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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, October 14, 2013, at 12 noon.

Senate

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2013

The Senate met at 1 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable HEIDI HEITKAMP, a Senator from the State of North Dakota.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Lord God of all creative possibilities, help our lawmakers turn this impasse into a bypass so that the heart of our Nation may beat vibrantly and strong.

Lord, on our coins and currency, we have placed the words ''In God We Trust.'' Give our lawmakers the wisdom to trust You and each other, turning the stubbornness of impossibilities into the blessings of creative possibilities.

You are our God, and we refuse to entertain fears about our Nation's future, for we remember how You have led this great Republic in the past. Make a way out of no way. Answer our prayers and use Your powerful arms to keep our Nation safe and secure.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

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

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

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

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 13, 2013.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable HEIDI HEITKAMP, a Senator from the State of North Dakota, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. HEITKAMP thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

DEFAULT PREVENTION ACT OF 2013—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. I move to proceed to Calendar No. 211, S. 1569, the debt limit bill.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 211, S. 1569, a bill to ensure the complete and timely payment of the obligations of the United States Government until December 31, 2014.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. We have some speakers throughout the day's session with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. We will have more information at a subsequent time how late we will be in.

Yesterday Republicans voted to stop the Senate from even debating legislation to avert a catastrophic default of the Nation's debt. They stopped this body from even discussing the single most important issue facing this Nation: the loss of the full faith and credit of our country.

They did so under the pretext that refusing to pay the country's bills would somehow make those bills disappear. No one denies that this Nation has work to do to reduce this debt. But Republicans who say this country should default on its debt today are the same Republicans who ran up the debt only a few short years ago. These same Republicans charged more than $4 trillion in tax breaks for the rich on the American taxpayers' credit card. They paid for two wars costing about $2 trillion with borrowed money, and they rang up a $400 million tab for a Medicare prescription drug plan. They ran up the Nation's credit card for years and years on many things.

There was one conversation on one of the Sunday shows today that said we were trying to break the caps set in the Budget Control Act. We know that on January 15, the second year of sequestration, we voted differently than that. We voted to extend the CR until November 15, not a word about breaking the caps. We are happy to go forward with the CR, as we have already voted for in this body. Any talk about breaking caps is not anything that comes from us. Yet every single Republican

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

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refused yesterday to even talk about paying the bill now that is due.

The Presiding Officer and everyone in this body knows—and I think the American people know—that I met yesterday with Senator MCCONNELL. We are in a conversation today. I am confident the Republicans will allow the government to open and extend the ability of this country to pay its bills. I am going to do everything I can throughout the day to accomplish just this. It is important we do this, and we must do this. It is the height of hypocrisy to not pay our bills.

Americans want Congress to compromise. They want Congress to give economic certainty and security, not more indecision and doubt. Americans want Congress to do its job. That is all they are asking us to do.

Americans want Congress to reopen the government, take the threat of default off the table, and sit down and talk about a long-term budget deal that creates jobs and strengthens the middle class.

I am confident and hopeful that will be accomplished.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved. Under the previous order, Senators are permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The majority whip is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. I wish to thank the majority leader for his statement.

We are hoping there will be positive developments today, and very quickly, relative to the impasse which we have reached. It is time to reopen this government, it is time to make certain we pay our bills, and then let us engage in honest debate on the issues that are before us, and there are many.

The forum for that debate is very obvious: It is the budget conference, the conference between the two budget committees. The Senate Budget Committee, chaired by Senator PATTY MURRAY of Washington, passed the floor of the Senate 6 months ago. Senator MURRAY and others on our side have tried on 21 separate occasions to ask for unanimous consent to go to this budget conference committee to start debating the issues which we now see in the press every day. Twenty-one separate times the Republicans have objected to even meeting. This is unfortunate and it is one of the reasons we are here today.

It is hard to believe, if one is in the midst of this maelstrom, that not even 2 weeks have passed since we started this debate on the floor of the Senate, which has led to this terrible situation.

Two weeks ago our government was open. There was good thinking—or at least a good hope—that we were going to extend the debt ceiling of the United States. Now we are in a much different place. We are only 2 days away from the second week ending of a full government shutdown, a government shutdown which has furloughed some 800,000 employees. That is an unfortunate situation for these employees and their families and for the American people as well.

What the House Republicans have learned, and those Senate Republicans supporting them, is that this government shutdown has real-world consequences. I can remember taking my kids to Chuck E. Cheese's and watching this Whac-A-Mole game where something would pop up and you hit it with a hammer. This is what the House Republicans have been doing on a daily basis. If a story comes out that suggests people are being denied critical medical care at the National Institutes of Health, they say: We will open that part of the government. If a story comes out, tragic stories, that families who have lost a loved one in service to this country are not receiving benefits they are entitled to, they will pass am exception to the budget. It is the same thing with the VA and FEMA. It is no way to run a government, and it is unfair to the American people.

Their strategy, as convoluted as it is, is they will pass these bills one at a time to fund our government until it gets down to a handful of bills for agencies they don't care for. One of the agencies the rightwing spokespeople have identified they want to close down is the Environmental Protection Agency. They want to close down the Environmental Protection Agency. It is an outrageous statement.

They may disagree with the policy of that agency—I disagree with some myself—but when it comes down to its important mission to make sure we have safe drinking water and air that is not going to create public health hazards, I hope it is something that most people, regardless of their political background, would agree is an important government function.

This strategy of a piecemeal appropriation has resulted in an embarrassing predicament for our government. People laid off cannot go to work and basic services cannot be provided.

The other day a Republican Senator came to the floor and said: Let us at least agree that we should open FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Natural disasters do occur, and so he made a motion to open that agency. I asked him: Wouldn't you want to also open the weather service to make sure they are fully staffed to warn people before a disaster occurs? Wouldn't you also want to make sure the agencies that arrive on the scene of disasters, such as the Small Business Administration, that try to get businesses back in place, should also be reopened? Shouldn't the Coast Guard be fully funded to make sure if there is need for rescue, they are present?

He reflected on it and said: Yes, let's include all of those.

This is the problem with picking and choosing agencies, they are going to miss something critically important. That is what we face.

Secondly, on this debt ceiling, as awful as it is to face a shutdown in the government, for the United States to default on its debt for the first time in history would be catastrophic. That isn't my word. It is a word given to us by the Business Roundtable. The leaders of the major businesses in the United States have said if we default on our debt for the first time, it will be catastrophic.

October 17, Thursday, is the day. If we haven't taken action by then, we risk default.

Yesterday we tried to pass what we call a clean extension of the debt ceiling with no political strings attached—just extend it until the end of next year. All we asked our Republican colleagues to do was to allow us to bring the measure to the floor for debate, for amendment. Not one single Republican Senator, not one, would vote to allow us to even proceed to the bill so that we could start the debate and in a timely way to respond to this challenge of the expiration of our debt ceiling Wednesday night.

If we listen to the business leaders across America, they will tell you there is a lot at stake. This is not only another political issue.

Since World War II, the United States has worked, effectively worked, to make the United States dollar the soundest currency in the world. Think about that. That U.S. dollar is the investment of choice of governments all around the world. They believe the safest place to be is in U.S. Treasuries. Why? Because the United States always pays its debts, period.

Now House Republicans and other Republicans have said maybe we won't pay all our debts; maybe we will go into something called prioritization; pick and choose the debts you want to pay. Many of us tried that when we were young and in college. It catches up with you. After a while, we find out we just can't do that.

Now put yourself in the position of a great nation, a nation that has to make 50 million to 80 million decisions a month as to how to pay the debts that are owed by the U.S. Government. How do we prioritize that?

Republicans, many of them argue we will first start by paying our largest creditors. In other words, pay China first. How soon then will we pay Social Security recipients, those waiting for veterans checks, those in our military waiting for paychecks, those who are owed money from our government, and the transfers to States and localities that are critical for the ongoing operations of their own government and their own credit rating? It is a ridiculous idea.

It reminds me of Soviet revisionism when it comes to history. They talk about how simple it will be to prioritize and default on our debt. It will not. It will be disastrous. The flat-Earth economists who are preaching this don't have a leg to stand on. Economists and business leaders, many of whom are conservative Republicans, have warned the Republicans: Don't do

this. This is something that will cause damage for a long time to come.

In the threat of default in 2012, interest rates on 4-week Treasury bills tripled. They are at the highest levels since 2008. Fidelity Investments, the largest U.S. money market mutual fund, liquidated all of their short-term Treasury bills just on the threat of default on our debt.

Is this default or is this debt ceiling extension something extraordinary? The honest answer is no. We have done it so routinely that most people haven't noticed. Congress has increased the debt ceiling 78 times since 1960, 49 times under Republican Presidents and 29 times under Democrats. The debt was increased by 189 percent under President Ronald Reagan—a 189-percent increase in the debt—compared to a little over 40 percent under President Obama. Debt ceiling increases have often been paired with other issues, but only recently has the threat of default been used as a bargaining chip.

I know if we fail to extend this debt ceiling it will be catastrophic. A lot of people will suffer. I think about families, working families, with their savings accounts, perhaps their retirement accounts. Imagine, if you will, what it means to them to lose 5 or 10 percent of the value of their savings. They work hard, many of them barely scraping by, just getting by paycheck to paycheck, putting a little money away for the future. Now, because of political gamesmanship on Capitol Hill, their hard-earned savings are at stake.

That is the height of irresponsibility. That is the height of recklessness.

The fact that we couldn't get one Republican vote yesterday to go forward is as troubling as anything that has happened on the floor of the Senate that I can remember. This is something we should all agree on—to move forward. I am hopeful these discussions between Senator REID, the Democratic majority leader, and Senator MCCONNELL, the Republican leader, will bear fruit. I hope they can find a sensible common ground to spare us what we face. I hope we can end this government shutdown, pay our bills, and then engage in a meaningful, regular order and honest debate in our budget conference over the many other issues that challenge us as a Nation. That is what we were elected to do. That is what we must do.

There are those who are arguing we need to continue this confrontation and take it to a high-noon scenario. Frankly, that is not very courageous on their part. It is pretty easy to be politically courageous with other people's money, and that is what is happening with those Republicans who are arguing we should default on our national debt. They are playing with the savings of working families across America. That isn't fair to those families. We should stand by them, push for economic growth, for the creation of jobs, and not what this would do—damage this Nation's recovery.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, over the last few days there has been a lot of talk about negotiating, and there has been a lot of negotiating. That is good. Various Senators in small and large groups have been talking about how long a continuing resolution should be in effect, how much to extend the debt limit, among other issues, and surely it is important that negotiations take place. We Democrats have tried over 20 times now to move to a House-Senate conference so that we can discuss and negotiate our differences on a budget resolution. Regrettably, Republicans have refused to allow those negotiations to occur.

The underlying issue is this: While negotiations are underway, our government should be open and serving the American people. Democrats believe government should be functioning during negotiations. For that matter, we believe, because government performs important duties, it should always be open and functioning. While those negotiations are underway, we surely should not have the threat of a global economic meltdown hanging over our Nation.

The American people don't want the government to be shut down or for the United States to default on its obligations while negotiations take place—or at any other time, for that matter. No one knows how long the negotiations will take. In the meantime there are real hardships being imposed on the American people because of the shutdown. Vital public services are being impaired across all of government: Nutrition assistance for women and children, Head Start programs for school children, research grants at the National Science Foundation, badly needed repairs to our highways and bridges, among hundreds of other programs.

I think all of us agree that negotiations are more than desirable; they are essential. But the issue looming before us is not that. It is whether the government will be open and the threat of default will be lifted while we negotiate. Negotiations could last a while, so they should take place while the government is functioning. It is unconscionable that Americans are denied services and benefits while we negotiate.

It is also unacceptable that negotiations take place when one side has placed a bomb on the negotiating table and set the timer. Let me put it this way: If in the future I came to my Republican colleagues and said: As chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I am not going to allow the Defense bill to come out of the committee until the Senate raises taxes on the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans—something I very much favor—what would be the result? They would reject my ultimatum, and rightly so. Threats to do immense damage unless I get my way on an issue is plainly the wrong way to legislate and to get things done. Such threats just push people to dig in deeper on their positions.

The shutdown of our government is doing tremendous damage. We know the American people have suffered great harm because of the government shutdown, and we know the impact on our economy and the world economy would be severe if we default on our debt. Who in this Congress believes the government should remain closed while we negotiate? Who in this Congress believes the government should remain closed while we negotiate? Who in this Congress believes a default on our obligations is not damaging? Surely no more than a handful among us.

Cutting through all the fog and cutting through the talk of the talking heads is this point, which I believe is unassailable. There are a lot of differences in negotiations. People have different positions on different issues. But I believe this is an unassailable and undebatable point: The vast majority of the American people believe that while negotiations are going on, the government should be functioning and that we should not default on our obligations.

Sitting down together and discussing the many issues that our Nation faces is essential, but it is also essential we do so while the government is open and functioning and serving the American people.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Madam President, I appreciate all of the speeches being given, and all of them have a seed of possibility. But evidently we are not going to water them or try to grow them. We are just going to talk about possibilities.

There is enough blame to go around. It isn't just on one side. But I would like to remind people of why we are here, hoping that we won't be here again. The reason we are here is we didn't do the appropriations bills the way we are supposed to.

I know we had a budget process, and the budget process got bogged down between the House and the Senate. But obviously we have gotten past that problem, because I noticed on the calendar we have a whole bunch of appropriations bills—I think, actually, all 12 of them that we are supposed to pass—and the first one went on the calendar on June 27. Obviously they didn't feel constrained by not having a budget that was agreed to by the House and the Senate. They set some parameters and came up with bills. So we are past that budget argument that there was no conference committee. I thought there should be a conference committee, but there wasn't a conference committee.

While we are talking about conference committees, I have to mention the last offer from the House we voted

on in regard to this shutdown was a request by the House to have a conference committee—a conference committee made up of the Senate and House—to work out these problems before the shutdown went on this long. The Democrats voted against that unanimously. It seems to me if they want a conference committee on a budget that was supposed to be done by April 15, but that we have bypassed and done the appropriations for already, that is kind of a weak argument for saying now that there shouldn't be a conference regarding all of these issues that are coming up right now.

I don't know how you get this resolved without getting the two sides talking. Neither side can solve the problem in the Senate without some help from the other side. It will take 60 votes, and that means neither side has the clear majority that is necessary to pass it.

The cloture vote we voted on yesterday was to fix the credit cards of the Federal Government indefinitely, with no limits for another year, through 2014. That amounts to $1.1 trillion of estimated additional debt for the country, for our kids and our grandkids. I used to talk a lot about our grandkids, then I moved it up to our kids, and now I am talking about us. We are finally the ones at risk. That should certainly make all of the seniors interested.

We went to the White House the other day, and the President did a marvelous job of going through a speech and then taking questions and giving answers. But I was very disappointed at the end because the end speech was give me what I want for the shutdown and government; give me what I want for the debt limit increase, and then we can talk. The reason we are talking is because we have a government shutdown and we have this looming debt ceiling problem. There ought to be other ways we can talk, but we don't. So like I said, there is plenty of blame to go around.

This comment about we shouldn't do it piecemeal, that is a reference to the different measures the House has sent over in regard to problems the Senate said we were having—problems that people immediately recognized. Yet none of those have been voted on. None of them have been voted on. Maybe they weren't that much of a crisis. I think we all agreed they were that much of a crisis, but the answer is: Let's not do it piecemeal.

Do you know why the appropriations process has 12 separate budgets, 12 separate spending bills? It is so we do it piecemeal, so we can look at them with some depth and maybe get some clarity out of the spending we are doing. When we wind up doing an omnibus bill—and that is where we are headed, where everything will be grouped into one, and it will be passed for the rest of the year—we won't get to look at any of the details. We won't get to offer any amendments to it, and we won't get to say what is effective and what isn't. We will just keep doing what we have been doing, which is running up the national debt. But we can't afford to keep doing that.

I talked about the national parks being a problem. I specifically talked about the national parks that are revenue producers and how we shouldn't shut down the businesses that produce the revenue. Well, I think in response to that, the States were allowed to take over national parks, but at their own expense and not from the revenue that would be generated by the park. That creates some complications for Yellowstone park, because Yellowstone park is shared by three States. They did that specifically so Wyoming couldn't claim that Yellowstone was Wyoming's national park. So a little goes into Montana, and a little goes into Idaho. So that would require a joint agreement by the three States on exactly how that would work, and I am hoping those three States are working out a plan for that if this ever happens again.

That is one of the things government ought to do, to look at what the future possibilities are and say: No, we are never going to have a shutdown or we are never going to have a debt ceiling crisis. We create these crises. We create them by putting definite deadlines on things and then everything crescendos up to that point. The people who are then picked for the task force to deal with that crisis have a huge media listening group, which is a disincentive, actually, to get it solved before the deadline.

A few other problems that were mentioned that need to be solved: The National Institutes of Health, armed forces who are on Active-Duty training, veterans benefits—particularly veterans benefits for the year—compensation for furloughed Federal employees, special nutrition programs, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Food and Drug Administration, continuing appropriations for Head Start, and salaries and related expenses for certain Federal employees.

Traditionally, when we have had a situation like this, when the employees do come back to work, they get compensated for the time they weren't there. Do you know what the people in my State think of that? Why are we paying people for not working?

So if the principle behind that is to go ahead and approve their salaries and expenses and get them back to work, that would take care of most of the problems. But then the people wouldn't be feeling the hurt out there, and if they don't feel the hurt, they don't know whom to blame, and if they can blame one side or the other, that makes a difference in elections.

That is not what this body is about. We should be about getting things done in the regular order, following the right spending process—which we don't do—and avoiding situations where we make it hurt.

We have a sequester in effect. It is the first time the Federal appropriations and the Federal spending have been cut probably since the Korean war. It was a true cut, but it was a 2.3-percent cut. You won't find anybody agreeing it is really 2.3 percent even though that is what the law says, and that is because we didn't do our spending process in the proper order. So we got through 8 months before the sequester went into effect, and when it goes into effect with only 4 months left, the 2.3 percent of the whole year's spending has to be taken out of the 4 months' worth of budget. That made it 5.3 percent.

I was visited by the Head Start folks of my State, and they showed me what was going to happen if the sequester stayed in place. It was kind of fascinating because they were cut 7.5 percent and are projected to be cut 7.5 percent each year after this. If we did the appropriations, the spending process, at the beginning of the year, it would be 2.3 percent, and we should anticipate that it is going to be done that way for the future, so they should have been told to watch for 2.3 percent cuts—5.3 for last year, for the 4 months they knew about it—although we knew about it for a whole year in advance, just didn't imagine it would ever happen.

So why 7.5 percent? Well, I have to believe, from other spending information I have seen by the people from Wyoming coming to Washington and telling me their dilemma, I think the Washington bureaucracy is holding on to an overproportion of the money to keep their jobs in place instead of out there where the kids are, and 7.5 percent when it should be 5.3 percent tells me that they kept 2.2 percent for running Washington. I don't think they think that is a very important part of the spending process.

The papers have been covering a number of things that people have been having trouble with. One of them is a fellow who went into the rum-making business. You can do that legally, and there are certain requirements you have to meet. Now he can't sell the rum. I thought, well, sure, his formula hasn't been approved or there hasn't been an inspection of the premises or something disastrous like that. No. He can't do it because the FDA hasn't approved the labels. I didn't even know we had a law that said Washington had to approve labels on liquors. I know we used to have one for labels that had to go on cigarettes, but even that didn't require Senate and House or administrative or FDA approval; it just required it. But evidently, if you are making rum, you have to have somebody approve your labels. I didn't run into that before, and I questioned it.

But we don't have to be in this position. We could have the government running, people could be paid, but we need to do it through the regular process. We need to do 12 spending bills and do them over a period of at least a week each and have amendments to them. There isn't an appropriator who

is the ultimate answer for any spending bill. There isn't even a committee that is the ultimate answer for each spending bill. The reason we have 100 people here and 435 people over there is so that we have 535 opinions on what could be unintended consequences or what is or what isn't important, and if they are denied the right to amendments, they are being denied the right to a voice for their constituents. It is not for us; it is for our constituents. That is why amendments are important.

We have had important bills come up here, and we worked on them for maybe 3 weeks with no votes on amendments while they tried to negotiate for a limited number of amendments.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. ENZI. Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, my colleague, our good friend from Wyoming, has talked about the need to get back to regular order so we can discuss our funding priorities. The fact is, of course, we agree. And the regular order would be to go to conference on the budget the Senate passed way back in March. On a regular basis the Democrats in the Senate have requested unanimous consent to go to conference on that budget. In fact, only a few days ago we put in our 21st request for unanimous consent to go to conference on our budget so we can go to regular order and discuss and debate the priorities that are so important to all of us. Every single time, a Republican Senator has objected to that request.

Like so many of my Democratic colleagues have been doing, I come to the floor again today to discuss the urgent need to end the shutdown and raise the debt ceiling. There can no longer be any doubt that the shutdown is hurting hundreds of thousands of families and businesses throughout our country. I and many of my colleagues have told the stories of these families and businesses and will continue to do so. This shutdown hurts real people in real places all across our country.

Keeping the government running should not be a partisan battle. Yet the Republicans who caused the shutdown in the first place seem to think they would be doing Democrats a favor by reopening the government so that people can get back to work, get paid, and pay their bills. The idea that Congress should simply do its job isn't a favor to Democrats; it is our responsibility to the American people.

The idea that stopping Congress from doing its job is somehow a valuable bargaining chip is incomprehensible to most people. Since the beginning of the shutdown driven by an extreme faction of the Republican Party, people of all walks of life in Hawaii have contacted me. They have shared stories about the impact of the shutdown on their businesses, their families, and their communities.

I talked about the toll of the shutdown on our Federal employees. I have shared stories from small businesses impacted by the closure of our national parks and other attractions. I have also been in contact with Hawaii's business community, our military, our State and local governments, and others. Today I would like to share some more shutdown stories and also underscore that allowing the United States to default on paying its bills would only serve to make things much worse.

One woman wrote to me:

> My husband and I are both Federal employees with the Forest Service. We both work in wildland fire. I am currently furloughed and he is working, but of course neither of us will receive a paycheck. We have three children ages 5, 3, and 1. My current day care costs are $2,300 a month. I can't stop paying for day care, because all require a 2–4 week notice and I would lose our spot for when I do go back to work. We have savings, but the money is what we have saved for things like Christmas and a special vacation together since my husband was gone for several months this summer fighting fires. This shutdown is extremely stressful for me and I am very concerned that it is going to go on for several weeks more.

The Hawaii Chamber of Commerce, representing over 1,000 Hawaii businesses of all sizes, also sent me stories from some of their members.

The president of one business wrote:

> Sixty percent of our business is with the Department of Defense. We move military household goods around the world as they are restationed. As a direct result of the government shutdown, we just had to lay off 41 of our 80 employees until this is resolved and the government starts booking moves. We informed the affected employees that all our staff will be working reduced hours. We anticipate that each day of this shutdown is costing the company over $18,000.

Another business owner wrote:

> My business is working on opening a fourth location in Aikahi Park Shopping Center. I was advised by our banker that SBA loan approvals and execution may be held up due to this debacle in D.C.
>
> How is that helping to move our economy forward? If we ran our business the way our leaders on Capitol Hill run our country—well, the ''closed for business'' sign would not be far behind.

These are stories about what is happening now as a result of the shutdown.

If the United States were to fail to pay its bills, it would be much worse. Interest rates would skyrocket, our capital markets could freeze, and our Nation's borrowing costs over the long term would require more of our Federal budget. In other words, a default would end up costing our economy and consumers billions of dollars.

Our country has never defaulted before. The consequences of such a default are so serious that everyone from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to the National Association of Manufacturers has warned the Republicans in particular to avoid such a catastrophe. Even the uncertainty of a possible default is enough to hurt middle-class families and businesses.

For example, after the last manufactured fiscal fiasco in 2011, mortgage interest rates rose. If you were a family looking to refinance or buy a new home, your mortgage would have cost you $100 per month more after the United States nearly defaulted than it would have cost before. That means $100 less for families across the country to spend on groceries, gas, and other items. For most working people, $100 means a lot. Imagine piling another $100 or more on the family with three young children I mentioned earlier. We can't do that to them or other families like them. Remember, in 2011 we didn't default. The uncertainty alone caused mortgage interest rates to rise. It would have been much worse if there had been a default. Yet here we are again.

It is incomprehensible that there are default deniers among my colleagues who refuse to believe that default would be catastrophic for all of us when we have the 2011 experience staring us in the face. A default would be like an immediate tax on everything middle-class families do. If interest rates explode, the cost of living in Hawaii and everywhere else would rise. Student loan rates would go up. That would reduce access to a quality education for many people. Credit cards, car payments, mortgages—all of these would become more expensive. The cost of doing business would go up. The cost of borrowing money to start or keep businesses going would go up. There is not a single good result that would come from our country defaulting on paying its debts.

As I mentioned in the past few months, a government shutdown doesn't give businesses a pause in meeting their commitments. They still have to pay rent, maintain staff, and pay to keep the lights on. Imagine if the cost of all of these suddenly went on and still nothing was coming in. That is exactly where many businesses would find themselves if the United States defaults.

In addition, with our economy still recovering from the economic crisis of 2008, finally we have businesses contemplating growing, and those plans will likely be put on hold or abandoned altogether. We should be growing jobs, strengthening the middle class, and creating opportunities for our families and businesses. A default crisis would do exactly the opposite.

In day 12 of the shutdown and with the potential of default looming on the horizon, it is way past time to give our families, businesses, and communities certainty and security. We need to open the government and avoid a totally manufactured catastrophe. Let's get on with it. I am disappointed that our Republican colleagues yesterday failed to support going forward to do just that. I ask them to reconsider their position so that we can find a path that protects our families, our communities, and our economy.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I wish to follow up on the words of my distinguished colleague from Hawaii and also comment on a few points that the Senator from Wyoming Mr. ENZI made in this important debate that is happening in Washington today—actually a debate that is happening all over our country.

First, I wish to associate myself with the effort underway by Senator COLLINS from Maine and Senator KLOBUCHAR from Minnesota, Senator PRYOR from Arkansas, and others on both sides of the aisle who have been working throughout the evening, the night, early morning hours—talking, trying to find a way forward. I thank both Leader REID and Leader MCCONNELL for blessing that effort and trying to find a way forward because, as the Senator from Hawaii said, this is a very dangerous situation.

Despite the fact that there are Members on the other side of the Capitol in the Republican Party—not in the Democratic Party, in the Republican Party—who continue to doubt that there will be any ramifications from default, I hate to say it, but they are going to be sorry they uttered those words. This is a very serious situation.

The U.S. Treasury bond is the safest investment in the world today. Let me repeat, the safest investment in the world today. Think about it. If you had a little bit of money, would you invest it in Russia? Would you invest it in Saudi Arabia? Would you invest it in China? Where would you invest it? The Government of the United States is not perfect but, relatively speaking, in all aspects of the world what is the safest, most sure group that is likely to pay their debts? That would be the United States, and it has been that way for over 225 years.

But the Republicans in the House have decided to put that on the line because they do not like the Affordable Care Act or they put all of that on the line because they don't like the way the budget process is working. They then doubled down and said not only are we going to put the full faith and credit of the United States at risk, we are going to shut down the government while we do that until we get our way on a specific piece of legislation.

I know there are principles underlying the Affordable Care Act that are worth debating how big the size of government should be, how much the Federal Government should spend, how much local government should spend, what level of revenues should be required to pay for it and who should put up those revenues, individuals or businesses. Those are important issues to decide. We try to make those decisions every day. But a group of 80 Republicans—3 of whom are in my own State, I am sorry to say, 3 Representatives—signed a letter saying: If we don't get exactly what we want on the Affordable Care Act—which, by the way, passed the Congress, was upheld by the Supreme Court, and is being implemented in a majority of States—we are going to put the full faith and credit of the United States at risk. Literally, the ramifications are too massive to describe.

We have only a few days. I wouldn't even say we have a few days. We are already feeling the results of this hostage-taking by a few Republicans in the House of Representatives. I am praying and hoping that my colleagues in the Senate will live up to the great hope of the Senate, which was at times such as these to walk back from the ledge, reason together and find a way forward.

I see my good friend from Tennessee. I think if there is anyone who could help us do that, he would be one who could, along with Senator MCCAIN and Senator GRAHAM and others who have been mayors, who have been elected officials for a long time, who understand how you can get wound up and that it is important to calmly wind down and figure this out.

I will yield for a minute to the Senator if he has a question. But I do want to say, because my argument is not with him, that when Senators come to the floor to say that Democrats have not wanted to go along with the regular process, I want to say again as an appropriator, because I came to the floor yesterday, I want to say the first step in an appropriations process is to get a budget.

The Democrats, amazingly, were able to get a budget. We have not for 4 years in the Senate. So we got a budget. Republicans got a budget. These are two completely different approaches to how the government should be funded, what should be spent, how much money should be raised—two different approaches. But you know what. It is two different parties. We have a Democrat Party controlling here, the Republican Party controlling there. That is the first step, two budgets. They are very different. We need to go to conference on that budget.

But the Democrats here have asked our Republican colleagues who sit right across the aisle, please let us go to the Budget Committee, 21 times. I have put this in the RECORD. We started on April 23, Senator REID requested unanimous consent; Senator TOOMEY from Pennsylvania objected. I am not going to read them all. Let's fast forward to 5/14, May 14. Senator WARNER asked unanimous consent to go to conference. Senator MCCONNELL blocked it. Then go into June, June 4. Senator MURRAY asked unanimous consent. Senator RUBIO blocked it. Then go to July 17, Senator MURRAY asked again, Senator MIKE LEE blocked it.

They blocked going to budget conference because the tea partiers in this party, the small group of Republicans, said we will go to conference, but you cannot talk about raising any revenues in the budget conference. We will go to a budget conference to try to solve the budget problems of the United States, but you Democrats cannot talk about raising revenues. That is because the only thing we want to talk about is cutting—cutting, cutting. That is all. They will cut anything: Head Start, education, EPA—don't like the EPA very much myself, but that is all they want to do is cut.

We said you cannot solve a problem with just one side of that equation. We don't know where the revenues might need to come from, but there has to be a balance and we have to start paying down our long-term debt.

That is one thing I wish to say again. I don't want anyone in this government or the world or my State or the Nation to think Democrats are not concerned about the debt. We are concerned about the debt. We do not like the debt being this high. We want to try to find ways and we have reduced—with our Republican colleagues—spending trillions of dollars.

The Senator from Tennessee, to his credit—because I have not been in those negotiations. I was not part of the group of 8, but I supported a lot of what they have done. I was not on Simpson-Bowles, but I supported a lot of that. To his credit, he has tried to come up with a grand bargain to get our country to pay down our long-term debt but in a smart way that strengthens our economy and does not pull out the rug from underneath it.

But because the Senator from Texas, Mr. CRUZ—through the Chair, Senator CRUZ from Texas, because Senator LEE from Utah, said: No, we cannot go to budget unless you Democrats agree before you ever get to the negotiating table that we cannot raise any revenue—that was what the fight was about, so we never went to conference.

When you don't go to the budget conference, then you cannot start negotiating the individual bills. My responsibility is to negotiate Homeland. I want to say I am very proud of my colleague Senator COATS. He and I were given a number by our leadership and we have completely put our bill together with virtually no disagreement on a lower number than we had last year. We had to cut a lot of things out. I might say, we were asked by some Republican leaders to add a $700 million project that I had to absorb into my budget because of something the Republicans asked for—and the President supported, I want to be honest. I was not a big fan of it, but the President and the Republicans wanted it, so I had to compromise and put it in my bill without any additional money and take some things out to make room for it. That is what we do around here—that is what we used to do around here. We are not doing it much right now.

For anyone to come to the floor to say to Democrats you are not the ones who want to go to regular order—we will go to budget. PATTY MURRAY, the Senator from Washington, could not be working any harder. She is one of the most respected Members in this whole

body, and I am not just saying that. She is very humble. She is very smart. She is very much willing to negotiate. The Senator from Maryland Ms. MIKULSKI is probably one of the most popular Senators who has ever served in the Senate. Literally everyone likes her. She is not difficult to work with.

She is tough. She is not difficult to work with. So we have two extraordinary people trying to work through this. Yet we are not so much being blocked by our side on the Senate—even though they have blocked 21 times—they are being run by a group of extreme, radical party members on their side who have now gotten the Republican Party in complete disarray. That is not good for them. It is not good for the Democrats. It is definitely not good for the country. Now we have to figure out our way forward.

I know I have run into my 10 minutes. I don't know if the Senator wants to speak or if he wants me to yield for a question. I am happy to wrap this up and I will in a minute.

But to recap, I am willing to be part of the common ground to find a solution, but I will not allow—as long as I am on this floor today and I will be here for a couple of hours—for anyone to suggest that Democrats have been holding up the process, we have been trying to get to a budget conference for 6 months. We have been trying to negotiate appropriations bills. But we will not be held hostage, nor the Federal employees or the businesses or nonprofits or our States and mayors and cities because Republicans cannot even go to the negotiation until they get 100 percent of their way or until the government is shutdown, it cannot open, or until we default on our debt.

We cannot negotiate under those terms. We can negotiate on terms where the hostages are freed and we sit down like grownups and work this out. I am hoping we can do that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. I thank the Senator from Louisiana for her desire to see this to a conclusion. I appreciate the many ways we have been able to work together on so many issues.

Look, I do not rise to blame either side right now. I do not. Let's face it, I have said from day one the effort that was taking place in the House regarding the health care bill was not an effort that was going to lead to a conclusion. It was an overreach. I know that. You know that. They know that. The country knows that. So we have ended up where we are.

But in fairness what has happened over the last couple of days is—on the other side of the aisle it has gotten one tick too cute. We had a group of folks who had an idea. I thought it was a good starting place, candidly. We had six Republicans and six Democrats who had an idea of a way to move beyond this. Let's face it. We all know what happens around here. Two nights ago the White House weighed in and leadership on the Democratic side pulled back a hair, asked the 12 folks not to have a press conference yesterday to announce what their efforts were.

The fact is we are where we are. Let me say this. I am perfectly happy with the two leaders negotiating a deal, and I want to support the leaders in negotiating a deal. I truly am. But at the end of the day what happened, let's face it, is we have had a little bit of a pullback where House Republicans overreached, no question. What has also happened over the last couple of days is there has been a little bit of a push to overreach and undo what happened with the Budget Control Act back in 2011, where budget caps were put in place, the President signed it, it passed, components of it—it passed the Senate. So just as much as the health care law is law, this also is law. What we have had over the last few days is a little bit of a pullback. I hope it is temporary.

What I would say is at this moment in time we have actually had a little bit of a problem on both sides of the aisle. Let's face it. I think we have an opportunity over the next 24 hours for that to be worked out. What I would do is encourage the leadership to continue on this pace.

As we all know, it takes 4 days to move anything across the Senate floor. We all know the debt ceiling is this Thursday. What I hope is going to happen is that both sides will admit there is a little bit of an issue, on both sides. I think there is a strong desire by the vast majority of our caucus over here to do something that is a pragmatic, good-government step. At the end of the day, look, these events have always been used in times when you have tremendous concerns about what our financial situation is. They have always been used as a backstop to hopefully negotiate some reforms. We have been on the wrong page for so long, which I admitted to. We may not have even been in the right book, but we have definitely been on the wrong page, and now we are finally on the right page.

Let's face it. Not only are we on the right page where we are focused on fiscal issues relative to the debt ceiling and the continuing resolution to fund government, we are finally on fiscal solutions. Not only are we on the right page, we are finally on the right paragraph. We are focused on discussing mandatory reforms. We are on the right subject. We have the two leaders who are now talking to each other. By the way, I think the six Democrats and six Republicans who came together have helped that effort.

There has been a little bit of a pullback. I think the White House kind of encouraged—hey, let's see if there is some way we can bust the sequester. In fairness, I am pretty sure that happened. I think the Senators are pretty sure that happened. I know there has been concern by some of the appropriators about the caps that exist, but it is the law.

What I hope will happen is that we will end up with an agreement. The time is so short. We are not going to be able to do anything substantial on the mandatory issue. I think we all know that. I hope we will end up with an agreement that at least sets the framework for us to move, leave this behind us, as we should, but sets up the framework to move into dealing with the mandatory issues in such a way as they need to be dealt with.

I think it is unreasonable to ask people on our side of the aisle to have a $1 trillion debt ceiling increase and not put some kind of framework in place to look at some of the mandatory issues we know are driving our country into the ground the way they are. I think there should be some framework for that to be discussed over the next 60 to 90 days. The House has looked at 6 weeks. Some people have said that is too short.

It seems to me that doing something for the short term to get government up and the threat of the debt ceiling behind us—but doing something over the short term—gives us some time to harness the energy the Senator from Louisiana was alluding to. I know the Presiding Officer has intimated some of the same things. There is some energy in this body to deal with that, but the fact is we have not. A big part of it—as I mentioned—is that we have been on the wrong subject for a long time. We are finally on the right one. Let's come to a place where we can now focus on what we should have been focused on all along relative to debt ceilings and CRs.

I think the less we do—and I don't think anybody I have heard in recent time has been doing this—to barb each other at this moment would be in everybody's best interest, because this is a moment where we do need to resolve this issue. This is not a moment to take shots at each other. We know where we have been. We know the path we have been down. It has been winding, it has been in the wrong direction, and we are now in the right place. Let's let the leaders work it out. I hope they will.

I hope while the Democrats say this is settled law—the health care bill, the Affordable Care Act—that Democrats and Republicans will say the Budget Control Act is settled law. We have agreed to some caps. There is a more intelligent way of getting to those caps. I think there are probably 70 people in this body who agree.

We could do some mandatory reforms and substitute those for some of the discretionary cuts and still end up at the same levels of spending that are in this bill, which would be more intelligent for our Nation, and it would make our Nation much stronger. I think there is a lot of desire to talk about those kinds of things as long as it is done in the right way. There are all kinds of mandatory reforms. They are not the same.

I know the Senator from Alabama, who just came into the Chamber, made note of that yesterday. There are all

kinds of mandatory changes, and they are not the same; they are not equal. We need to look at those and honor the trusts that have been set up.

Look, I think we have finally gotten to a pretty good place. I really do. I think both sides are a little bit at fault. People might discern that one side is more at fault than the other, but now it is time for all of us to focus on the right page, the right paragraph, so we can get this done.

I think we can get this done as long as people don't try to—as the Senator from Louisiana mentioned a minute ago—game this out to say which side ends up with a bigger win. I am afraid a little of that stepped in over the last 24 hours. I hope it will dissipate. I hope we will end up in a place that is good for our Nation. That is what we all came here to do, and I think it is going to happen, although I will say I have been a little bit concerned because over the last 24 hours that has not been what these conversations have been about.

Hopefully we will get back on the page we were on about 36 hours ago and focus on doing something that is bipartisan, that will stand the test of time, and will go over to the House in such a way that it has a tremendous amount of support coming out of this Chamber, and that it is not something where one side tries to peel off five or six items from the other side. That is not going to stand the test of time. That is not going to take us to a place that solves this problem in time to keep the kind of things the Senator from Louisiana mentioned might happen if we don't.

In all likelihood my time is up, and I yield the floor for that reason.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I would like to respond for 5 minutes, and then I will have to take the Chair and relieve the Presiding Officer.

Let me again say how much I respect the Senator from Tennessee. No one on his side of the aisle—except perhaps the good Senator from Alabama—has spent more time on budget issues because that is actually the job of the Senator from Alabama.

The Senator from Tennessee has taken it upon himself to be a leader. I agree with him that we are on right page, the right chapter, and in the right book to talk about some fiscal issues.

I don't agree that the strategy to get us here was the right strategy, but we are here. There is no sense in pointing fingers. I do agree that the Senate needs to try to find our way forward because—the Senator from Tennessee is correct—where we are now, there are no winners and losers. It is just about doing what is right for the American people. I want to do that for the State of Louisiana, and he wants to do that for the State of Tennessee. We have lots of people who are counting on us to try to lower our temperatures and find a way forward.

Secondly, I also agree with him that whatever we can come up with here has to be broadly supported on both sides—or at least core-supported on both sides—because it is going to have to be something we can bring to the House and say, look, this is the best we can do and we cannot go over this cliff.

Thirdly, I want to make a point. On this Budget Control Act, that is law. Let me say the Affordable Care Act, in lawyers' terms—and I am not one—would say it is not settled law. It is law that has passed and been upheld by the Supreme Court, but there have not been enough court tests. I will take the Senator's word for it, but it is settled as far as we are concerned because it passed.

The Budget Control Act is as well. But this is the point I would like to make to my good friend from Tennessee: The House is willing to take the sequester, which is the lowest number, but what they do—which is very disingenuous and what the Democrats will not be for—is basically take the lower number overall, but keeping Defense at a very high number, and therefore cutting the heck out of everybody else.

There is no agriculture money, no education money, no health care money, no nothing, but they want to keep Defense whole. That is what the House is trying to do. I realize that is not what my colleagues on the Republican side here want to do. As the Senator from Tennessee knows, that is our problem. It is not about just taking the lower number, but how that number is going to be allocated across appropriations. That is how the Defense appropriations bill is put together. It absorbs all the money and leaves all the other budgets starving.

I know Defense is important. I am a Democrat who supported a strong defense. I have stood against irresponsible cuts to the Defense budget. But to take a lower number in the whole budget and then say, OK, we will take the lower number, but we are going to give it all to Defense, and then we can't fund anything in health, education, and social services, which is so important—that is not right either.

One more point is this: The Senator from Tennessee has been very brave. There are not that many brave people around here. He has been one of the brave ones around here who said we may need to raise a few revenues around here; we can't solve the whole problem by cuts alone. In the last big deal we did, we were able to figure out how to raise some revenues and also make some cuts so we could have a good and steady way to balance our budget and not pull the rug out from underneath this very promising economy.

I have 5-percent unemployment in Louisiana. I am not talking as a State that doesn't have jobs. Our problem is we have so many jobs, we need people to fill them. It breaks my heart we are ready to pull the plug on that, and we are close. I know how much my people are counting on us to get this done.

I want to thank the Senator, but I hope he will also stand up to some of the other voices over there who say we can solve this problem by cutting, cutting, cutting, and we can cut mandatory problems and cut entitlements, that is all we have to worry about, and I think he knows that is not correct.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CORKER. Madam President, I want to take 30 seconds and say for the RECORD, I don't want anybody to think that I thought the strategy that was undertaken was the right strategy. I think I have been clear in saying I did not think that took us to a positive place. But the point is we are where we are, and we are finally on the right page. Let's stay there and solve this problem.

With that, I will yield the floor. I see the outstanding and distinguished Senator from Alabama is here. He is someone whom I very much enjoy working with, and I look forward to his comments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. LANDRIEU). The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I thank the Chair for the opportunity to share some thoughts, and I thank Senator CORKER for his commitment and leadership on these difficult budget issues.

As a businessman and someone who fabulously ran an important city in Tennessee, he knows we have to live within our means. There are limits as to what we can do and maintain a healthy financial future for America. I think that is important for all of us.

I first want to respond to a couple of things Senator REID, the Democratic leader, and Senator DURBIN said earlier this morning that sort of surprised me. First of all, he said there is no plan to break the caps. I was—as the Senator from Tennessee was—with the President on Friday, and he said there was a strong push from Democratic Senators to spend above the limits of the Budget Control Act that we all agreed to in August of 2011.

The Budget Control Act allowed substantial growth in spending. Instead of growing $10 trillion over the next 10 years, we would have reduced the growth of the budget to $8 trillion. It is not really a cut over the 10-year period.

The President submitted a budget in February of 2012, 6 months later, that would spend $1 trillion over those cuts. The Democratic budget that just passed this year—the first time in 4 years—would have increased spending by $1 trillion over those cuts. I am a little bit uneasy because I think there is an effort, and there will be an effort, which is unacceptable, to deal with those cuts—or to break the caps that limit the growth of spending, which is the right way to say it. Of course, there are some cuts we need to make.

Then Senators REID and DURBIN talked about President Bush's problems with deficits. He didn't do a great

job in containing deficits. The highest deficit he had in 1 year was $487 billion. The year before he left office, the deficit he had was $167 billion. President Obama took office and rammed through, with unanimous Democratic support, a stimulus bill that added $1 trillion to the debt of the United States—the biggest single spending bill ever, and every penny of that borrowed because we didn't have any money. We were already in debt. So we borrowed $1 trillion to spend.

So for 5 consecutive years we will have averaged over $1 trillion in deficits per year. We have never been over $500 billion a year before that, and $1 trillion is $1,000 billion. So President Obama's average in 5 years is unprecedented. It is stunning. We have never, ever seen such a debt accumulation in such a rapid period of time. I think we need to understand that. Our colleagues continue to defend it and still want to spend more, and their budget would spend $1 trillion more that they voted on and passed in this Congress.

They use the word ''extreme'' for anybody who wants to reduce spending and try to attack people who want to reduce spending.

Senator DURBIN talked about how we need a sound dollar. Is the dollar sounder today, I ask Senator CORKER, because we, this Congress, reached a bipartisan agreement to reduce spending by $2.1 trillion and the growth of spending by that much? Isn't it stronger today than it would have been if we hadn't done that? It was a tense time in August 2011. People weren't sure how it would all end, but it ended in a modest reduction in the growth of spending which I think made the country better as a result. The last thing we should ever contemplate is backing off of that agreement and not at least adhering to that agreement. We need to do a good deal more.

So I wish to share a few thoughts in general. I will go into detail, if we have time, about the nature of the Budget Control Act and explain it in more detail.

We have heard the word ''extremist'' thrown around a lot over recent days. Let me share with my colleagues what I think is extreme. Extreme is adding $6 trillion to the debt of the United States in 5 years—that is extreme—and saying there is no spending we can cut. ''We have cut every dime we can cut.''

Extreme is forcing a health care law through that the American people oppose and telling them we can take $500 billion out of Medicare, and strengthen Medicare, and then fund ObamaCare, double counting the $500 billion that will come back to haunt us in the future. Extreme is refusing to make any concession, negotiation, or alteration to a health care law that is going to financially bankrupt us. It will add another $6 trillion to the long-term debt of America—almost as much as Social Security, according to the Government Accountability Office.

They say it would be fully paid for. The President said in a joint session of Congress it would not add one dime to the debt now or ever, period, and the Government Accountability Office says it will add $6 trillion to the long-term debt of America. This is how a nation goes broke. Instead of fixing Social Security and Medicare, which need fixing, we start a whole new program that adds almost as much debt over time as they do.

Extreme is knowing we are on an unsustainable debt path and refusing to do anything about it. In the last 5 years, we have spent more than $15 trillion and added more than $6 trillion to the debt. Never has so great a sum been spent for so little benefit. Consider: Nearly 60 million working-age Americans aren't working. They are out of work. I wish the unemployment rate were 5 percent, but the truth is the unemployment rate in this country is 7.3 percent, and we have the lowest workplace participation since 1975. There are fewer people working today than there were in 2007. That is the key number. How many people are working? Our population is up, but the number of people actually having jobs is down, and more and more of those are part-time jobs.

Median household income is lower than it has been on any year since 1998. Two-thirds of the job creation this year has been part-time. We spent $1 trillion last year on welfare and poverty programs, State and Federal combined. One in six Americans are on food stamps. Let me repeat: One in six people in this Nation are receiving food stamps from the Federal Government. This economy is not healthy. Despite the endless inundation of Federal funds in some of our big cities, one in three children still live in poverty in our Nation's capital. In nearby Baltimore, one in three residents are on food stamps, and one in three youth live in poverty.

This isn't a booming, growing economy. We borrow, tax, and spend. It hasn't produced results that are good for our country. Growth is way below what it was projected to be at this time. They were predicting 3.5 or 4 percent growth. We are not likely to add 2 percent growth this year.

The only people who seem to be gaining in this economic plan is the political class who came up with it and those with enough lobbyists to profit from it. What does the President say? What does Senator REID say? How about our friends on the other side of the aisle, what do they say? Spend more money. That is what they say we need to do. But it is a budget that spends another $1 trillion, and we have to go to conference on that budget, they say. It is rather odd that after 4 years of not even producing one at all, now they are anxious to take one to conference that adds $1 trillion to the debt.

Put more people on government aid. Energy prices too high? Oh, mail people another check. They are hurting; let's send out government checks. Factory closed? Mail another check out to people who didn't get a job. Your school is failing? Send them more money. Families falling apart? Mail another check. Then there is this one: Too many Americans unemployed? Bring in foreign workers to do the job.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, do we have a 10-minute limit?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. SESSIONS. I ask unanimous consent to speak for 2 additional minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank the Chair.

By what definition can we call what we have been seeing for the last 5 years a success? It is just not. That is the problem. We have taxed more, we have spent more, we have regulated more, we have borrowed more, we have stimulated more, and it hasn't produced solid growth. We have had the slowest recovery from a recession since the Great Depression.

So this is the plan. Reduce wages that results in an increase in unemployment, more part-time jobs, more regulations, and higher energy costs. And we make that up how? Well, the government will just borrow money and subsidize people in need.

That is not the kind of compassion I think we need. I think we need to be asking ourselves, what is really happening that is hurting Americans, and why can't we create a government that is leaner, more productive, that allows growth and prosperity to occur, and not tax, regulate, and borrow our country into debt. This is the fundamental choice the Nation is going to have to be dealing with.

Indeed, my colleagues fundamentally are saying this: Well, we have a problem in Washington. We don't have enough money. We just don't have enough money. We acknowledge we are borrowing too much money, the debt is too high, and we are on an unsustainable course. But, see, the problem is not us. We haven't overspent. We don't have programs that are running out of control. We have no unmanaged agencies and departments. The problem is, American people, you haven't sent enough money. Why don't you send some more money? That is what we need to have in this country. The American people need to understand how smart we are, how good we have managed their money, and if they will just send us more money, we can figure out all of this and the government will take care of it. It is your fault, America. You are hardheaded. You won't send us more money. Send more money, and we will fix the problems in America.

I reject that idea. We have to get our house under control and make our government leaner, focused on productivity, and serving the interests of people who are hurting right now. They are not doing well, and this economy is not doing well.

I see other Senators are here, Madam President. I thank the Chair for the opportunity to share these thoughts.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Madam President, I was presiding during the last exchange between the great Senators from Louisiana and Tennessee. I was struck because as a junior member of this body I get an opportunity to sit in the chair quite a bit. I would suggest to anyone, if they want to see someone who came to the floor and predicted this outcome—who said it very early on—Senator CORKER gave what I call the box canyon speech. He did it repeatedly, because he could see what this would do if we continued to take hard-line positions that really would achieve absolutely no results.

I think Senator CORKER has been a champion in calling out all of us to behave responsibly, to behave in a fiscally appropriate way. He has been a great mentor to many of us who are new in this body. We don't always share the same philosophies, but I certainly appreciate his willingness to tell the truth and to speak with common sense. That is really why I came to the floor today.

Initially, when I came here, I thought I would write a book called ''That Makes No Sense,'' talking about all that we do and what we say and how what we do doesn't really match up all that well with what we say. I have to admit that in the last couple of weeks, my father's voice has come to me over and over. My father never went to high school. He had an eighth grade education, but he was part of the greatest generation, a World War II vet. He had an expression for his seven kids, in nine years—seven of us in nine years. When we would do things that he thought lacked common sense, he would say, ''How darn dumb are you?'' I am sure the Presiding Officer knows he didn't use the word ''dumb,'' but I will use that word in the interest of propriety here. So I rise today to talk about what we are doing now that makes no sense.

We have heard in the last hour and a half a lot of discussion about fiscal accountability and fiscal responsibility. Senators have been coming to the floor and speaking about their perspective on how we need to live within our means. I totally agree. But think of this: Think about where we are right now, today, adding to our debt and deficits by a dysfunction that is completely created right here in Washington, DC.

I am going to start by mentioning three things. The first thing is the House of Representatives consistently not voting—not taking up the CR, which was negotiated—short-term, negotiated and agreed to—and not putting that CR on the floor for a vote. Then, the same people who voted to not let people work voted to pay people not to work. Think about what the American public sees when they see that, that we won't let people who want to work—they know their work is piling up. They are committed public servants. The Washington Post has been replete with stories about people who want to get back to their jobs. They want to be public servants. So we vote so they can't go to work, but we pay them not to go to work. We won't let them work, but we pay them not to go to work.

In the meantime, we don't have anyone to check out disaster accounts in North Dakota. We don't have BLM permits being issued in Indian country to help as the struggling Indian nations in my State achieve some economic parity. We don't have things getting done. There is no bill in the House with that headline CR—that is what I call it. It is the headline CR. Whatever is in the headlines, we will pass a bill to fix that. That is no way to run a government. It makes no sense.

Let's talk about the debt. Let's talk about the need to control our debt and have a deficit reduction and a long-term plan to pay down our debt. Why is it important? Because we pay interest on the debt, and every dollar of interest we pay is another dollar we don't have for Head Start, another dollar we don't have for education or research or for higher education. So this is a real problem. What are we doing?

We have people who have said it doesn't matter; we don't need to pay our debt. We can just decide which bills we are going to pay. I am the same as every person in America. They know that when they go to check their credit score—a person goes to the bank to get a car loan, and the bank says: Well, you don't have a high enough credit score so we are going to deny your car loan.

You say: But what is the problem?

They say: Well, you missed a credit card payment and you missed your mortgage payment.

You say: But I always paid my car loan.

That is not the way it works. What they know and what the American people know is that if you do not pay all your bills, your credit rating goes down.

The tragedy is that we are not only going to add to the debt and deficit of this country by playing this brinkmanship, we are going to hurt every American who relies on credit—whether it is for a mortgage, whether it is for a car loan, whether it is for a student loan. We have now linked student loans to this problem.

Think about the dollars and think about what is happening to the American people when we do not do what we need to do. We shut down government but will not let people go to work, will not let people serve the public, but then say: Oh, don't worry, we are going to pay you. And then, by shutting down this government, we have cost millions and millions and billions of dollars, adding to the debt and deficit—dollars we did not have to spend.

Now we are going to play this brinkmanship on our debt limit. We are going to shake up not only the American markets, we are going to add to the interest costs of the American people and of this government. We already have in the markets discounting of our Treasury bills. We already have seen exactly what is going to happen. The longer this impasse stays, the more dramatic this result is going to be.

The vote we took yesterday in the Senate sent a message—and the wrong message, I tell you, the wrong message—to the markets. We need to send the right message. We need to come together. We need to lead from the Senate because the House, which is not even in session today addressing this problem, seems to think there is no problem with the debt limit, there is no problem with not paying our bills, there is no problem with paying people and not letting them work.

Do you know what my dad would say? How darn dumb are you? What I say is that makes no sense because as passionate as I know they are about debt and deficit reduction, the reality is that what we are doing is adding to the debt and deficit.

What we are doing is justifying—justifying—a 5-percent approval rating for the U.S. Congress. Every day we are here that we do not achieve a result, every day we are here that we do not solve this problem, how can you argue that the judgment of the American public is wrong?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, we are in the 13th day of a self-inflicted crisis brought to us by the Republicans. Why did this happen? Why are we in the 13th day of a shutdown, the 13th day of the American people not being able to count on their government, which is supposed to be of, by, and for the people? Why? Because Speaker BOEHNER over in the House said he does not believe the American people want the Affordable Care Act, and even though he believed they did not want a shutdown, unfortunately that is what he brought to the Nation. That is horrible news—horrible news. People are suffering. People are struggling. Hundreds of thousands of people are not getting their paychecks. Americans know a lot of us do count on that paycheck. It is not as if we have massive amounts of savings behind it. If you do not get that paycheck, you are in trouble. How do you pay the mortgage? How do you pay the rent? That is what is happening. We have police officers who talked to me yesterday, trying to use some gallows humor to explain away their fears. They are afraid. They cannot pay the bills. They have families. This is a disgrace—a self-inflicted disgrace—on our Nation.

I have not even gotten to the issue that is staring us in the face: perhaps the first time in history that America would not pay its bills—a default—even

though the Constitution is clear. It says, essentially, the debts of the United States shall not be questioned. That is in the Constitution. Well, they are being questioned.

We have a situation where not only are these employees of the Federal Government being laid off and not getting paid and the communities in which they live are going to suffer because they really cannot go down to the corner store, but the contractors are not getting paid; the small businesses are not getting paid; road projects—and I know something about this as chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee—many new projects are stopped in their tracks, not because people are not ready to go but because all the various signoffs that have to be made before you start a project cannot be made; investigations into chemical explosions that kill people every single year in America stopped in their tracks; investigations into airplane crashes stopped in their tracks; little kids kept out of Head Start. Why? Because the Republicans do not like the Affordable Care Act.

What is it that they do not like about the Affordable Care Act, I ask rhetorically. Do they not like the fact that 3 million adults in America are now insured through their parents' plan—I am sure many in the Presiding Officer's State and I know in my State over 1 million. Are they that upset that they want to shut down the government because people are getting insurance?

Madam President, 71 million people across the country—8 million in my State—getting free preventive services, including immunization. Are they that upset that they would shut down the government and make our people suffer and shut the doors? Seventeen million kids with preexisting conditions like asthma and diabetes can no longer be denied health insurance coverage. The Presiding Officer is a champion for children. I can imagine how she feels about this. They want to repeal a law that finally has protected 17 million kids with preexisting conditions like asthma and diabetes. There are no more lifetime limits on policies.

There was a magnificent piece written in the Washington Post by one of my constituents—a mom, a freelance writer—who talks about her son who was born with a brain tumor, and over the years they have had to have operation after operation after operation. They came an inch away from reaching the lifetime limit on the policy—$500,000—and they learned the Affordable Care Act passed, and this child got his health care. Now, as she says, he is talking and he is walking and he is shooting baskets. I saw that mom and son on the Lawrence O'Donnell show the other night, and if you have not seen it on MSNBC, I think you ought to take a look at it.

So you have to wonder, what is it they are trying to do?

What is interesting is that if you listen to my colleagues now, they are off the Affordable Care Act. They kind of gave up on it because we said to them: This law passed 4 years ago. It has a steady stream of funding. It has its kinks and its problems. We are going to work with you on that. But you cannot stop it. It was upheld in the Supreme Court. You lost an election about it. Get a life. Figure it out. It is happening. OK. It is happening.

So now they have a new thing—deficits. Madam President, you are considered a fiscal conservative. I want to remind you and everyone listening within the sound of my voice that not only did the Democrats lead the way on a balanced budget, we actually got surpluses at the time Bill Clinton was President. How did we do it? We worked together with our Republican friends, but we passed a budget without one Republican vote and we set the stage. Do you know what happened? Not only did we have a surplus—in other words, we had extra money beyond a balanced budget—we had created at that time 23 million new jobs. What a glorious time. We did not do it by threatening to shut down the government. We did not do it by threatening to default on the full faith and credit of the United States of America. We did it by sitting down, looking at each other, smiling, shaking hands, and working together.

Let's open the government, let's pay our bills, and then let's sit down and really debate how we are going to get to a balanced budget. We have a lot of history to draw from. We do know when you put two wars on a credit card and the biggest tax break to millionaires in history on a credit card and a prescription drug benefit on a credit card it is a problem. That is why we saw, under George W. Bush, surpluses turn immediately into deficits. Now our colleagues suddenly are deficit hawks. Where were they when George W. was putting all this on the credit card? And now they do not want to pay the bills. It is unbelievable.

This is not complicated. This is a self-inflicted crisis. You keep the government open, you pay the bills, and through regular order, with my friend the good Senator from Alabama and my friend the great Senator also from Washington State, sitting down, hammering it out, we bring in PAUL RYAN, we bring in the House Democrats, and we sit down, and through them we get a path forward.

Everything that is happening now is unnecessary. I want to repeat that. Everything that is happening now is unnecessary—13th day of a shutdown, pain and suffering throughout the country.

I have a little community in Los Angeles. Little kids—their noses are bleeding. They are sick. They live near some industrial site. EPA said they were getting on it. EPA got the message: You are out. We cannot help you. We are closed down; 92 percent furloughed.

You will notice in all those little mini-bills, Madam President, you did not see anything about that. No watchdogs anymore. The watchdogs are gone. We cannot have government by press release. We cannot have government by mini-bills. We are the greatest Nation on God's Earth, and we need to open the doors and let the people in.

We have elections. Elections have consequences. Republicans control the House, it is true, but Democrats control the Senate and the White House. Therefore, we need to work together. We do not threaten to shut down.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent for 60 seconds.

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

Mrs. BOXER. So here is the good news. The good news is we have a bill over in the House. It is a clean continuing resolution. It would open the doors to government immediately. And it is a very short-term CR—continuing resolution—and would still preserve everyone's right to sit down and negotiate through regular order. We have a strong budget chairman. We have a strong budget ranking member. America has gotten to know them well. And the same in the House. Therefore, I put my faith in those folks under regular order.

So we could open this government in 5 minutes, we could pass a clean debt extension in 7 minutes, and then we sit down and negotiate. I did speak with Leader REID this morning, and I feel he is optimistic that we are going to get there—I really do—and it lifts my spirits.

MITCH MCCONNELL and HARRY REID have been around here a long time. They have had their ups and downs and sideways and everything else like everybody in the relationships here. But I think they know the moment of history is calling them. I put my faith in that. I hope I am right.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, yesterday Senate Republicans rejected a cloture motion on a strictly party-line basis for a simple measure to prevent default for the United States of America. This bears repeating. Yesterday we voted on whether to proceed to a bill to prevent default, and not one Senate Republican voted for it.

I think it is fair to say that many of the Senate Republicans are operating in good faith and have a strong desire to get out of this mess, but they are concerned about embarrassing and undermining the Speaker of the House by moving too quickly on this measure. Too quickly came and went a couple of months ago.

Worrying about undermining the Speaker of the House should not be our primary concern given the crisis upon us. We should be singularly focused on protecting the dollars as the reserve currency, maintaining our ability to borrow at the lowest possible rate, and

retaining our ability to solve problems as the greatest Nation in the world.

The time for worrying about the implications for one or the other political party or a faction within it has long since passed. It is time to reopen the government, to pay our bills, to ensure the full faith and credit of the United States, and to return to the negotiating table on all of the challenges in front of us. In short, it is time to get back to governing in the way we should.

I would like to emphasize a point that is not made often enough about the current crisis; that is, there is simply nothing conservative about the behavior of the House Republicans. Conservatives traditionally have been characterized by holding a respect for institutions, a focus on the needs of the private sector, and a desire to not waste money.

Are these principles being upheld or subverted by the actions of House Republicans?

First, with respect to our Democratic institutions, the procedural violence being done to the Congress is hard to overstate in this case. The idea that a faction of a party is demanding concessions in exchange for ceasing their infliction of pain on America is unbelievable. Why? Because we are all Americans here. We all want to do right by our country.

So the idea that one party is willing to inflict terrible pain on our country, or else, was so beyond the pale that there is no rule against it because no one ever contemplated that a major political party would ever behave in such a way. The assumption has always been that elected leaders would find a better way to stand for strongly held beliefs than by threatening to bring the American economy to its knees. Up until now that has been a safe assumption.

This is the least conservative behavior imaginable because it throws us into a permanent crisis, unable to solve major problems for the foreseeable future.

Second, conservatives traditionally have wanted to protect the free marketplace. Some default deniers surmise that maybe the U.S. Government can service its debt while delaying other payments, that we can simply prioritize. The United States of America cannot do that. Even if it were operationally possible, which the Treasury Department assures us it is not, it would cause such severe harm to markets and undermine our credibility so terribly that even talking like that may be doing damage to our economy.

In 2011, Congress's delay in raising the debt limit forced the Department of the Treasury to take extraordinary measures to ensure that our government could pay its bills. GAO estimates that this raised Treasury's borrowing costs by about $1.3 billion in fiscal year 2011. That is $1.3 billion in added government costs just for coming close to defaulting. This does not include the lingering added costs of borrowing that continued beyond fiscal year 2011.

It also does not include the wasted time and resources that these extraordinary actions meant. After all, this manufactured crisis took the Treasury Department's focus away from other important cash and debt management responsibilities. The Bipartisan Policy Center projects that the full cost of that crisis to the Federal Government alone, not to the economy, just to the Federal Government, will be around $19 billion over the maturity of the debt.

There is nothing conservatively virtuous about defaulting on what we owe. It will cripple free markets. It is Russian roulette played with a bullet in every chamber. There so nothing conservative about that.

Finally, there is the conservative principle about saving taxpayers' dollars. Two points: First, with the likely passage of the House bill to provide retroactive pay to Federal employees, let me tell you what is happening. We are paying Federal employees to stay home. We are paying our dedicated Federal workers, who want to do their jobs, not to do their jobs. This is not conservative. This is not liberal, for that matter. It is upside down.

We are preventing Federal employees from doing their important work, such as assisting small businesses and combating terrorism. Let me be clear. Federal workers did not cause this shutdown and should not lose pay because of it. That is why I cosponsored Senator CARDIN's bill to make sure they receive back pay when the government reopens. Our Nation's furloughed public servants want to work, and many Federal civilian employees are being required to work during this shutdown without pay.

While it does not make sense to punish Federal workers for Congress's dysfunction, it makes way more sense to simply reopen the Federal Government. Still, the House refuses to vote on a clean continuing resolution that can reopen the government tomorrow but instead voted to give backpay after the shutdown ends. What is conservative about paying people to stay home?

Second, this shutdown is costing us money, not saving us money. In just the first week, it cost the economy $1.6 billion in lost economic output and is estimated to cost an average of $160 million each additional day. This is hurting small businesses and working families across the country, and it is completely avoidable.

As the Presiding Officer knows, people are in real pain. This needs to stop. There is nothing good in this shutdown or in the threat of default. As a progressive, I have talked on this floor about how it hurts our economy, the American people, and the priorities I am fighting for. But you do not have to share my priorities to think this is an awful mess. You can be a rock-ribbed conservative too. This is bad for all of us. There is a simple way to move forward: Open our government, pay our bills, and start negotiating on the issues that matter.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleague from Hawaii Senator SCHATZ and share his points. I think most of the American people share his perspective this is an awful mess and it is way past time that we fix it.

I am hearing from people in New Hampshire every day who are affected by the negative consequences of this shutdown. I heard from some employees at the Berlin prison. This is a medium-security facility in the northern part of New Hampshire. It has not even been fully staffed. It does not have all of the inmates there. Several of the employees have emailed me talking about what their situation is.

One woman says:

> We are expected to work and not get paid for the time being. But it's going to be tough when both working members of the household are government employees who aren't getting paid. I am expected to make my Federal student loan payments on time as well as my private student loans. How is one supposed to do that when the government is not paying them? They expect payment. Well, so do we.

I also heard from a gentleman whose family is back in New York because he is still getting settled in Berlin. He has a child who is ill. He says he was told last week that any sick or annual leave could be used, but it would be considered as a nonpaid day during this shutdown. He says:

> I have been dealing for the past 3 months with my youngest child who's been having kidney problems and had surgery recently. My wife has been having kidney difficulty and had surgery. So now I cannot respond to my family's aid because I would be concerned about whether or not I am going to be able to get paid for these sick days. We are hearing from people across New Hampshire. Hundreds of Federal workers have been furloughed in the State. New Small Business Administration loans have been stopped. Federal Housing Administration and VA loans have been slowed. Facilities in the White Mountain National Forest have been closed.

This is the peak weekend for foliage in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Yet because of the shutdown, facilities, bathrooms in the White Mountain National Forest are closed, campgrounds are closed, the small businesses that depend on those for the rest of their season are taking a huge hit. So many of the manufacturing businesses in New Hampshire are being affected.

I heard from a company called Nanocomp, which is a real innovative, small New Hampshire company producing next-generation carbon nanotube technology. They have a number of Federal contracts. They have already been hit by sequestration. So this is a double whammy. Their CEO said to me:

We would burn through our very thin cash reserves as a result of this shutdown, and when that money is burned, it is not able to be replaced. So our basic financial viability can be irrevocably damaged, even after the crisis passes.

For this company, the consequences of this shutdown could be irreversible. I heard from another small business owner with a company called GlobaFone. He called because he is so frustrated because again his government contracts are not being paid. He does not know what that is going to mean. Their cashflow is uncertain. He is not sure if his line of credit with the bank is going to continue.

There are very real consequences from this government shutdown.

Then of course, on SBA loans, according to the Granite State Development Corporation, which is one of the largest SBA lenders in New Hampshire, about 20 loans have been put on hold with the Granite State Development Corporation because of this shutdown.

Then, we have heard from some of our community banks that provide for SBA loans that those loans are being held up. There is no doubt this is having a huge impact in New Hampshire on families, on small businesses. But it is having an impact across this country.

That is affecting activity. As the Presiding Officer said so well in his comments, this is having a huge impact on how the economy of this country is doing. As we think about the concerns we have heard expressed about the debt and the deficit, one of the improvements to reducing the deficit and the debt as this economy recovers is the recovery itself. It has improved economic activity. It is making sure businesses can do better. They can hire more workers, people get back to work, and they can pay their taxes.

Yet that very economic recovery is what is being threatened right now by this shutdown. We know that as bad as this shutdown is—and we are in the 13th day—that 4 days from now we have an even more disastrous potential impact to this country and to our economy looming. Economists across the ideological spectrum have warned that if the Federal Government defaults on paying our bills, if we reach that debt ceiling and we do not continue to pay our bills, we could see businesses stop hiring, retirement accounts and families nest eggs could lose much of their value overnight. Interest rates would rise, which means higher costs for consumers, small businesses, and the Federal Government. Consumer confidence, which is so important for small businesses, would drop sharply. We are seeing that already. In the last few weeks we have seen the sharpest drop in consumer confidence since the fall of Lehman Brothers back in 2008.

We have heard from some people who are debt deniers, debt ceiling deniers, that these are just scare tactics, that these terrible consequences would not happen. But, in fact, we saw that in 2011; when we were having this debate again about whether we should raise the debt ceiling, there were dire consequences to that debate. In late July and early August, leading up to the debt deal of 2011, the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 2,000 points. As a result of that drop, average Americans with retirement accounts saw their household wealth plummet by $2.4 trillion.

Our credit rating was downgraded for the first time in America's history, and the crisis resulted in an additional $1.3 billion in borrowing costs for the Federal Government. As the Presiding Officer said so well: If you care about the debt and the deficits facing this country, why would we inflict that kind of burden again on the economy by saying we are not going to raise the debt ceiling.

The potential consequences, if we refuse to raise the debt ceiling, on November 1 we have already heard from Treasury Secretary Lew that Social Security and Medicare, which have not been affected by the shutdown, would clearly be affected by a default. It could delay or disrupt Social Security checks, Medicare, Medicaid, veterans' benefits, military salaries.

According to the Treasury, delayed or disrupted payments would prevent 57.5 million Americans from receiving Social Security benefits in a timely manner. This could put the most vulnerable people in America in jeopardy and prevent them from receiving the benefits they have earned and the benefits they need to live on.

My former colleague and fellow Senator, Judd Gregg, a Republican—he and I don't always agree on everything, but we certainly agreed on the negative consequences of our failure to act to increase the ability of this country to pay its bills.

In an op-ed that was published by The Hill newspaper, Senator Gregg said the brinkmanship on default is: The political equivalent of playing Russian roulette with all of the chambers of the gun loaded. It is the ultimate no-win strategy. A default would lead to some level of chaos in the debt markets, which would lead to a significant contraction in economic activity, which would lead to job losses, higher spending by the Federal Government, and lower tax revenues, which would lead to more debt.

That sums it up very well. Senator Gregg understands, as I think most of us do in the House and Senate, that for us to refuse to raise this debt ceiling, to allow the country to pay its bills, to allow the country to default, would be shortsighted, irresponsible, and reckless. I hope that we are all going to come together to get this done in the next couple of days and save this country from even more disastrous consequences.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. The vote yesterday was to raise the debt ceiling without altering by one penny the spending and debt path we are on.

It was demanded by Senator REID and the majority that we raise the debt ceiling, give the President another $1 trillion or so in borrowing, and no commitment to make any changes in how we got here. That was not what we did in August 2011. Then, we agreed to reduce the growth of spending over 10 years by $2.1 trillion in exchange for raising the debt ceiling $2.1 trillion. Of course, we have already spent all of that.

We have already borrowed $2.1 trillion more. Senator REID and the majority are demanding a clean debt ceiling bill, where we raise the debt ceiling but don't bother to ask us to change our spending habits, not one penny.

They say we can't negotiate on the debt ceiling. That is wrong.

I think it is perfectly appropriate. The House is prepared to do this, but they want some changes in how we are spending the taxpayers' money. The American people are tired of it. By a huge majority, they say we should not raise the debt ceiling unless we change our spending habits. Actually, almost a quarter of the American people say we should live within our income. We shouldn't raise the debt ceiling at all.

The idea that the President of the United States would not pay the bond holders of the United States, the debt holders of our country, if the debt ceiling were not raised, is unthinkable. Of course he will. He has to under the Constitution.

If we did not raise the debt ceiling, we would be bringing in $240 billion a month. The interest on our debt is $20 billion a month. That should be the first thing that is paid—and I am sure it would be if that were to happen.

I agree, the shutdown needs to end and the debt ceiling impasse needs to be dealt with. It is not good for America. But we cannot just say we are not going to do anything, we are not going to make any changes in our habits around here. That is what is at stake.

I will take a few minutes to walk through our situation about how we arrived at this point, especially with discretionary spending. I hope this will be helpful to our colleagues. It is a product of our work on the Budget Committee, where I am ranking member.

Many will remember in the summer of 2011 that Congress and the President engaged in a vigorous debate, tough negotiations, about how best to address runaway annual deficits of $1 trillion a year. As a matter of fact, over 5 years we have added $6 trillion to the debt of the United States of America.

Our discussions were ultimately resolved with the passage of the Budget Control Act. The BCA, as it is called, had at its heart three agreements. First it required a vote in each House of Congress on a balanced budget. Of course, the Senate voted that down. A majority, I believe, voted for it, but it didn't get the supermajority for a constitutional amendment.

Second, it allowed the President to increase the debt limit by $2.1 trillion subject to a congressional vote. That occurred.

Third, it provided spending controls of at least $2.1 trillion over or equal to the debt limit increase over 10 years.

The debt ceiling has already been reached in 2 years, a little over, and we still have not honored the commitment to reduce the growth of spending by $2.1 trillion over 10 years.

To rein in government spending the BCA did two things. It placed statutory caps or limits on discretionary spending. Those are the general programs of our government, which totaled $915 billion over 10 years. It was enforced by sequestration. It also called for an additional $1.2 trillion of future savings from any combination of entitlements and revenues agreed to by the so-called supercommittee that the legislation formed to try to reach some agreement on long-term improvements in our financial condition. This supercommittee was given the challenge to do this.

If they failed, then additional reductions of $1.2 trillion would be enforced through a future sequester mechanism.

The sequester was very clear, very real. The legislation mandated $2.1 trillion in reduced spending, but it allowed the committee to look for ways to do it. If the committee didn't reach agreement, there would be some automatic cuts. Nearly $1 trillion of savings were booked initially. The supercommittee went to work, but unfortunately they failed to make recommendations to Congress to find the other savings required under the act.

I commend the members of the committee. I do believe they tried their best, but they didn't reach agreement.

With that failure, the BCA outlined the path forward: $1.2 trillion in spending reductions, including interest savings, in both defense and nondefense operations spread out evenly over the 9 years left between the fiscal years 2013 and 2021.

Due to a variety of other laws passed over the years, primarily the 1990 deficit deal and the 2010 so-called pay-as-you-go act, which was passed on a debt limit increase also, the reductions do not apply to all Federal spending programs but only to those that are not exempt from enforcement. Many social programs are actually exempt. The food stamp program does not get a dime in reductions. Medicaid does not get a dime in reductions, for example. These cuts were to begin in January 2013, but were delayed until March of this year 2013, inside of that fiscal cliff agreement bill we reached, the American Taxpayer Relief Act, in January.

When the sequester took effect on March 1, it covered both discretionary and some mandatory spending, but less on mandatory. Discretionary spending was reduced a total of $68 billion for this fiscal year; $43 billion of that will fall on defense, and $26 billion on nondefense spending. They each represent about half of the Federal Government expenditures for discretionary accounts.

Additionally, $17 billion in identified mandatory spending was sequestered, of which $11 billion came from Medicare.

Total reductions were $85 billion. It is not a whole lot when we are spending $3.5 trillion, but $85 billion was at least progress downward in spending a little bit, at least from the growth in spending.

Looking ahead, colleagues have asked me what happens next under the Budget Control Act? In 2014, spending will be restrained on both the mandatory and discretionary side of the ledger at the approximate rates I mentioned. A sequester began on October 1 for mandatory spending—and this is mainly Medicare—totaling $18.8 million. Medicare spending will be reduced by a little over $11 billion, and the rest of the mandatory savings will come from reductions in defense and other mandatory spending.

There are some programs in the Defense Department that are mandatory also. Most of the Defense Department is discretionary. So the minor mandatory spending reductions hit defense and certain administrative expenses for Federal benefit programs and so forth.

For discretionary spending, the direction is down. Under the BCA, total regular discretionary spending is planned to be at $967 billion this upcoming fiscal year, split between $498 billion for defense, $469 billion for nondefense, although nondefense got less of a cut than defense.

This year's nondefense number is the same as last year; it is frozen. The nondefense discretionary spending did not take another cut this year. It is flat. Defense will be taking an additional $20 billion reduction this year under the BCA.

A so-called clean continuing resolution would come in at an annual rate of $986 billion, due to the fact that it keeps nondefense spending below the BCA caps while reflecting the current run rate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank the Chair. I have a number of other comments about where we are financially.

I would ask unanimous consent to have 1 additional minute.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. I would say, colleagues, that the defense cuts do not count the war reduction costs. Those were entirely separate and not part ever this.

The defense budget is getting hammered, but we ought to smooth some of these reductions out in a more fair way. Fundamentally, though we must remain committed to the requirements of the BCA.

I know it would be hard for my Democratic colleagues because the budget they produced would spend $1 trillion over the BCA limits. The President proposes to spend $1 trillion above those limits that we agreed to in August 2011.

As part of this deal, it would be wrong for us to breach the promise we made to the American people that if they let us raise the debt ceiling to $2.1 trillion, we would reduce spending over 10 years by $2.1 trillion. That reduction is really a reduction in the growth of spending because we would be growing spending $8 trillion over 10 years rather than $10 trillion over 10 years.

I thank the Chair and I yield the floor.

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

The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes.

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

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the cost of the Federal Government shutdown, including a cost we don't talk about—the opportunity cost. The fact is we are paying a huge price for what we are not doing here in Washington while so much of our time and energies are spent on this totally unnecessary shutdown.

Americans are rightly looking at Congress and saying: What are you guys doing? Why are you hurting people? Why are you hurting families? Why are you impeding our economic recovery? They are also asking: Why aren't you working on what we send you there to do—on creating jobs, on improving our educational system, on addressing our Nation's long-term fiscal sustainability?

Last weekend, I came to the floor to talk about the effect of this shutdown on individual Minnesotans. I receive e-mails from people who are hurting. Let me read from a few. I will not read them in full because of time.

Charlotte from Duluth writes:

> Senator Franken: Veterans' benefits are important to me, and I want to tell you my story. I have three children and my spouse who currently attends college, we just got into the hud-vash program.

The HUD–VASH program is a program that provides housing assistance and support services for homeless veterans and their families.

Charlotte continues:

> We thought it was a miracle to not be homeless. Now we are facing the same thing, no check, no schooling. My family will be homeless without food, clothes, a vehicle if this government shutdown is not resolved. I am praying for a miracle in this situation; my son is turning 1 year old next month, I don't want to remember his first birthday with us losing everything we have worked so hard for. My daughter just started head-start. She loves it, but it is the last thing on my mind now. I am thinking, how will I get her to school? How will I provide a home for her to live in? What is she going to eat? This is not a joke. I have never been one to take a hand out from anyone. These are things I have earned; and are now being taken away from me because someone in Washington

wants to prove a point. What point is everyone trying to make? That you have the power to do this?

Timothy from Bloomington writes:

My daughter is a single mother who cannot afford her home. She has wisely decided to sell the house. She has persevered and now has a sale pending. She is in a financial crisis and needs this sale to go through or she will risk falling into foreclosure. And now the government shutdown is threatening to prevent the sale from going through because a branch of the IRS that prints income tax transcripts is closed. At the very least the situation will cost my daughter more than $1,000 if she has to continue making payments, at worst she may fall into foreclosure.

Last weekend, I also talked about the way the shutdown threatens to deprive our seniors of vital nutrition programs, such as Meals-on-Wheels. Here is what Millie Hernesman from Hibbing, MN, told the Hibbing Daily Tribune about Meals-on-Wheels:

I'd hate to see it disappear. It offers a variety of important meals that cover every facet—from protein to fiber—and it comes right to my door. I like it a lot.

Sandra, a Head Start director in southern Minnesota, wrote me about Head Start. She writes:

Dear Senator Franken, Thank you for your ongoing support for Head Start. If the federal budget is not settled by November 1st, the HS programming in Olmsted and Freeborn Counties will have to shut down. Our federal grant is from 11/1–10/31. As the HS Director, I know the devastating impact this would have on our families and staff.

Now let me talk a little about Head Start. Because of the sequester, we have seen children in Minnesota lose slots in Head Start. If this shutdown continues through the end of October, programs serving about 2,500 children could be affected by the lack of Head Start funding.

You know, kids are only 3 years old once. They are only 4 years old once. The learning experiences they would be missing at that age because their Head Start Program is shuttered due to this shutdown or that they are missing now because their program has already been shuttered because of the sequester can never be replaced. We are just hurting our communities and our Nation when those little children lose that opportunity.

We know from study after study that a quality early childhood education such as Head Start returns between $7 and $16 for every $1 invested. Why? Because a child who has had a quality early childhood education is less likely to be referred to special ed, is less likely to be left back a grade, and has better health outcomes. Quality early childhood programs can help reduce the rates of adolescent pregnancy. Kids who have had a quality early childhood education are more likely to graduate high school, more likely to go to college, more likely to graduate from college, more likely to have a good job and pay taxes, and they are less likely to go to prison.

If we really cared about our Nation's long-term fiscal sustainability, we would be investing more in Head Start, not less. And we have been investing less because of the sequester and are now because of the shutdown. So that is just an example of the entirely counterproductive nature of this shutdown and the tremendous price we are paying for it.

But I rise today also to talk about the price we are paying for what we are not doing here in Congress, for the unmet needs which we are not turning our attention to because of the time we are wasting with this shutdown and the threat of default on our debt.

We have a skills gap in Minnesota. What is a skills gap? Well, recent studies have shown that between one-third and one-half of manufacturers in my State have at least one job they cannot fill because they can't find a worker with the right skills to fill that job. This is a nationwide phenomenon and it is not just manufacturers, it is information technology, health care, and other businesses that have jobs sitting there waiting for skilled workers to fill them. There are more than 3 million jobs in this country that could be filled today if there were workers who had the right skills—more than 3 million jobs today.

The thing is, we know how to train people for these jobs. We know it because we have done it. We have done it in Minnesota and we have done it elsewhere in this country. I have seen partnerships in my State between businesses and community and technical colleges that have been wildly successful.

Take, for example, Hennepin Technical College in Hennepin County. A number of manufacturers needed workers skilled in precision machine tooling. They worked with Hennepin Technical College to create a curriculum, and they then donated machines for the students to work on. At a roundtable at HTC I learned they had graduated over 300 students from the program and 93 percent of those graduates had permanent jobs.

One of the manufacturers at the roundtable was Erick Ajax, CEO of EJ Ajax and Sons. It is a metal stamping and sheet metal fabrication company in Fridley, MN, that was founded by Erick's grandfather in 1945. I love what Erick has done with his company and how he has worked with HTC—Hennepin Technical College—and the University of Minnesota to train his workforce and provide them with good high-tech jobs and pays for them to continue their education.

Erick gave me an example of one of his workers that I find so exciting—not because it is extraordinary but because it is something we can duplicate over and over in this country. He hired a guy who had completed a certification program at a community and technical college. The guy was really good at his job, so Erick sent him back to continue his education and get his associate's degree. The guy continued to work for Erick, continued to be a star, and a few years later Erick paid him to go to the University of Minnesota to get his bachelor's degree, and he got it. Now the guy is head of quality control for EJ Ajax, an incredibly high-skilled job at an advanced manufacturing company.

Now, understand, this guy graduated from college with no debt—zero debt—and with a great job. This brings me to what I want to be working on here.

A number of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle know how enthusiastic I am about incentivizing partnerships between businesses and community and technical colleges to fill the skills gap. As I said, I have seen many successful models in my State.

I have seen it at Alexandria Technical and Community College in Alexandria, MN, which is sometimes referred to as the Silicon Valley of packaging machines. I have seen it at South Central Community and Technical College in Mankato, MN, where about 8 to 10 manufacturers, who had helped fund and had given machines to the school's Right Skills Now Program, sat with me and told me that between them they had about 50 job openings they could fill that instant.

In the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, of which I am a member, we had a hearing a couple of years ago on workforce boards that had successfully responded to the great recession and created jobs in the face of it. We had four workforce boards testify from four different States: Virginia, Wisconsin, California, and Washington. Every model had been essentially the same: A business—manufacturing, IT, health care—had worked with a community and technical college to train unemployed workers for jobs they needed to fill. These are public-private partnerships. The businesses have skin in the game.

Where do we come in here in Congress? Well, I have gone around Minnesota to community and technical colleges and talked to businesses, and I have talked to national experts in our State and around the country, and the fact is we aren't doing this fast enough. Sometimes these partnerships could do a lot more, train a lot more people with some extra funding—maybe to buy a very expensive machine or to hire an instructor with very specialized skills.

What I am proposing is a competitive grant program. Businesses and community colleges would apply for grants based on how many jobs their partnership would create, what the value of those jobs would be to those hired and to the community, and how much skin the businesses have in the game.

Let me tell you why I think we have to do this, just in terms of global competitiveness. Manufacturing is moving back to the United States. That is because of a number of factors. Manufacturing these days is a lot more capital intensive because of the investments in machine and technology. So labor as a piece of the pie has gotten smaller, but

skilled labor as a piece of the labor pie has grown. It is a much bigger piece. That is why, if we are going to be competitive with the rest of the world, we need skilled labor. Filling the skills gap is a national imperative.

I go to high schools, junior high schools, and middle schools with manufacturers all the time. I let the manufacturer describe what the work is like at their factory. It is not dark, dirty, and dangerous, as people think it is, or as it used to be. It involves advanced technical skills, critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork. These jobs, good, skilled, well-paying jobs, are available with the education you can get at a 2-year community and technical college.

One of the concerns I hear is that people often think of a 2-year education as a ceiling, and I understand that. But a 2-year education doesn't have to be a ceiling. That is not how they think of it in some European countries. They think of a 2-year education as a platform. And if you think about it, with the pace of technological advancement accelerating as it is now, and no doubt will continue, the idea that you will have the same job in the workplace for the 40 or 50 years of your working life is kind of ridiculous, especially in any field involving technology.

So it makes perfect sense to go to a 2-year community technical college and get an education that trains you in the kind of skills that will get you a good-paying job. Then, as Erick Ajax does with his employees, the business you work for can send you back to school and pay for it, often while you continue to work and draw a good paycheck.

We just came through a big debate in Congress about student debt. Think about getting a job after 2 years or even after a credentialed degree and then having your continuing education paid for by your employer. Think about that as a piece of an evolving approach to the issue of college affordability.

Jobs, economic growth, global competitiveness, college affordability, how we think about education, aren't these the things we should be spending our time on in the Senate, in Congress? That is why I came here. That is what I get excited about. That is what I get excited about working on. Let's end the shutdown. Let's commit to not defaulting on our debt. Then let's discuss how we strengthen our economic recovery. Let's talk about which investments we make that are smart and will lead to economic growth and which ones have outlived their usefulness.

Every day the government stays shut down, every day we wake up under the threat of default, every day we spend focused on something that isn't working together to create jobs and rebuild the middle class is, in my mind, a tragedy. It is an insult to all the people who are struggling and it is a huge missed opportunity for our country. This nonsense would be ugly enough even if we didn't have work to do, but we do. We have so much work to do. It is time for Congress to stop creating problems and start solving them again.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. 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 wish to enter into a colloquy with several of my colleagues.

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

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, it is Sunday afternoon. I am sure all of us as well as a lot of furloughed employees would rather be preparing for coming back to work. Even though Monday is a holiday, maybe they are thinking about Tuesday and getting ready.

But here we are on the Senate floor thinking about all the issues with the shutdown, the default, and the threat of the default on us right now as we creep closer and closer to this deadline. It is unbelievable that we are at the risk of potentially defaulting on the debt of this country.

I heard one of my colleagues earlier talked about the default potential and maybe it is not as bad as people think and we will get through this. The fact is, if we go into a default, there is no question we have already seen—by the chamber of commerce, the business community, many people whom we talk to in our home communities—the impact this will have on everything from the stock market, interest rates, the ability for small businesses to borrow money at a reasonable rate.

The number that came out was a 7-year high in the sense of the least foreclosures in the last 7 years for individuals. Yet as families are finally getting back on their feet, with less defaults, here is the biggest default sitting in front of us. We have tried to do everything possible to avoid this effort in the next few days; one, by trying to get the government back open so we can have negotiations and discussions about what is necessary to ensure we don't have a default that could jeopardize the economy.

In my home State we see the impacts. We had a hearing on Friday here in Washington and we had the captain of one of the crab vessels, which is a big industry for us. My friend in Oregon deals with seafood issues also. It is an incredible impact that could happen. They have to have the permits and the quota laid out by October 15 so they can start the season because crabs don't sit around on the bottom of the sea waiting for a shutdown to finish. They have another process they go through. So if we are unable to get the permits done, this industry in Alaska which sells a lot of crab in the holiday season, especially to our trading partner Japan, Japan will go elsewhere. They will go to Russia and buy crab. Once they start buying from another seller, the odds of us recapturing that decrease.

As my colleagues on the other side like to say, we are just trying to find a solution. Every day we wait is another day we are shipping jobs overseas, and here is a clear example.

We have several Federal lands that are permitted for bear hunting and hunting in general, fishing, sports fishing, by Federal regulators, but we do not have those agencies open. So now those sports hunters who come up to our State from all across the country and the world are unable to access those places. The result? Thousands and thousands of dollars are lost to these guides. We don't get this business back. Once the season ends, it is gone. It is over.

This idea that the House has—and my colleagues and I have talked about it. My friend from Montana talked about this a few days ago. They passed on the House side a bill to pay all the furloughed employees; 435 to 0 was the vote. The Presiding Officer spoke about this on the floor. We all support that. We want to get our employees back to work and pay them because the furlough wasn't their problem—the shutdown wasn't their problem. But here is what is amazing. They want to put them all back to work and pay them, but they only send us a few agencies to open.

In other words, if you are a fiscal conservative—and from the States we all represent we have pockets as well as full components of individuals who are concerned about the taxes of this country and the spending—why would you pay for everyone to go back to work and then not put them to work? It makes no sense.

The Presiding Officer was the Lieutenant Governor of a State. I can't imagine if he and the Governor decided that we are not going to put anyone to work, but we are going to pay them all for the next month or whatever, he would be dragged out of office before he could blink an eye. As a former mayor, I couldn't do that. It is unbelievable. But yet that is how chaotic it is over on the House side. We are ready to solve these problems, move forward, get the government open, and ensure that we do not default on our debt.

I know some claim this is all new spending. This is not new spending. These are all bills, for those of us on the floor right now, which came before our time. But they are due and we have to pay the bill. It is similar to when you buy a house. After you buy the house and you have a banker, you don't get to say: I would like to stop and think about paying you part of it or maybe not pay you all of it and still live in the house.

They like to toss numbers around and make it sound as if it is more spending. No, it is paying for what has already occurred. We have actually cut

the deficit since a lot of us came to office. When I came in January 2009, the deficit was $1.4 trillion per year. Today it is about 630. We have cut that deficit over 60 percent in a combination of efforts, and that is where we need to keep going, but this is not helping that effort.

I know my colleagues on the floor have example after example, as I do in my home State, of sports fishermen who can't go fishing and fees for those folks who manage it, to the commercial fishing, and my military folks. Here is what is amazing. Every one of the folks on the floor has the same situation. Even if we pay our furloughed Federal employees all their pay back, what happens to the contractors who work on behalf of the Federal Government? They have bills to pay. They don't get that money back. But they are told to go back to work, and I guarantee it is going to cost the Federal Government more money. In my State there are multiple examples, and I will leave it to my colleagues. But I know when the American people are watching and when Alaskans are watching this for the last week, they think it is ridiculous, and it is. It is a self-created crisis by a few who believe the only way they can get their way is to crash the economy and at the same time crash the government.

Are there problems with the government? Sure. Are there things we can do to improve it? Absolutely. Every day we should be working on it. But this start-and-stop program doesn't work so well because we never get to the issues all of us came to work on.

So I turn to my friends if they want to add to this. The idea is going to be kind of a free-flowing conversation so people can see a discussion of what is affecting us in our home States and see how we can get to a solution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I am pleased to be here with my colleagues from Montana and Alaska to talk about some of the impacts in our various States. I thought I would share six or seven different aspects of the impact of a government shutdown and the potential of a default and then turn this over to my colleague from Montana. Then I think we are going to engage in a little bit of back-and-forth.

Before I list specific examples of the challenges that are faced, I thought I would give a framework or an analogy of how to think about this.

The legislative process is very much like a baseball game where various folks come together. There are some for bills, some are against a bill, they have a competition, and ultimately one side wins. Normally, the side that loses, if they believe they are still right, will say we will be back again later in the session, next year, just like a baseball team, to compete again or we will be back next year with an improved team.

But in this case, after the team that supported health care won, the team that lost said we are going to appeal the ruling to the umpire and we are going to ask the umpire to rule the game out of order and rule that the losing team actually won. Then, if the umpire doesn't come to our rescue, we are going to hold the crowd hostage and we are going to threaten to burn down the stadium.

Those are the types of actions that are outside the sphere of the normal legislative process—and they should be—because we have to be able to have a dialog in a democracy where we consider a bill and decide yes or no and then implement it and then come back and have an argument over improvements to that framework or whether we should throw it out completely. The American people have the opportunity to weigh in and say: Keep those folks. They did good legislation or throw the bums out.

But all that is broken if, instead of completing that cycle, we have the losing team say we are going to hold the crowd hostage and threaten to burn down the stadium. Then democracy doesn't function. That is where we are right now. Holding the crowd hostage is the government shutdown, and threatening to burn down the stadium is the threat to default on the payment of bills due.

So let's look at how the government shutdown is reverberating in some unexpected ways. Let's take home mortgages. A great majority of home mortgages across the Nation are insured by Fannie and Freddie. That insurance doesn't happen while Fannie and Freddie are shut down.

Let's take work necessary to improve our ports, where that work is on jetties. Now that work has to stop because we can't incur a new liability to the contractor to haul the rock out and put it into place or maybe it is on a dredger that needs to take place during a window between different salmon runs in the Columbia River. But now that gets delayed and who knows when it will get done.

Let's talk about a company in Oregon that exports, and they need for those exports an export license, but they can't get the export license because Commerce is shut down and can't issue that license. They have inventory that is waiting to ship out. Then they have cashflow problems not only because they can't ship the inventory, they can't get the payments for shipping.

Let's talk about the trickledown for folks who are unemployed. You may think about it as an employee who is staying home. One employee wrote to me and said, think about this, think about the fact that I owe child support that is not going to get paid because I am not getting paid. Then he said, think about the housing market. I am not going to be able to pay my mortgage. What impact is that going to have on the U.S. economy?

Let's take a look at the backlog of veterans' benefits. All over my State I have veterans who are applying for benefits and they want an answer, and the Veterans Department is trying to process those applications. They have a high, intense effort to catch up on that backlog. Suddenly the backlog is getting bigger instead of getting smaller because the work that was being done to get rid of that backlog grinds to a halt and therefore individual veterans are disadvantaged by not having their applications processed.

Let's think about Head Start. Jessica wrote to me.

> I work in early headstart in Grants Pass. We are facing a shutdown due to the government shutdown. We have children who need stability and a caring place where they can get their basic needs met. So many families struggle to feed their children and sometimes the food we serve is all those children get for the day.

Then she says:

> We provide more than just what some consider day care. We teach, we nurture, we give hope to the next generation. Shutting down our centers would mean a higher rate of poverty and dangerous homes for families and children. We need our voices to be heard. We need someone to stand up for us.

There are so many different ways in addition that this shutdown is reverberating in Oregon. One that affects every rural community is the impact on timber planting. We have had the shutdown going on of actual logging that is taking place in Federal forests. Folks who are logging are being told to stop cutting new trees, to pull their logs, skid them out, if you will, haul them out and shut down.

What about the planning for the cuts for next year? What about the supply of logs to the sawmills that is going to keep that sawmill operating through the winter and into the spring? The reverberations are substantial. What about the economy in those small towns that depends on those log mills when folks don't have the money, because they can't log, to buy food at the grocery store?

I know the issues are not unique to Oregon. I am sure many of them reverberate in Alaska and Montana.

With that, I yield the floor for my colleague from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. I thank my colleague from Oregon and the Senator from Alaska.

For many years my Republican colleagues have railed against government. We find ourselves in an interesting time right now where government is shut down. We are on the verge of not expanding our debt limit, putting the full faith and credit of this country at risk. Some of the folks on the other side of the aisle ran their campaign last year about shutting down the government. They got their wish. They have steered us into an unnecessary, very costly shutdown.

Yet during the shutdown we found and we have learned every day, often, underappreciated functions of the government. Beyond the headlines there are countless stories of the functioning of government which is not doing its

job because of the shutdown that is hurting American families. There are a number of them in Montana.

We read in the news about children with cancer. We have an NIH laboratory, Rocky Mountain Lab, in Hamilton. It is closed. It is one of eight Biosafety 4 labs in the United States. They do critical research on SARS, ebola virus, staph infections. It is not happening.

Mr. President, 98 percent of the National Science Foundation is shuttered—no new scientific research grants. Four of the five Nobel-prize winning scientists are furloughed.

National parks are closed, disappointing tourists and impacting struggling communities around those parks. Closing fishing access sites that support local businesses—fly stores, river guides, fly fishing instructors, and just improved quality of life—does not allow people into many of the best fishing spots in this country.

Head Start Programs are struggling, depending on when you got your grant. In the small town of Box Elder, 10 miles from my hometown, they are on the cusp of laying off 20 percent of their teachers. Why? Because they can't get their Indian Impact Aid. Since that office is mostly furloughed at this point in time, it is very difficult to get them any help.

We have heard about the devastating floods in Colorado, the blizzards in South Dakota. We do not have a farm bill, but these folks are doubly impacted. Because the Farm Service Agency offices are shuttered, there is no help for livestock producers who have literally lost thousands of head of cattle.

When it comes to getting a cosignature on an FSA loan check, it is impossible to do because the FSA office is closed.

Our military members are getting paid, but the ROTC students all over America who rely on the government to help pay for their rent—that is not happening right now.

The Senator from Oregon talked about VA disability claims put on hold. The backlog is growing. It was shrinking.

The IT system for a smooth transition between the DOD to VA, the electronic medical records, is on hold. By the way, that is critically important to get our backlog to a reasonable number.

Home loans, education assistance, transportation office, workforce training—all put on hold. Domestic abuse shelters, Meals on Wheels, flu monitors at the CDC, the Mine Safety and Health Administration, National Transportation Safety Board—all furloughed except for the essential staff who are working without pay.

Along that line, I want to say thank you to the folks at the rostrum who put in 3 pretty tough weeks. In the last week and a half-plus, almost 2 weeks, they haven't been paid. They are here on a Sunday afternoon, much like the police officers who responded to a tragic and scary situation last week were running toward the problem, who were on duty but were not getting a paycheck.

The House's political appeasement approach has been an attempt to open the most popular and most noticed agencies, picking winners and losers in a system instead of working together.

Then we have the debt ceiling, a situation where there is a Republican-driven government shutdown to bring us close, too close for comfort, to defaulting on our national debt. Some folks out there will say it is no big deal. I can tell you if you are in business you know it is a big deal. Some folks say you can prioritize your payments, but the fact is that without increasing that debt limit, prioritizing the payments will not fix the problem.

We have folks all across this country, business people, working families, who are losing confidence in the United States. I just met a group of World War II vets who got off a plane about 2 hours ago in Washington, DC. A number of them talked to me about how we need to get our act together here. They fought for this country, but we are not fighting for them, and we need to.

The Montana Chamber of Commerce, bankers across this country, Macy's, business leaders—all have said don't be playing with this fire. In fact, a friend of mine by the name of Tony James, who is president of Blackstone Group, wrote in the Wall Street Journal:

> Using the debt ceiling to settle domestic squabbles is playing Russian roulette with a loaded gun. And worse, by continuing on the present course, we are playing a deadly game with a gun held by some of this nation's biggest rivals.

I couldn't agree more. We need to reopen this government. We need to pay this Nation's bills. And we need to put this country back in the leadership role in this world.

Senator BEGICH, the Senator from Alaska, talked a little bit about park shutdowns. I was curious to know, with Denali National Park, which is a big deal—I assume the Senator is in the same place as we are with Glacier and Yellowstone. It is closed for business?

Mr. BEGICH. Yes. Not only closed for business. As we know, the FAA also is shut down. There are elements of FAA still operational, but the fact is, in order for visitors to my State—and I am sure to the Senator's State, to Oregon, there is a lot of general aviation that moves around, moving tourists, moving businesses, moving folks from place to place. If you are in need of parts—people may not realize it, if you need parts for those planes you have to register them with the FAA. But if the FAA is closed, you cannot register the parts, you cannot get the parts for your plane, and they are not making the parts then because they know they cannot get them registered. It is like a ripple effect.

The worst part of this is those businesses that are on the outskirts of all these national treasures we have in this country—Oregon has them, Montana has them—and the net result is those businesses don't have customers. Customers do not show up. Those businesses that had prepared, built their inventories in anticipation, got material ready, got guides ready, got their businesses all ready to go for those tours, cannot do them. They have no customers because they have no place to take them. The reality is, the net result for these individuals—I think my friend from Oregon says it so clearly in discussions I have had with him—it is almost like—my friend from Oregon can correct me if I say this wrong—but it is almost like a tax for these businesses. They do not get that money back they have invested. It is gone. It is over. They do not get to repeat the season. It is not like the movie ''Groundhog Day,'' you don't get to go over and over it again. If it is gone, it is gone. All of us have that with these parks and national treasures. The Senator talked with me about this.

I want to mention one thing that is very important, because we have heard it on the floor and I have heard it in the media accounts. They say we cannot extend and pay the debt of this country, making sure we do not go into default unless we have more spending cuts. We did that. We did that. The continuing resolution cuts $70 billion on an annualized basis out of the budget this year, this coming year. We cut $70 billion. We actually talked about it, tried to find common ground, and the common ground was we agreed with their number, the House number. We brought it all the way down to their number. Seventy billion dollars was taken, additional cuts on an annualized basis, to our budget. Now you have to pay the bill.

When you hear this ''we didn't give one extra penny to make sure we don't default''—first of all, the default should not be part of the debate here. We should never default on our debts, period. But if you want cuts, we have done it, $70 billion.

Now because of the work they are doing or lack of what they are doing, the government shutdown is causing kind of an indirect tax on these business people, which is unbelievable.

Mr. MERKLEY. I thank my colleague from Alaska. He is correct in pointing out that essentially right now we have a shutdown tax being imposed on families and businesses across our country. Indeed, we are facing just a few days from now a default tax. A lot of folks from across the aisle come here and say they took a pledge to block any form of tax. But this is the worst kind of tax of all.

Mr. BEGICH. They do not get any recovery.

Mr. MERKLEY. There is absolutely no value, no revenue raised that can be applied to the important aspects of running a government or reducing our deficit. Indeed, this is a burden on

American businesses and American families that has no benefit in any other way.

In fact, the Senator mentioned the ripple effect. That ripple effect means what damages a family—I gave the example of a simple situation when an employee does not get their wages. They cannot pay their child support and they cannot pay their mortgage—and then what goes on from there.

Let's take, for example, the cut in food stamps. If food stamps are not issued, then it is not just the family who is directly hurt—and I might mention our most vulnerable families—but it is also the grocery stores that are hurt. They may have to lay off additional employees, additional ripples. This is a huge infliction of a burden.

If we want to think of a few examples of what happens with the default, we can think of many. Let's picture the default tax. By threatening not to pay our bills, that reduces confidence in Treasury bills, so therefore the interest rates go up on those Treasury bills. The interest rates therefore on mortgages go up and the interest on home loans go up.

Mr. BEGICH. If I can interrupt, car loans, credit cards, student loans, any type of credit you want to get to grow your business, expand your educational opportunities—maybe you are doing holiday shopping this year—all that is impacted in a negative way.

Mr. MERKLEY. Indeed, maybe you were planning to take out a home equity loan to repair your roof or make improvements to your house. You are going to pay a higher price. This is a default tax on all of America that does nothing productive at all.

This infliction of pain and agony on our businesses and our families is something that has not apparently resonated for some of my colleagues who want to threaten a default. Some of them have come to this floor and said: We think there is enough revenue coming in that we can pay our T-bills—our Treasury bills—and we can default on other obligations and therefore there won't be much damage.

We had a group of experts come in and testify before the banking committee. They said: Look, envision a situation where you are applying for a mortgage and you tell the bank that you have always made your house payments, but you were not able to make some of your other payments, such as your student or car loan. The bank is going to charge you more for your house payment because there are bills you have been defaulting on.

The same situation applies in America. If we pay our Treasury bills but we don't pay other obligations, that in itself will lower our credit rating and increase interest rates. A default is a default. You can choose whom you are going to default on, but no matter whom you default on, there will be a default tax on American families and American businesses with great damage to this country. That is why President Reagan simply said: Do not mess with the good faith and credit of the United States of America.

Mr. BEGICH. It makes no sense that we would be here. Earlier this week Senator TESTER and I were on the floor talking about this issue. When I went home, my 11-year-old son asked: How do you not pay your bills? We can have all the fancy economists we want, but when you have an 11-year-old ask you the question, it should tell you something about this country—what we should do to meet our priorities. When you don't pay your bills, you are in default. When you are in default, you destroy your credit rating. When you destroy your credit rating, the cost of doing business goes up. It is very simple.

They can use all the fancy words and different ways to slice it and dice it by saying that we can pay some or we can pay a little. No, that is not how it works. Can you imagine if every household watching us today said: I think I will pay part of my bills today. Maybe I will pay another bill next week, but I won't pay them all. Congress doesn't pay all its bill, so I guess that is the new norm.

If my 11-year-old son can pick this up, you can surely guess what is happening when people around the country are watching us. And I say ''us'' in a collective way. All three of us are appropriators. We have dealt with cutting $70 billion out of the budget already for this year. We sucked it up and said: We are going to do that because it is right for this country. Even though we may not have agreed on that number, we agreed to make sure we did this because we wanted to make sure we did not default and that we kept the government working. We will continue to fight on the issues we care about.

It is amazing to me. Sometimes we have to look to the young folks in this community and around this country, and they probably know better than we how to solve this problem. I am just guessing.

Mr. MERKLEY. I think the children across the country know that responsible individuals pay their bills and responsible governments pay their bills. I am sure this concept is common sense in the great State of Montana.

Mr. TESTER. The Senator is correct. There are so many folks out there who claim to be probusiness folks and that they know what is going on in the business community. This whole debate that revolves around the debt ceiling is about as antibusiness as we can have.

The fact is that if we don't increase the debt ceiling—and the Senator from Oregon and the Senator from Alaska have already pointed it out—interest rates not only go up for our national debt, they go up for everybody. The economy decreases and shrinks, and as a result we have less revenue coming in. Everybody knows that if we are going to address our national debt, we have to have a vibrant economy to address it.

We came through a period of time where we had a Vice President who said debt doesn't matter, we got into two wars, two major tax cuts, a Medicare Part-D plan, and the worst recession—some would call a depression—since the 1930s, where the tax revenue dropped like a rock and the safety net programs to keep people afloat—which cost money—were decreased.

Now we have a situation with the debt that we need to deal with. The worst thing we can do is play around with the debt ceiling so our economy tanks again, and then we will see not only the interest rate go up on the debt but the debt go through the roof one more time. It does not make any sense from all the different perspectives. When people lose confidence—whether it is people within this country or outside this country who buy our debt—that means the rate we pay is going up.

Mr. BEGICH. Is it fair to say that we have been moving this annual deficit down every year? It has been on the right glidepath—down. If we have a change in the T-bill rates, this effort to keep moving the deficit down will quickly reverse because we pay interest.

Mr. TESTER. Absolutely. It could have such a negative impact on the GDP that we could have a negative fourth quarter if this crazy talk keeps going.

Mr. BEGICH. To remind folks who are listening, the gross domestic product is basically the business of the country.

Mr. TESTER. That is correct.

Mr. BEGICH. If it goes in the wrong direction, it will have a direct impact on the people who are working—meaning fewer people will be working. If there is less business, there is less need to hire people, which means higher unemployment and more foreclosures. It is a domino effect.

Mr. TESTER. That is exactly correct. I think everybody on the floor right now—and there are a lot of other folks—would love to sit down and figure out ways to get the debt and deficit under control. As Tony James said, you don't do it by holding a loaded gun.

Mr. MERKLEY. If I could just emphasize the point the Senator from Montana just made, there are those who say they want to engage in a default strategy because they think it will somehow do something positive in controlling our deficit and controlling our debt, but what the Senator from Montana pointed out is that when you engage in using default as a weapon, you reduce revenues, increase costs, which increases deficits and increases the debt.

I think what we can summarize is not only is the default strategy severely damaging to families and businesses across the country, but it is damaging to the effort to reduce our deficits and reduce our debt.

Mr. TESTER. And I might add it could not happen at a worse time. We have seen the economy rebound, and it

is starting to head in the right direction. We have an opportunity to have more growth. We have an opportunity to get some manufacturing back in this country. We have an opportunity to really help rebuild this economy. Because of the actions of Congress, particularly folks over in the House, we have seen the stock market—God help us today. I think it opens right now.

Mr. BEGICH. The Asian markets open right about now.

Mr. TESTER. I can't help but think that these folks are back there shaking their heads and saying: We have no confidence in what Congress is doing.

Mr. BEGICH. For the first 15 to 18 days of debate, the market slowly slid about 800 points. Last week, when there was a sliver of opportunity and people thought maybe we would get the default off the table, that market shot up 300-plus points. The business community wants us to establish some certainty here so they can take their resources, invest in this economy and continue to move forward.

We know the resources are there. They tell us that in our home communities. I had a business that just laid off another 400 people because of this shutdown. They are ready to grow their business interests out of Anchorage and around the globe, but the challenge for them is they are not sure what we are going to do.

Within a couple of days when they saw a glimmer of hope, the market shot right back up, which tells us again that the market is ready.

Some people said that yesterday's vote was just a partisan vote. No, we had to actually not default, so we supported not defaulting on our debt. I will have debate after debate on where we need to cut. Again, the continuing resolution cuts $70 billion on an annualized basis. We have met their number with that cut, and we are willing to keep to that agreement, but let's not throw the economy over the edge or crash it into the wall, as some seemingly want to do.

Mr. MERKLEY. I ask through the Chair whether the Senator knows of any business group in Alaska that is arguing that the government shutdown strategy or the default strategy is good for business.

Mr. BEGICH. I come from the small business world. At the young age of 14 I started my first business. I don't hear the business community in my State asking me to crash the economy and keep the government shut down because it has no impact.

When we look at the concentration of Federal workers, it is Maryland, Hawaii, and Alaska, in that order. When we think of the State budget, 25 percent of the State operating budget is from Federal resources; 50 percent is capital money that comes from Federal resources; the military is pretty strong; and over $1 billion goes to Social Security payments. I can go through the list. It has a huge impact.

There are no businesses calling me and asking: Can you keep the government shut down longer? I don't need that permit to drill on the National Petroleum Reserve. I don't need to go fish for that crab this week. I don't need to fly my plane to move that cargo out to a rural community. I don't hear that.

I have people call me and say—I can't use the words they use because we are on the Senate floor, but you can fill in the blanks. They are very upset that they cannot conduct their basic business operations because of some of the connectivity they have with the Federal Government through permits or land use. Denali National Park is a great example. It is an unbelievable place to visit, but nobody can visit it. The hotels and the facilities around it are not getting the access they need.

Mr. MERKLEY. It is the same in Oregon. I don't think I have heard from a single business group that has argued in favor of the shutdown or default strategy. I know many businesses need the export license, and they need permission to take up the subcontract or the contract on the jetty or the dredging or any number of other areas.

We have Crater Lake National Park. The tourist industry relies on people to come to that area. There are timber companies that need to have permission to complete their logging contract. In every single way they know, they are partnered with the government groups that enable this work to go forward, and they want those doors open. They want the government open.

I ask through the Chair, what is the story in Montana?

Mr. TESTER. It is the same in Montana as it is in Oregon and Alaska. Particularly startup businesses and entrepreneurs who have a great idea are holding back because they don't want to get into a situation where they start investing money and interest rates go through the roof and they are not able to fulfill the dream they have which would also create jobs and grow more economy.

We are getting very close to October 17. The longer we play with this, there will be a point in time where the damage that will be done will take a very long time to rebuild. I think now is the time—in fact, hopefully tomorrow—to get a commonsense agreement on the Senate floor to open the government and deal with the debt limit in a way that makes sense for this country and makes sense for the world because it will not only have an impact here, but it will have an impact around the world.

We are seeing businesses in our States that are not investing right now. They are holding off at this point. They were starting to invest. So it is very unfortunate. We are playing with fire, and we should not be doing that. We should be working to build the economy, not to try to contract it.

Mr. BEGICH. I think all of us on the floor agree that we have hope that an arrangement and deal will be made. We want to reopen the government, pay our bills, not go into default, and recognize we still have more work to do because we do need to bring down the deficit. We need to bring it down and ensure that at the end of the day we are paying off our debt long term. But we have to get through this process. We can't just keep doing these short term, stop and go. I think we are all here to make sure that happens.

So from my perspective, I am not happy that I am here on Sunday, but I am glad I am here on Sunday, trying to work with others to solve this problem. I would rather be back home with Alaskans talking about the needs they have and trying to figure out what we are going to do in the long term on education, making sure we oversee our oil and gas development, our mining and our timber, which I think both of our States have a lot of interest in.

We are here now, and we have to resolve these issues. They are going to be tough. There is going to have to be a little give-and-take to find that common ground. At the end of the day, I believe we can get there. But we can't get there if people are hardened into their views, and trying to claim that we haven't done enough already. We have done $70 billion worth of cuts already on an annualized basis.

So I thank my colleagues for coming to the floor and spending their time on a Sunday talking about an important issue. Hopefully, the next time we are here we can talk about a great resolution that moves this country forward and keeps our economy going.

I yield to my friend from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. I appreciate my colleague from Alaska helping to organize this conversation. I must say, I think if we got 10 commonsense people in a room, they would agree to do that short-term continuing resolution. The Democrats have agreed to a Republican number. It is a win for the Republicans. The Democrats are asking for a negotiation. That is a win for our country. We are asking for the default strategy to be set aside completely because it is completely contrary to any responsible organization to use a strategy of not paying their bills.

On that foundation we should get back to the normal process of considering legislation we should be passing, such as how we restore the regular budget and appropriations process. I know that would be very welcome across this Nation. This Senate has to be able to get a budget process that isn't cut off right out of the gate, if you will, as it has been this year. It was 6 months ago that we passed a budget and we started to go to a conference committee, and a small group of colleagues filibustered starting the budget conference committee. Somehow we have to have a process where we can get into a conference room and have that conversation and not have a small group basically sabotage the entire budget appropriations process that is so important for our Nation.

Mr. BEGICH. I agree. The last thing I will say this afternoon is—and I will

say it as an appropriator—that is what we should do. We need to get past this stop-and-go. We need to sit down and focus on the long term. We need to get the budget resolved. We need to stop spending our time trying to get people to the table. That is all we have been trying to do. We need to get a budget resolved so people will know what their annualized budgets will be. I totally agree with the Senator from Oregon.

Hopefully, over the next 24, 48 hours, we will get down that road, and we will get this short-term stuff out of the way and get on with the longer term.

Again, I wish to thank the Presiding Officer for the time and for allowing us to speak today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Madam President, I wish to thank my colleagues for what I think was a very vivid way in which they laid out the severe damage that is occurring because of the shutdown and the potential that one of the most important economic powers, if not the most important economic power in the world, is fooling around with the notion that we not pay our bills on time.

I wish to compliment various newspapers around the country that are doing their best to point out to people that this isn't some kind of exercise that is just about all of us here in Washington. This isn't about the politics or the posturing. This is about real people and the pain they are feeling.

This morning in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the headline was ''Shutdown is casting a wide net of grief.'' In that article, it went through a number of different people's lives and how they were hurting because of the shutdown—people such as Nancy Jones.

Nancy retired from the Army 4 months ago, and she was at a food pantry this weekend because her retirement check had not processed through yet, and now it is not clear when she is going to get her retirement check. She moved back to St. Louis to help with her four grandchildren, and now she is putting her head on her pillow tonight not knowing when her pension, which she has earned, will actually come through because of the shutdown. As a result, she is going to a food pantry at a local church to get two bags of groceries.

Then there is Rasheedah Whitfield. She went to the Social Security office in St. Louis to do something very simple, and that was to replace her lost Social Security card. She knocked and no one was home. The Social Security Administration has furloughed people who do things such as getting a replacement for people's lost Social Security card. Why is that so important? Well, because Ms. Whitfield needs her Social Security card in order to fill out her Section 8 application, and time is running short for her to find housing for herself and her small child. She is unsure what she is going to do if she can't get that replacement card.

Then there are the people who have been furloughed who clean one of the Federal office buildings in St. Louis. They work for $11 an hour cleaning the Goodfellow Federal Center in north St. Louis. It is an $11-an-hour job. These people aren't sitting on a big cushion. These people are trying to figure out now, without that $11-an-hour job, if they can either pay the rent or make the car payment, but probably not both.

Then there is Jill Ketchum who works and who is fortunate that her child, her 5-year-old daughter, goes to the Head Start school. She is not sure what she is going to do because she has been told by the Grace Hill Settlement House that the Head Start program cannot last through the month if the shutdown continues. That mother, who is working and uses that important Head Start program to make it work for her family, will have no place to take her daughter. What does she do? Does she have to quit her job? What about all the other single mothers out there with young children who have the rug pulled out from under them because Head Start can no longer operate?

Jill and Rasheedah and Nancy don't deserve this. They are playing by the rules. They are doing everything they should be doing in this great country. They are not asking us to do them a favor. They are just asking us to do our job.

Here is what I am so frustrated about. This pain is being inflicted on millions of Americans, and this pain grows every day. Somebody likened it the other day to when the power goes out at our home. In the first couple of hours, we are getting candles out and getting out the board games, and we think, Oh, this is kind of fun. I got the feeling around here the first couple of hours that we didn't understand the gravity of what this meant to so many people throughout this country and to so many people in my State. But after the electricity has been off a few hours, all of a sudden it is not funny anymore. We start to lose our food in the refrigerator, and we wonder how we are going to replace it. We wonder about what is going to happen with our jobs. We wonder about keeping warm. That is what we are getting to now. We are getting to the point where these families across America cannot believe this is going on day after day.

Here is the weird part. What are we doing? It is not even clear to me what the other side wants. It started out with a goal that was not only irrational, but unreasonable—that somehow the election last November didn't matter; that somehow a faction of one party in one House in one branch of this great government could say: If you don't give us our way, we are going to turn out the lights, and we are going to cut the power. So it was about blowing up ObamaCare.

Now it is not about that anymore. I listened with interest this morning as the Republicans in the House of Representatives spoke about what this is about, and it is not clear to me at this point what it is about. What is it that is the problem? Because it is not ObamaCare anymore. Is it entitlement reform? Is it a grand bargain? Speaker BOEHNER walked away from one of those not too long ago.

Is it about how much we are spending? We have been asking for a conference on our budget. For years, we were getting political criticism over the fact that the Senate had not passed a budget. So we stayed up all night, took dozens and dozens and dozens of votes, and passed a budget. Then we asked to go to conference. For month after month after month, the junior Senator from Texas and others blocked our ability to go to conference and talk about the budget.

So I don't even understand at this moment what this is about. It is not about ObamaCare anymore. Is it about reforming Medicare and Social Security? That is not clear. Is it about how much money we are spending? That is not even clear.

It feels as though we are boxing shadows.

I am really hopeful about my colleagues across the aisle in the Senate, many of whom I have worked with on many different issues and a lot of whom I have worked with on bringing down spending. My colleague from Alaska said we cut our deficit in half last year. It is a good thing we are spending less money. Most of us here think we should continue in a thoughtful way to spend less money. It is my hope that my colleagues who rejected—the majority of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle rejected the effort of the junior Senator from Texas to say, ''Us too,'' to the goal that was irrational and unreasonable, shutting down ObamaCare. Those Senators who knew this was not a game that should be played, I am hopeful they will help us reach a resolution that will not only allow the government to reopen but allow us to quit playing the very dangerous game of saying to the rest of the world that we are not the United States of America; that we are not the grandest and most glorious democracy ever created; that we are dysfunctional deadbeats. If it gets to be Thursday and we have not gotten this wrapped up, the rest of the country is going to see this democracy as dysfunctional—a democracy that so many other countries have tried to copy and emulate because we have always managed to work it out. To me that is the saddest part of this whole thing, that we are actually playing around with the essence of what makes our country great, and that is our democracy, our ability to compromise, our ability to negotiate, our ability to not throw tantrums and say we either get our way or we shut the place down.

And the phoniest argument of all that is being made, the most disingenuous, misdirected reason we have gotten is this notion that somehow this is

all about if we would just stop the congressional exemption under ObamaCare. Members of Congress and their staffs are the only people in America who are required to shop on the exchange. Let me say it again. Members of Congress and their staffs are the only people who are required to shop on the exchange. The only issue here is whether or not we get an employer contribution. That is the only issue.

Every Republican in my State who works for the State government gets an employer contribution. Every Republican who serves in Congress from my State gets an employer contribution. They do it right now; they get that employer contribution. If it is so immoral, if it is so bad to get an employer contribution, give it up. Step up, set the example. Set the example, Say, ''No more employer contribution. It is evil.'' Until they step up and give up their employer contribution, I think it is beyond offensive that they would threaten the young lady who answers my phone with her employer contribution or the young man just out of school with a heavy debt load who thought he was going to get an employer contribution when he came to work for the Senate, who lives in Columbia, MO, and doesn't make a huge amount of money.

You do not come to work for the government if you want to get rich. You come to work for the government if you want to serve. The notion that for political purposes we are threatening the employer contribution of the people who work in our offices is, frankly, about as low as it gets. So I do not want to hear it anymore unless somebody is giving up their employer contribution. They all can. The minute I hear the Republicans who are advocating this position have given up their employer contribution—right now—then we can have a discussion that has misled the American people into thinking somehow—somehow—this is some special deal for Congress.

Real people are getting hurt. We are not even sure what the other side wants. We are threatening the essence of what makes America great, which is our democracy, and we are misleading the American people in ways that are tremendously unfair to the great people who work for all of us across this city and, importantly, across all of our home States.

So I will continue to talk to my friends across the aisle. Even today, on Sunday, all of us are having these conversations. It is my understanding our friends down the hall in the House of Representatives went home. We are having conversations. One week ago I do not think the Speaker could utter a sentence without saying the word ''conversation.'' We are having conversations today. I hope they will continue into the night and that tomorrow will be a better day for this democracy that we all like to brag about but we are threatening to blow up.

Thank you.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following joint resolution was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

H.J. Res. 76. Joint resolution making continuing appropriations for the National Nuclear Security Administration for fiscal year 2014, and for other purposes.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.J. RES. 76

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have been told that H.J. Res. 76 is due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the joint resolution by title for the second time.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 76) making continuing appropriations for the National Nuclear Security Administration for fiscal year 2014, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I object to any further proceedings on this matter at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the joint resolution will be placed on the calendar.

DISCUSSIONS WITH THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have had a productive conversation with the Republican leader this afternoon. Our discussions were substantive, and we will continue those discussions. I am optimistic about the prospects for a positive conclusion to the issues before this country today.

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2013

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 2 p.m. Monday, October 14; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; and that at 5 p.m. the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the Wood and Haikala district judge nominations.

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

PROGRAM

Mr. REID. Madam President, under the previous order, at 5 p.m. tomorrow there will be 30 minutes for debate prior to a series of up to two rollcall votes on the confirmation of Andrea Wood to be a U.S. district judge for the Northern District of Illinois and Madeline Haikala for the Northern District of Alabama.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 2 P.M. TOMORROW

Mr. REID. Madam President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it adjourn under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 4:46 p.m., adjourned until Monday, October 14, 2013, at 2 p.m.