric be getting so high? What might the Republicans be getting so touchy about? Let's look at where we get the rest of our revenue for our 50-50 budget.

We got the first \$600 billion from restoring the Clinton-era tax rates, a time of huge economic success for our country for folks over \$450,000 in income. Where do we get our \$975 billion in new revenue? We go to the Republican treasure trove. We go to Ali

Baba's cave for corporations and the rich. We go to the tax earmarks and the special deals that special interests have, year after year, squirreled away in the Tax Code.

People think: How much can that be? What can it mean when we have money going through the Tax Code and out but not coming to the government in revenues? What is in Ali Baba's cave? How big is the treasure trove? Have a look.

This is the amount of money the U.S. Government collects in taxes from individuals—\$1.09 trillion. Here is how much goes back out the backdoor of the Tax Code to people who have loopholes, special rates, deductions in the Tax Code that helped them: \$1.02 trillion—virtually the same. For every \$1 of revenue the United States collects in actual revenues from individual taxpayers every year, another 94 cents goes back out through the loopholes and the deductions and the special rates, a grand total every year of more than \$1 trillion. Since we budget over a 10-year period, it is \$10 trillion in this budget period.

On the corporate side, for every \$1 of revenue the United States collects in actual revenues from corporations, another 87 cents goes back out the backdoor of the Tax Code through loopholes and special rates and deductions. Again, because we do this over—every year, \$157 billion. Again, because we do this over 10 years, that is more than \$1.5 trillion. If we add these two together, it is more than \$11.5 trillion in the budget period. If we presume some modest growth in the economy over those 10 years, that number gets to about \$14 trillion.

So Ali Baba's Tax Code cave of tax spending is very big. There is lots of treasure squirreled away in it, and that doesn't even count the billions of dollars that corporations and wealthy tax avoiders hide offshore so it never even gets into the tax equation. The IRS has pegged that recently at about \$385 billion a year.

There is one little building in the Cayman Islands that Chairman Conrad used to refer to regularly when he was chairman of the Budget Committee. One little building in the Cayman Islands, maybe 5 stories tall, where over 18,000 companies claim to be doing business. One can imagine what kind of business they are doing there. That is how \$385 billion a year never even appears in the tax equation.

This spending that gets done through the Tax Code that does not get reviewed by annual appropriations, it gets squirreled away in there and it is there to stay. It is a big treasure trove indeed—not counting offshoring, probably \$14 trillion in a 10-year budget period for those who are clever and connected enough to get their special deals, their tax earmarks, into the Tax Code.

We take out of that, call it \$14 trillion—at a minimum \$11.5 trillion—\$975 billion, about 7 percent. That is how

much of it, this little red slice, is what we take to balance the budget for deficit reduction. The problem is the Republicans do not want us to look into their treasure trove. Ali Baba's cave of tax tricks is where the juicy earmarks are for special interests. Do you want to know why Mitt Romney had to fiddle his taxes to get up to a 14-percent tax rate—which, by the way, is a lower tax rate than a solitary hospital orderly pays walking down the halls of Rhode Island Hospital at night. How does he get it so he has to fiddle his taxes to get up to a rate lower than a hospital orderly pays? How do Romney and the hedge fund billionaires pull off that trick? Look in Ali Baba's cave for the carried interest exception.

Do you want to know where ExxonMobil, which is the richest and most profitable corporation in the history of the world—where ExxonMobil gets its hands into the American taxpayers' pockets? Look at the Big Oil subsidies in Ali Baba's cave.

Do you want to know how corporate jets get special favored tax treatment compared to the commercial jets that ordinary mortals fly? Look at the accelerated depreciation schedules in Ali Baba's cave of tax tricks. If using the phrase "leftwing manifesto" seems a little strident, a little exaggerated about a budget proposal for 50 percent spending cuts and 50 percent revenues and you want to inquire why, look no further than the Republican treasure trove of corporate and special interest tax earmarks heaped up in Ali Baba's cave.

We are knocking at the door. We are knocking on the door of Ali Baba's cave, which so far has been untouched. We have done all spending cuts and a little bit of tax rate increases for families over \$450,000 back to the Clinton-era rates. We have not touched, yet, Ali Baba's cave. What we are saying as Democrats is that Americans paid in deficit reduction spending cuts what they are going to lose in services and in benefits, \$1.8 trillion, and they will pay in another \$975 billion in cuts under our Democratic proposal. We are saying that folks earning over \$450,000 a year income saw their tax rates go up to Clinton-era levels, and they are paying in another \$600 billion in deficit reduction. Now we want to go into Ali Baba's cave of tax earmarks and out of at least \$11.5 trillion, probably more like \$14 trillion, and if you throw in the offshoring that takes you up to \$17 trillion, \$18 trillion—we want to take less than \$1 trillion out over 10 years to help reduce our budget deficit.

So the Republicans are getting anxious. The alarms are ringing in the special interests and the Republicans are rushing to the trenches to defend their special interests and their cherished tax earmarks. The best defense being a good offense, that is how a balanced deficit reduction plan that in sum has \$1 trillion more in spending cuts than in revenues suddenly becomes a leftist manifesto.

We just had the hearings in the Budget Committee on our budget. If you listened on that committee, the Republicans said it plainly. They did not mince words: Not a penny of tax loopholes, not a penny from Ali Baba's cave of tax treasures can go for deficit reduction—not a penny. That is their rule.

They will say they are willing to move the treasure around a little bit in Ali Baba's cave so long as it all gets used for corporations and the wealthy. Again, that is not a guess. That is in the Republican budget—none of the goodies squirreled away by the special interests over the years in Ali Baba's cave for deficit reduction—none; all of it to lower tax rates for corporations and the rich, the ones who mostly benefit from the treasure in Ali Baba's cave to begin with. They are willing to spread the treasure around a little as long as it stays in the hands of big corporations and the rich.

We are at the gates of Ali Baba's cave, this treasure trove of Tax Code special deals and earmarks for the rich and the well connected. We are at the place where the lobbyists wheel the sweet corporate tax deals. We are knocking on the door of a \$14 trillion tax spending area that has been, so far, left completely untouched in deficit reduction and so our Republican friends are getting a little twitchy.

Come on, tell us, out of nearly \$14 trillion in tax spending and earmarks, can't we just put a little bit toward the deficit? Just 7 percent? Under their own budget, they take 41 percent of it and give it back in the form of lower high-end tax rates, lowered rates for big corporations and the rich. Can't we do just 7 percent for deficit reduction? I thought the deficit was so important, but maybe not when it comes to our friends protecting the interests of the big corporations and the rich.

Madam President, I also wish to speak about the continuing resolution and its provisions relating to Commerce, Justice, and Science appropriations. Specifically, I want to highlight how the continuing resolution will support continuing advances in the field of digital forensics.

The continuing resolution is accompanied by a series of explanatory statements that detail Congress' intent behind the raw numbers of the resolution itself. The explanatory statement for the Commerce, Justice, and Science provisions in turn incorporates portions of the Appropriations Committee report on the earlier Commerce, Justice, and Science bill. "[L]anguage included in . . . Senate Report 112-158," the explanatory statement provides, "that is not changed by this explanatory statement or this Act is approved." Neither the explanatory statement nor the continuing resolution change language from Senate Report 112-158 regarding computer forensics. The language from Senate Report 112-158 therefore states the intent behind this portion of the continuing resolution.

This is what Senate Report 112-158 says:

Cell Phone Digital Evidence—As smartphones and the Internet have become integral parts of daily life, these technologies have also become an integral part of a majority of criminal acts and enterprises, from drug deals by text to child pornography websites. Because more than 95 percent of all criminal cases are investigated and prosecuted at the State and local levels, the Committee is concerned that without the Department's support, the ability of State and local law enforcement to effectively investigate and prosecute cases involving digital evidence and computer-based crimes will diminish. The Committee encourages the Department to prioritize State and local assistance toward computer forensics and digital evidence training and investigations surrounding drug and violent crimes, and crimes against children.

Collaborative Efforts To Fight Cybercrime—According to the Norton Cybercrime Report 2011, more than 69 percent of online adults have been a victim of cybercrime in their lifetime, resulting in an annual price of \$388,000,000,000 globally. The Committee is aware of the important progress that has been made in the fight against cybercrime by collaborative efforts that bring together prosecutors, researchers, and DOJ in a multidisciplinary effort to identify and prosecute cybercrimes such as 'phishing.' These collaborative efforts involve experts in computer forensics that help to identify the source of phishing, train prosecutors in the intricacies of the crime and how best to prosecute cybercriminals, and conduct research to stay ahead of cybercriminals and their ever changing tactics. The Committee believes these collaborative efforts have made good progress against cybercrime and encourages the Department to continue funding these important initiatives.

I applaud Chairwoman MIKULSKI for stressing the importance of computer forensics training and research, first as the Chairwoman of the Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Subcommittee and now as chairwoman of the full Appropriations Committee. I am very grateful for her leadership on this important issue.

The report clearly identifies the need for continued Justice Department attention on this subject. This is particularly the case in light of the severe cybersecurity threats facing our Nation. Like the Norton report cited by the committee, a recent report by the security firm Mandiant highlighted the growing threat to our national economic security posed by cyber attacks launched by criminal organizations and foreign countries. Every day, sophisticated hackers are attempting to steal America's secrets, its intellectual property, and the identities of our citizens. As FBI Director Robert Mueller has stated, "[w]e are losing data, we are losing money, we are losing ideas and we are losing innovation. Together we must find a way to stop the bleeding." Digital forensics tools that help attribute the source of an attack and the extent of the damage caused will be an important element of any cybersecurity solution.

Digital forensics tools also help law enforcement investigate and prosecute

more traditional crimes. Criminals use smartphones and computers to engage in all kinds of criminal acts and enterprises, from drug dealing to child pornography. Even when criminals do not use modern electronics in the commission of the crime, digital forensics can provide useful evidence relative to, for instance, the whereabouts and intent of the offender, or the participants in a conspiracy. Federal, State, and local law enforcement thus must have access to digital forensics tools and appropriate training to investigate and prosecute these crimes effectively.

For the last decade, the Justice Department has funded extremely important research in these areas. For example, its National Institute of Justice, or NIJ, has funded research on tools for scanning for child pornography; forensic tools for mobile cellular devices; data forensics for cloud computing; technologies to identify and defeat encryption methods used by criminals; and forensic tools for seizing digital evidence in a forensically sound way. NIJ also has funded invaluable training that equips state and local law enforcement to tackle the cybercrime and digital forensics issues that they encounter in their criminal investigations. I believe that NIJ and the Justice Department more broadly must support this research and training going forward. I am very pleased that the continuing resolution we are considering today likewise prioritizes this important work.

Again, the fact that the continuing resolution does this is a testament to Chairwoman MIKULSKI's leadership in this field. She has been a champion of effective law enforcement for a long time. She now is bringing the same leadership to bear on cybersecurity and criminals' use of emerging technologies. I also would thank Senator SHELBY, who is the ranking member of both the full Committee and the Commerce, Justice, and Science Subcommittee, for his work on this important issue. As a result of their collaboration, the continuing resolution will support a broad range of important Federal initiatives. It is very good news that research and training on digital forensics will be one of them.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, the Medium Air Defense System is a NATO program we jointly develop with the Germans and Italians. They have made clear if the United States does not fulfill its funding commitment for 2013, Germany and Italy would interpret this as a unilateral withdrawal, and they have stated this in writing to Congress.

The Memorandum of Understanding among the U.S., Germany and Italy clearly states that a "withdrawing Participant will pay all Contract modification or termination costs that would not otherwise have been incurred but for the decision to withdraw."

This is a standard clause for cooperative international agreements. In fact,

it is usually included at the insistence of the U.S. to ensure long-term commitment of our Allies so they do not withdraw on joint programs, leaving the U.S. to pay the bills. It is included in agreements on the Excalibur program; technologies and systems for AEGIS-equipped ships; and the Global Positioning System. It will also be included when the U.S. and Israel enter an agreement on the Iron Dome missile defense program.

There is precedent. Following its withdrawal from the NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance Memorandum of Understanding, Canada was assessed a fiscal penalty, even though a development contract had not yet been awarded. The MEADS program has contracts with industry that, if canceled, will require the payment of termination liability. To think that we would get out for free is unrealistic. If we take the funding out of this program, we leave the Army a bill that it will have to pay.

MEADS is not a "missile to nowhere." Last November, MEADS conducted a successful intercept test that demonstrated advanced technologies for air defense. The Department of Defense has informed us the missile used in the MEADS program will be incorporated into the aging Patriot system next year.

The United States has not paid more for the program than what was agreed to in the MOU. The U.S. share of the program is \$2.32 billion in 2004 dollars, which when adjusted for inflation is closer to \$2.9 billion in today's dollars.

Finally, premature withdrawal from MEADS sends the wrong signals to our allies when the U.S. has been asking them to do more on missile defense. Secretary Panetta sent the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee a letter last June, echoed by a letter from Secretary Clinton in September, which specifically asks Congress not to terminate MEADS at this time, as it would undermine a new and fragile consensus achieved by the U.S. with its NATO Allies in Chicago last spring.

I agree with my colleague from New Hampshire now, more than ever, we need to be vigilant about how and where federal defense dollars are spent. Prohibiting funding for this final installment of MEADS research is the wrong way to approach this, but I look forward to working with her and other Senators as we develop the fiscal year 2014 spending bills.

Mr. REED. Madam President, before I begin, I want to thank Chairwoman MIKULSKI. She has demonstrated both leadership and resolve in her new role and in assembling this bill under very challenging circumstances.

Overall, this bill provides a total of \$1.043 trillion for discretionary spending, and it reflects a number of reductions that the Appropriations Committee had to make in order to accommodate the \$4 billion cut to the discretionary spending caps mandated by the January agreement on the so-called

"fiscal cliff." In addition, because of a point of order raised by Senator TOOMEY last year, the emergency designation was removed for \$3.5 billion in disaster and mitigation funding in the Superstorm Sandy appropriations bill. I opposed this point of order because I believe disaster funding should be treated as an emergency, as it has been in disasters past. Because we fell three votes shy of the 60 needed to waive the point of order, we must now absorb \$3.5 billion in cuts in this bill. That will have real impacts on critical programs.

Moreover, I am deeply disappointed we have not been able to come up with a commonsense and balanced solution to turn off sequestration. These crippling across-the-board spending cuts 7.8 percent for defense programs and 5 percent for domestic discretionary programs will be applied to virtually every discretionary program in this bill. If left unaddressed, they will translate into an estimated 750,000 fewer jobs across this country, including in my home State of Rhode Island, where the unemployment rate is just under 10 percent.

I was one of a majority of Senators who voted for a reasonable solution to replace sequestration with a balanced mix of revenues and spending reductions. I am frustrated that a minority in this Chamber blocked this plan, which would have prevented the self-inflicted job losses and economic pain of sequestration. Now, in order to avoid a government shutdown on March 27, we must forge ahead and pass the best appropriations bill we can, despite these limitations.

Even in the face of these limitations, the Senate bill represents a better path because it makes responsible investments and saves jobs.

Without the funding provided in this bill to meet the funding levels promised in MAP-21, last year's transportation authorization bill, we would lose an additional 25,000 jobs. As chairman of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, I worked to provide \$2.4 billion in funding for clean water and drinking water projects, \$336 million more than the President requested. This investment, when combined with state matches and leveraging, will support 849 projects and 130,000 jobs.

Let me turn to the Interior title of this continuing resolution in more detail. The CR provides \$29.8 billion, which is an increase of \$650 million over the Subcommittee's FY 2012 allocation.

While that amount is a 2 percent increase, most of it, approximately \$600 million, is needed to fully fund the 10-year average for fire suppression. In addition, we must also absorb the cost of \$423 million appropriated as part of the September continuing resolution to repay fire borrowing that occurred in FY 2012.

Even though the subcommittee's allocation rose, so did the costs of programs we must fund. The House was able to avoid tough decisions for the

Environmental Protection Agency and Interior funding in its CR because it had an even larger allocation for this title. But it only accomplished that by shortchanging other important investments in other titles, including transportation, child care, education, health research, police, and firefighters.

Lest anyone be confused by the House's new-found commitment to the EPA and other environmental priorities, one should only review the devastating cuts it made to these programs in its initial FY 2013 committee-reported Interior Appropriations bill.

With the resources available and the challenges we face, I believe we in the Senate have funded all agencies in the Interior Appropriations title fairly, and we have still been able to achieve a number of important environmental goals.

As I have already noted, we have been able to provide a solid level of funding for infrastructure through the clean water and drinking water State revolving funds.

We were able to hold funding levels steady for grants that help States run their environmental programs at \$1.1 billion. These funds create jobs at the State level and provide for enforcement of our Federal pollution control laws.

As I mentioned, we also fully funded the 10-year average of fire suppression for both the Interior Department and Forest Service, in anticipation of a tough fire season.

We were able to include \$53 million in new funding to hire doctors, nurses, and support staff at newly constructed Indian Health Service facilities. These funds will allow seven facilities to open their doors to patients that would otherwise sit vacant.

I am pleased to say this bill also includes language to extend the authorizations of 12 national heritage areas so they will continue to receive their partnership grant funding from the National Park Service.

We want to make sure these heritage areas continue to thrive, so I am proud we were able to extend their authorizations in this bill. And it is worth noting that these grants don't require new funding they are already paid for with the existing National Park Service budget.

This is important in my State, with the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, but for many others, as well.

Finally, land and water conservation funding is sustained at the FY 2012 level of \$322 million.

Of course, there are tradeoffs within this bill, and places where we had to sustain cuts below the FY 2012 enacted level.

This is in part due to the hand we were dealt by the President in the budget he submitted for FY 2013. We accepted cuts proposed by the administration for several programs, including construction programs and Superfund.

The Senate bill funds the EPA at \$8.34 billion, which, while a reduction

of \$107 million from the FY 2012 level, is the amount requested by the President for FY 2013. Additionally, the Senate bill spares the agency from the debilitating cuts set in the FY 2013 House Interior bill, which funded the EPA at a level that is \$1.29 billion less than FY 2012. Yes, that is a billion.

Unfortunately, however, those reductions alone were not enough to meet our obligation to provide an approximately \$1 billion increase for fire. We had to make cuts to other operating programs in the bill cuts that I know will only be more difficult because they will come in addition to sequestration.

Before I conclude, I want to address a few other aspects of this bill and the consequences of continuing resolutions and the sequester.

A major reason we are now confronting such huge deficits is the utter collapse of our financial markets beginning in 2008. Some of this collapse occurred because parts of our financial system were either lightly or barely regulated such as our derivatives and subprime mortgage markets.

However, we also learned the severe costs of having an under-resourced and outmatched Securities and Exchange Commission and Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

I still remember an April 2008 hearing with former SEC Chair Christopher Cox, in which he stated the SEC didn't need more resources meanwhile Bernie Madoff was scamming more and more victims in the largest Ponzi scheme in history, and Lehmann Brothers was levered 30-1 and hiding its precarious financial condition through repurchase agreements.

By starving the SEC and CFTC of resources, we are repeating the mistakes of the recent past.

The CFTC is already suspending its examinations of key market participants and "shelving" enforcement actions because of budget constraints. The impact of static funding along with the sequester will further erode its oversight. Indeed, under the CR, the CFTC will operate with a budget that is 37 percent less than the administration says it needs.

The case of the SEC is more disturbing. While subject to appropriation, the SEC has no impact on the deficit since its expenditures are offset by transaction fees applied to the industry. With the impacts of the sequester, the SEC will operate at 20 percent less than the administration has requested. This failure to appropriately fund the SEC will do nothing to improve the fiscal situation. At the same time, our economy and our capital markets will be more vulnerable. That makes no sense.

If we want American markets to be the most liquid, transparent, efficient, and orderly in the world, we need to provide the cops on the beat—the SEC and CFTC with an adequate and stable source of funding.

I also want to speak about the impacts CRs can have on specific pro-

grams because they offer no nuance or flexibility. That has been shown to be the case this year with the Weatherization Assistance Program, a program that creates jobs and helps provide energy efficient retrofits to low-income individuals and families.

President Obama described the program this way in a 2009 interview: "[Y]ou're getting a three-fer. Not only are you immediately putting people back to work but you're also saving families on [their] energy bills and you're laying the groundwork for long-term energy independence. That's exactly the kind of program that we should be funding."

Under the Recovery Act, we invested \$5 billion in this program, which annually received only \$175 to \$200 million. As the program worked through this infusion, funding for the regular program was scaled back. In FY 2013, funding will be only \$68 million even before the sequester is applied. Since there will no longer be carry-over from earlier years, there will not be enough funding to mount a viable program in all 50 states. That's not only regrettable, it is also counterproductive to our goals to create jobs and increase energy efficiency. I hope we can work with the Department of Energy to find ways to sustain the program in 2013 as we seek to address the shortfall in 2014.

Finally, while this should be the case for all of our spending priorities, I want to note that this package includes a full defense appropriations bill that provides DOD with the funding for programs it needs. I am particularly pleased that the bill provides funding to build two Virginia-class submarines in FY 2013 and to purchase equipment for two submarines in FY 2014, which will ensure that we will have the capital resources and workforce in place to move forward. This also retains thousands of good paying jobs for highly skilled workers in my State and elsewhere.

There is much to comment on about the tough choices we have had to make in this bill and the sequester cuts that loom over every discretionary program. Given the very challenging circumstances we face, Chairwoman MIKULSKI has done her best to craft a bill that can clear the Senate and hopefully get to the President's desk so that we can avoid a government shutdown, which would be even more disastrous.

TRIBAL SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

Mr. FRANKEN. Madam President, I rise today to discuss tribal school construction funding—an issue that is central to the academic wellbeing and intellectual development of tribal children across the country.

It goes without saying that all kids need clean, safe places to study.

And making sure that every child gets a good education, in a safe, clean environment will benefit our economy and our society as a whole. Unfortunately, many Indian kids attending