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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CHRISTOPHER MURPHY, a Senator from the State of Connecticut.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Father, hear the prayers of all Your people everywhere, great and small alike, rich and poor together. May all people called by Your name humble themselves and pray, seeking Your face and turning from evil.

Lord, You have promised that You will hear the prayers of those who fervently seek You, forgiving our sins and healing our Nation. Inspire our lawmakers who believe in You to also pray. May their intercession bring them a tallness of stature that will enable them to see above the walls of partisan division in order to secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity.

We pray in Your holy 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 assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 14, 2013.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CHRISTOPHER MURPHY, a Senator from the State of Connecticut, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

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

The assistant 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.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, at 5 o'clock today the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the nomination of Andrea Wood to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois and the nomination of Madeline Haikala to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Alabama.

At 5:30 there will be a rollcall vote on the Haikala nomination. The Wood nomination is expected to be confirmed in another way.

LEADERSHIP NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. President, constructive good-faith negotiations continue between the Republican leader and me. I am very optimistic that we will reach an agreement that is reasonable in nature this week to reopen the government, pay the Nation's bills, and begin long-term negotiations to put our country on sound fiscal footing.

I deeply appreciate my friend the minority leader for his diligent efforts to come to an agreement. The Republican leader and I will keep Members informed as negotiations continue.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, let me echo the remarks of my good friend, the majority leader. We have had an opportunity over the last couple of days to have some very constructive exchanges of views about how to move forward. Those discussions continue, and I share his optimism that we are going to get a result that will be acceptable to both sides.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The assistant majority leader.

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

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for such time as I may consume.

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

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, we now find ourselves, amazingly, in day 14 of a government shutdown—a shutdown that was brought to us by the Republicans in the House. They are sitting on a bill we sent them to open the government and they refuse to take it up.

My colleague, the Senator from Connecticut, served over there and I served over there, and we always had an opportunity to use the rules in some way

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

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to get a vote on a bill that was passed by the Senate. But the House, not wanting to have such a vote, has made it pretty much impossible for our colleagues over there, Democrats and moderate Republicans, to actually vote to keep this government open.

I listened very carefully to Majority Leader REID and Minority Leader MCCONNELL, and I have hopes, as I expressed them yesterday, that we will be able to reach an agreement both on the shutdown and on the debt ceiling. But the fact we are struggling, the fact that people all over the world are looking at us as if we are some kind of dysfunctional country, the fact that we have about 1 million Federal employees not getting their checks, not knowing where the next meal is going to come from, the fact we have more than 2 million workers who work for private-sector contractors who don't know when or how they are going to get paid, is something we should all take note of, and we should listen to those who say this is ridiculous. This is self-inflicted.

You know, it reminds me of getting up and walking out of your house on a beautiful day. You are walking down the street, and, yes, you have a few problems on your mind—life isn't perfect—but you are pretty optimistic; things are pretty good. Suddenly, you pick up a stone from the ground and bash yourself in the head. Honest to God, that is what they have done, these Republicans. They have bashed in the heads of the American public on a beautiful day as we are coming out of a recession, when we know we have our problems, but we also know we can solve them. It doesn't make sense.

Then, as if that isn't enough, they have another stone in their hand called default. So maybe as you are beginning to see the light of day, you hit yourself again and say to the world: America could actually default on its debts, and the full faith and credit of the United States is in question.

Robert C. Byrd, one of the great Senators and historians, always tells us to read the Constitution. In my desk I have a couple of copies, and every once in a while I will look at it. I am not quoting verbatim, but it says the debts of the United States shall not be questioned. Nobody has the right to play with that. Yet we are doing it again because the Republicans are angry. Why are they angry? I believe it is because they lost the Presidential election. I believe it is because they didn't take back the Senate. This is a direct quote from JOHN BOEHNER. He said the American people don't want to shut down the government, but they also don't want ObamaCare, the Affordable Care Act. That was his opinion. That is not the truth. The American people don't want to see us shut down the government and threaten default because of a bill that passed almost 4 years ago, a bill that was upheld by the Supreme Court and a law that was heavily debated in the Presidential election. The person who said this—Mitt Romney: On day one, I will repeal ObamaCare—lost the election.

I have been around here a while. I have served with five Presidents, three of whom were Republicans. Lord knows I didn't agree with everything the Republican Presidents wanted, and I didn't even agree with everything the Democratic Presidents wanted. I fought hard and I got annoyed and I worked in elections. I never saw Republicans or Democrats, until today, to be willing to default. Newt Gingrich did lead us to a government shutdown in the 1990s, but we haven't had one since then because it was so painful and awful. I know the grownups are now trying to resolve this. I know our leaders are going to the White House, and hopefully, they will come to an agreement. But the fact that it would take us this long, 3 days before a default and the 14th day of a shutdown, is unbelievable.

A teacher knows the rules when they get a job. They know school starts at 9 a.m., and they dismiss the kids at 3:00. If a teacher says, I don't like the start time and I am coming 2 hours later, they can't have this job because they know they have to show up. The equivalent of that is keeping the doors of government open to the people we represent, not slamming them shut in their face. That is what we have to do when we show up here; that is to keep the government going. Do we have disagreements across and even within parties? Of course we do. But we have a procedure to deal with that. It is called legislating. That is what we do when we have disagreements. It is something called debate—debate the issues, battle them out, have a vote, and pass a bill. The other Chamber does the same. Then the House and the Senate go to a conference committee and argue out the differences. You send that bill to the President—whoever he or she may be—and the President either signs the bill or vetoes it. And if they sign it, it is a law. If they veto it, we have an override. I have been involved in those. But once the bill becomes a law, it is the law, and you carry it out. You don't decide what laws you want to enforce and what laws you don't. That is not the right way. Our founders said: We are a government of laws, not men. Carry out the law. If you don't like the law, try to change it.

Now, the Republicans didn't like the Affordable Care Act—which, by the way, is signing up thousands of people a day as we stand here. In my home State, it has signed up by now tens of thousands, and we have had about 750,000 at least unique visitors to our site. In Kentucky, they are signing up 1,000 a day. Unbelievable, never expected. This is the law that caused the government shutdown. The Republicans stamp their feet. They didn't like it. They didn't care that there was an election about it—none of that. They didn't like it, so they are going to shut down the government.

Now we don't even hear them talking about it. Now they are talking about wanting to cut Medicaid and Social Security and Medicare. That is the new thing they want to do. PAUL RYAN: Let's just forget this one. I guess we can't do anything about it. But let's now cut Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. We have a process to get to conference with the House. On the Budget Committee we have a strong chairman, PATTY MURRAY. She has asked now 21 times to take our budget to conference. TED CRUZ and his friends have objected, and then they have the nerve to say we won't negotiate. We want to negotiate in a conference committee. That is why there is a conference committee. They have stopped it.

The House has decided now. It is too late. We can't do anything about the Affordable Care Act. Then why don't they open up the government? They shut it down. They now admit they can't do anything about it. It has a steady stream of funding, it is beginning to work, and people are going to think: Why do you want to take away the rights I have now, having a preexisting condition, to get health care? Why do you want to stop my child who can now stay on my health care until he is 26 and take away benefits like free trips to the doctor to get immunizations and birth control and health care? They tried to stop women's health care. They gave that up. They tried to stop us from getting cancer screenings, and we said forget it. So they are all over the place.

I have lived long enough to know when I see people who are joyless, unhappy, and angry. That doesn't make for an optimistic country. They have the privilege of being here, even if they are only controlling one branch of the three, the House. It is the White House; the Senate, Democrats; the House, Republicans. They have a privilege, and they have a lot of leverage, but the way they are behaving is unacceptable. As I said, it is a self-inflicted wound.

I never questioned the fact that Republicans, Democrats, and Independents love this country. I never question it. But I have to say, when you start acting like you are committing domestic abuse you have a problem. I love you, dear, but I am shutting down your entire government. I love you, dear, but I am going to default, and you are going to be weak. Something is dreadfully wrong.

I see my colleague from Maryland here. I know Maryland is suffering mightily from this shutdown. He and I both have a lot of Federal employees, but the size of our States are different. As a percentage of the workforce, Maryland and Virginia are really suffering. In California we have tens of thousands of workers furloughed, not getting their pay, and a lot of contractors.

I say to my friend from Maryland, I was trying to figure out how many contractor employees are also impacted.

Even taking away military contractors, because some of them are getting paid and some of them aren't. If you take that all out of the equation, there are still more than 2 million workers in the private sector who are working for Federal contractors.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article from the Baltimore Sun.

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

[From the Baltimore Sun, Oct. 14, 2013]

THE SHUTDOWN'S FORGOTTEN VICTIMS: GOVERNMENT CONTRACTORS

(By Clarissa Olivarez)

In a city where government contracts make up a multi-billion dollar industry, it is surprising that with the exception of a couple of articles that received moderate attention, the mainstream media has largely ignored the impact of the shutdown on federal contractors.

There has never been much sympathy for contractors. On average, we make more money than federal workers because we normally do not have the advantage of affordable health care and/or other benefits offered by the federal government to its direct employees. As a contractor, my colleagues and I work 40 hours a week, and our company bills the government for the services we each provide. On Oct. 1, however, the federal government furloughed many of its employees, which meant that funding for contracts under certain agencies was halted. Once contractors are ordered to stop work by their contracting officer, they must comply and wait patiently at home while Congress and the White House try to find a solution.

While defense contractors are mostly still in business, since their services are considered ''essential,'' there are thousands of others who were sent home without pay for an indefinite period of time. As a technical writer and communications specialist for a small company that supports a non-defense agency, my fate was sealed long before early media reports warned of many more impending furloughs.

When you are sent home from work for over a week, you begin to notice certain things around you that could cause you to lose heart. In my own neighborhood, I have noticed several cars parked in their driveways—cars that never leave in the mornings for work and never leave in the evening for a night on the town. The Metro parking garages are empty. People's morale is diminishing as cabin fever sets in on all sides. And as rumors of the shutdown continuing until the 17th spread like wildfire in a windstorm, my colleagues and I seem to have exhausted every resource.

Many of my co-workers have emailed several government websites only to find an automated reply shoot back at them stating that the government was shut down and there was nobody who could address their concerns. We have written letters to congressmen and spoken with local news anchors, but nothing is being done to help us in our time of need. As contractors, we inhabit a different world, and unlike furloughed federal employees, we will not be reimbursed for the time off we have been forced to take.

Unfortunately, like everyone else, there are many of us who owe student loans and are expected to pay rent. We have to pay for utilities, credit card bills, dog food and any other necessities like food and clothing. To make matters worse, my husband and I had set aside money in our savings account for a vacation later this month. That money is now going toward bills and other unforeseen expenses.

What does all this mean? An article in the Washington Post recently reported that the shutdown could amount to a loss of $200 million a day for local businesses throughout the city. Contractors provide as much of their income to local businesses as their federal counterparts. If it is not enough that we are suffering as a group, our non-existent income will now begin to hurt certain sectors of the economy.

Small businesses within the city have been doing their part to ease the financial burdens of furloughed employees by advertising ''Shutdown Specials'' that would at least partially allow for the small-business sector of the economy to avoid an otherwise severe financial blow. But, with a heavy concentration of federal and non-federal patrons, the shutdown could cripple numerous mom-and-pop establishments as workers save their hard-earned money and guard their savings due to the uncertainty of a future paycheck.

Contractors, especially those contractors who work for small businesses, have been hit hard by this shutdown, and it is important that we do not go unheard. Representatives in Congress need to realize that they have only solved half of the problem by passing a bill to reimburse federal employees for time spent at home. While the government will probably not take ownership of the effects it has produced on contractors, it is critical that they remember that we are an essential part of the federal workforce and many of us are weighed down by similar worries.

I am glad my friend is on the floor, because this was written today:

In a city where government contracts make up a multi-billion dollar industry, it is surprising that with the exception of a couple of articles that receive moderate attention, the mainstream media has largely ignored the impact of the shutdown on federal contractors.

I really wanted to bring this to the attention of my colleague. Would my friend like me to yield to him?

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, let me say to my friend that she is absolutely right. We have heard from a lot of contractors who employ individuals, from large contractors such as Lockheed to smaller companies that employ 30, 40, 50 people. The range is around 20 to 25 percent of their workforce has been laid off. There is no assurance whatsoever they will ever get paid. There are some contractors who don't know whether they are going to survive; it is that serious. So the private sector direct employment loss as a result of the shutdown is growing every day, and it is having an incredible impact throughout the country in every State.

The Senator mentioned Maryland, which I have the honor of representing along with Senator MIKULSKI. Ten percent of our workforce works directly for the Federal Government. The overwhelming majority of them have been put on furlough. We have estimated the number to be in excess of 125,000 in our State of Maryland. Add the private contractors who are laying off workers as a result of the shutdown.

Last week I stopped by a restaurant right off the Baltimore Beltway to get a sandwich. I know the owner. I asked him how things were going. He said: Terrible. He said: About half of my customers are not here because they are Federal employees that would normally come in during the workday and are not coming in.

The margins are very small for these businesses to be able to remain open. So the direct impact on Federal workers and the direct impact on those who have contract work with the Federal Government and the impact on our economy—it is in every State of the country, but it is particularly in the State I represent—has been devastating.

One more number. The Metro system depends upon the Federal workforce here. They need a fare-box revenue in order to keep the system operating in a moderate way. Their ridership is down 23 percent. Their revenues are down 23 percent. What is the Metro going to do?

The impact of this shutdown has had an incredibly damaging impact on our economy and on families. We have a lot of two-parent households working for the Federal Government both on furlough. So many Federal workers live paycheck to paycheck, and they are now recognizing there might not be any paycheck. How are they supposed to pay their bills?

I spoke to one of my constituents in Maryland who works for a Federal agency. He and his wife have both been furloughed. They just recently bought a home and have a mortgage payment to make. The mortgage company isn't going to say: Sorry the government is shut down; don't pay your mortgage. He has to pay his mortgage. How is he going to be able to do that?

We have hurt people. This shutdown, which should never have happened, has had a huge impact on our economy. The tragedy is for the taxpayers. It is a waste of money, with over $2 billion wasted as a result of this shutdown.

So I thank my colleague for allowing me to interject to underscore the point she has made. She has been on the floor just about every day, and I admire her very much for what she has been saying because she is absolutely right. The damage is clear. We never should have shut down government. We should pay our bills. It is difficult to understand the Republicans' original position that they want to negotiate the end of ObamaCare on a bill that just keeps the lights on in government.

Now we are talking about paying our bills. They are talking again about dealing with some policy issues. If we are going to get into that discussion—which we should not unless we turn the lights on—let's open government and then turn the lights on and then sit down and negotiate. That is what we have to do. We have some major issues we need to deal with, including how we are going to grow the economy, create jobs, have a modern transportation infrastructure. As chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee, my colleague fought so hard for a multiyear reauthorization of our surface transportation systems, for modern roads, well-maintained—a modern transportation system.

To Chairman BOXER, we have three major transit initiatives in Maryland that need to move forward. We have to have funding for that. That is how our economy will grow.

Yes, I look forward to sitting down with my Republican colleagues to negotiate a budget for next year but first open government and pay the bills.

Mrs. BOXER. I so appreciate my friend, through the Chair, interjecting his thoughts. I have listened to him and to Senator MIKULSKI throughout this ordeal. The Senator is right. I have been on the floor quite a lot. The reason is clear. We need to make a record so that this never, ever happens again.

There is a reason we had not had a shutdown since the last one when Newt Gingrich and Republicans brought it to us in the 1990s—because it was horrible. They got hurt by it.

We begged them not to go down this road. They went down the road. Why? Because they didn't like the fact that there is an Affordable Care Act. They didn't like it, so they stamped their foot and said: We are shutting down the government because we don't like it. We begged them. We said: That is not going to help your cause. This Affordable Care Act—85 percent of the funds do not come from appropriated funds; they come from a separate stream of funding, and the bill and the law are going forward. They would not listen. Now they have changed their tune and decided it is about cutting Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid. That is their new thing.

My friend is right. It would be so easy to end this. Open the Government, pay our bills, get to the budget negotiations, where we will have Senator MURRAY, Senator SESSIONS, PAUL RYAN, and his counterpart begin regular order.

I want to continue about this contractor employee. What he said is so moving—actually, I think it is a she.

She says:

> As a technical writer and communications specialist for a small company . . . my fate was sealed long before early media reports warned of many more impending furloughs. When you are sent home from work for over a week, you begin to notice certain things around you that could cause you to lose heart. In my own neighborhood—

I say to Senator CARDIN, she is talking about your city of Baltimore.

This contractor writes:

> in my own neighborhood, I have noticed several cars parked in their driveways—cars that never leave in the morning for work and never leave in the evening for a night on the town. The Metro parking garages are empty.

The Senator alluded to that.

> People's morale is diminishing as cabin fever sets in on all sides. And as rumors of the shutdown continuing until the 17th spread like wildfire in a windstorm, my colleagues and I seem to have exhausted every resource.

She says:

> Unfortunately, like everyone else, there are many of us who owe student loans and are expected to pay rent. We have to pay for utilities, credit card bills, dog food and other necessities like food and clothing. To make matters worse, my husband and I—

And this is interesting—

> had set aside money . . . for a vacation. . . . That money is now going toward bills. . . . What does all this mean? An article in The Washington Post recently reported that the shutdown could amount to a loss of $200 million a day for local businesses throughout the city.

Mr. President, $200 million a day for local businesses throughout your city of Baltimore.

She says:

> Contractors, especially those contractors who work for small businesses, have been hit hard by this shutdown.

She explains how they may never be made whole.

Day 14 of a shutdown——

Mr. CARDIN. Could I ask my colleague to yield?

Mrs. BOXER. Yes, I am happy to yield.

Mr. CARDIN. I thank the Chair, and I thank Senator BOXER. She points out the hardship of people not getting a paycheck. Senator BOXER points it out very clearly. Some of these people are the same people who were just furloughed as a result of sequestration, so they already had smaller paychecks because of sequestration.

Let me remind my colleagues that sequestration was put in 2 years ago as a placeholder. I don't know of a single Senator who wanted to see sequestration take effect. It was a placeholder to get to a budget negotiation. What did we do? We passed the budget. We passed the budget almost 7 months ago. We said: Let's negotiate. We knew it was not going to be our budget. We know we have to negotiate with the House to get a budget to get rid of sequestration.

I mention that because once again we have a very simple request today: Open the government and pay our bills. Sit down and negotiate. It is pretty simple. We have not brought forward our policy objectives in this, which is to have a budget that makes sense for this country, that allows growth of employment, invests not only in roads and bridges but energy and research and education so we can build a competitive economy for the 21st century. We want a budget that is balanced on how we reduce spending—not just on what we call our discretionary spending accounts but also as we look at our entitlement spending. We want to see our health care system more efficient. We want to work to make it a more efficient system. We started that with passage of the Affordable Care Act. Now we want to implement that. That will bring about some additional savings.

We believe we should pay our bills. We should have the necessary revenue. Our revenue code is full of inequities that hemorrhage revenue. My colleague from California is well aware of the fact that in our Tax Code—I serve on the Senate Finance Committee. I think my colleagues understand that we are now spending more money in our Tax Code than we do in appropriations bills. We spend more money in the Tax Code. That is tax breaks some people get—not everyone. We certainly can review those tax expenditures and close those that are inefficient, which will not only provide more equity in our Tax Code but will provide more revenue to pay our bills and reduce our deficit.

It is that type of negotiation we want to get into, but we cannot do that when the Republicans have put a gun to the head of the U.S. economy. That is what they have done by shutting government and by threatening not to pay the bills. We say very simply, put down the gun. Let's negotiate these issues.

Mrs. BOXER. Absolutely.

Mr. CARDIN. The Senator is absolutely right about the private contractor issue. When you look at 800,000 Federal workers who have been furloughed, that does not include the private contractors, which are clearly going to be an additional hundreds of thousands who are not working today, yes, it is a huge drain on our economy, and there is no reason for this.

For all those reasons, we say very clearly on day 14, day 14 of this shutdown, let's open the government, let's pay our bills, and, yes, let's develop a sensible way to negotiate our budget. Let's not try to threaten the American people and then try to pass an extreme agenda as a result of that.

Through the Chair, I thank Senator BOXER.

Mrs. BOXER. Through the Chair, I thank my friend. This contractor issue is a sleeper issue in a way, as this woman writes in the Baltimore Sun, because if you look at the numbers, you may see more contractor employees affected than Federal employees because even if you take—there are millions of them. Even if you take away, if you look at the statistics, the millions who work for the military and assume they are getting paid, there are still more than 2 million who are contractors to other arms of the government, such as homeland security or border patrol—you name it. It is a sleeper issue.

This woman who is so articulate, Clarissa Olivarez—I hope she knows we are taking her words to heart and putting her words in the RECORD. She is explaining what it feels like to be scared. For what? For nothing. Because they did not like the Affordable Care Act—which they are not going to change. They tried to repeal it 43 times.

Open the government. They are so afraid they will lose the vote, they are not even allowing a vote over there.

They are coming back—my friends in the House—shortly. By the way, imagine, Speaker BOEHNER said go home over the weekend while all this is pending. They were not even in session. Outrageous.

I am going to conclude in about 5 minutes by talking about some of the other impacts of the shutdown.

Mr. President, 93 percent of the employees at the EPA have been furloughed. What do they do? They make sure the air we breathe is safe, the water we drink is safe, and the rivers we swim in are safe. They make sure Superfund sites are being cleaned up, those toxic brews in there, including things such as benzene and arsenic and every other bad thing you can imagine. In my State there is not one single EPA inspector on the ground. I have established that. That is the same in many others. Mr. President, 505 Superfund sites were being cleaned up. Cleanup is suspended. Many children live near those sites. There are many schools near those sites. There are many homes near those sites. They are toxic waste dumps. No cleanup.

Now we find out that 92 percent of workers at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission have been furloughed. What is their job? It was created ''to ensure the safe use of radioactive materials.''

I say to every Senator who has a nuclear powerplant in their State, make a little prayer. If something bad happens, we will have to somehow nab all those workers and get them back on the job in time. Earth to my Republican friends: Have you ever heard the word ''Fukushima''? Do you know what I am talking about? Wake up. What are you doing to the American people? You don't like a bill, so you shut down the government. You take all of the watchdogs off the job so people could start dumping waste into the waterways, into the air?

We even have a circumstance in California where pesticides are being imported from other countries. The EPA has to inspect those at the site and make sure they are safe. There are no inspectors. I just told you that. So they are sitting in a warehouse, and our farmers are starting to say: Where are these pesticides? We need them.

This shutdown is mindless. The Army Corps of Engineers manages 12 million acres of public lands, recreation areas that host 370 million visits annually. These recreation areas support local businesses such as resorts, marinas, outfitters, grocery stores, gas stations, hotels—shut down. Last week the Corps closed Lake Mendocino, which is located north of San Francisco. Lake Mendocino hosts half a million visitors annually and visitors spend $12 million at businesses within 30 miles of the lake, supporting 106 jobs and $2.8 million in income. Those small businesses cannot go on like this. They cannot go on like this.

Mr. President, 561 national wildlife refuges are closed because of the shutdown. I say to my friend, Senator CARDIN and I—we are very close friends because we work together daily on these issues. He is the chairman of the committee that oversees water quality, these wildlife refuges. In many parts of the country, hunting season is in full swing. I say to my friend from Oregon—I just found out, but he probably knows this—that on the California-Oregon border, hunters and tourists usually head to Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge for the opening of hunting season. But they have been denied access, which means local businesses are losing much needed revenues. The impact of this is felt with a direct hit to Federal employees, contractor employees, and local businesses. Everyone is suffering. That is why we had a letter that I put in the RECORD yesterday, or the day before, signed by the Chamber of Commerce, the AFL–CIO, and the nonprofit sector. It is so rare, I say to my friends, that we see those three groups coming together.

They are demanding that we open the government. They are demanding a clean debt ceiling so we can pay our bills. They are demanding it, and they represent the broadest base sector of America.

Who is benefiting from this other than people who have a very dark side? That is all I can say. You would have to have a really dark side.

I will give a couple of examples of what is happening. The NTSB, the National Transportation Safety Board—we had a horrible crash in July with Asiana Airlines, flight 214. We don't know exactly why it happened, and the NTSB has been forced to postpone their hearings. These investigations help us to find out how to avoid disasters in the future.

Three weeks ago in Santa Monica, at a little airport, there was a crash that killed four people. Investigation materials were shoved into a vault, and we don't know why it happened. If we knew why it happened, we could save lives.

I remember when I first came to Congress a very long time ago, and I served in the House, there was a terrible crash. They found out it was a very small bolt or a screw that was responsible for the problems, and they grounded every aircraft that had that faulty part and fixed it. That is why these investigations are critical. These investigations are critical so we are able to not only tell the loved ones what happened but to make improvements. It is all shut down.

Another example has to do with the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Last week in San Diego a 2-year-old Annette Estrada was killed when she was crushed by a falling TV. Normally the Consumer Product Safety Commission investigates this heartbreaking incident, find out the problem, and demand it be fixed. Who knows who the next child will be. That is why we have a government—a government of, by, and for the people—to make life better for the American people.

The government is shut down. Open it. Let the people in. It is easy to do. Speaker BOEHNER has a bill. Let them vote over there. Open the government now. People are in danger. There are no winners in a shutdown. It is devastating for workers. It is devastating for small businesses. It is devastating for contractors. It is devastating to our economy, which is just coming out of the worst recession since the Great Depression. What are they thinking over there?

Then they send these little mini-bills. Oh, open this little agency, and open that little agency. I call that government by press release. The heat is on them, so they pass a little mini-bill. Since when does one political party decide which of our communities survive, which ones thrive, which ones die, which people live, which people die, which child is healthy, and which child is not healthy?

There is a community in California where kids are suffering nosebleeds, and they are sick. It turns out that they are very close to an industrial site. I called the EPA. They were going to rush over there and figure it out and stop the pain. They can't go. I don't see a bill over there to open the EPA. They will never send us that.

Mr. CARDIN. Through the Chair, I just have to say to my colleague that she is absolutely right. She is the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee Agency. She has given great examples that show how critically important the Environmental Protection Agency is in protecting public health and protecting our environment. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is important to protect the public safety.

The Senator from California is absolutely right. I want to give another dynamic, and that is jobs. The fact that the EPA is not in full force is hurting economic growth. I will give one example: Harbor Point in downtown Baltimore, which is an RCRA site, which means it was an environmental cleanup site that has a court order on its development requiring the EPA to sign off to make sure the environmental issues are being protected in its development.

Everything is fairly well understood here, and it has gone through a long process. We are now at the point where we are ready to develop this prime spot. It is the most iconic spot in downtown Baltimore. It is going to help our city grow. Our city needs economic growth. It is on hold. Why? Because the EPA does not have its people in the office to be able to review this application in a timely way. That is just one example. The Environmental Protection Agency is critically important for public health. It is critically important for our environment and also for economic growth.

I will give another example: The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau is not at full complement either. We have microbreweries in Maryland that are doing very well. Every time they add a new product, they have to get approval from the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. That is on hold. Their economic growth is on hold.

I could give many more examples. Senator BOXER mentioned our refuges.

The Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge is located on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. It is one of the most beautiful spots in the world. This is hunting season. The Eastern Shore of Maryland depends upon the hunting season for its economy.

I can't tell you how many hotel operators, restaurants, and shopowners depend upon the fall season being in full force with the hunting season, and now we put a real damper—not just the weather we had over the past weekend—but the fact that the government was closed has put a damper on the economy. Actually, it was good weather for hunting. They lost that. They are not going to be able to recover that. It is lost.

As my friend pointed out, our request is pretty simple. Our request is to open the government, pay our bills, and let's sit down and negotiate. The point I hope everyone understands: The funding level we sent over to the House of Representatives is the Republican funding level. We didn't negotiate that number. That is the current fiscal year 2013 number. We didn't negotiate between that number and our budget number that this body passed. We gave up on that and said: Look, it is more important to keep the government open. We have already negotiated.

Bear with me for one more minute. Senator BOXER has given the Baltimore Sun a lot of credit today, and I would like to quote from their editorial because I think it is important to point out.

> Passing a ''clean'' continuing resolution keeping government fully operating at funding levels the GOP has already endorsed is no compromise. It's the status quo. Raising the debt ceiling isn't a concession either—it allows the nation to pay the bills Congress has already incurred and prevents the possibility of a government default, which would hurt the economy, raise borrowing costs and increase the federal deficit.
>
> So when Speaker Boehner lashes out at President Obama for failing to negotiate, one has to ask, what is this thing he describes as negotiation? House Republicans are not merely leveraging their political position—as some dryly claim—they are threatening to do grievous harm to the global economy and the American public.
>
> The gun isn't raised to President Obama's head or to the Senate. The Democrats have no particular stake in passing a continuing resolution or in raising the debt ceiling other than keeping public order and doing what any reasonable person expects Congress to do. No, the gun is raised at the nation as a whole. That's why descriptions like ''ransom'' and ''hostage'' are not mere hyperbole, they are as close as the English language gets to accurately describing the GOP strategy.

I hope we are close to reaching an agreement to open the government. It should never have been closed. A lot of damage and harm has already been done.

We are on a motion to proceed to the debt ceiling. If we were not to pay our bills, that would cause irreparable harm not just to our economy, but to the world economy. That is something we should not be playing around with waiting until the last public minute.

I urge my colleagues to put the interest of this country first. This is a serious matter that affects our economy, America's future, and the global economy. If we turn the global economy into further economic disorder, it is going to have a major impact on the United States, and it will be our fault.

I urge my colleagues to immediately cease this strategy of threatening our economy. Let's open the government, pay our bills, and sit down and negotiate, as we should, a budget agreement which will not be what the Democrats want or the Republicans want, but it will be a compromise, as it should be, between the parties. We owe that to the American people.

Through the Chair, I thank Senator BOXER again for underscoring these points and pointing out the wide impact this has on all parts of our country. We have to end it. I hope we can end it tonight.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I thank the Chair for allowing this interlude. I do want to say to my friend, I think it has been very helpful that he and I have been in this conversation because we share the view that these two self-inflicted wounds are outrageous, and we want to make sure that the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD is very clear and shows the pain, the suffering, the concern, and the insecurities that this dual wound, the potential of a default and an actual government shutdown, are causing. I pray that we are never facing this again.

I am very mindful of the words I use here on the floor so I am not going to say what I think about this exactly the way I would say it if I were talking to my family. There is no reason for it. It makes no sense to do this to a country they say they love. Why hurt the country they say they love?

Why make the country they say they love look like a laughingstock? Why make a President who was going to go to Asia to pitch our economy and investments in our Nation—why make him cancel a trip and have China stand there and say: Well, you can see America just doesn't have it together. If they loved their country, they wouldn't do that.

Some of the comments over there are unbelievable. One of the Republican House Members said: I have never seen us so happy. She is happy? She is happy that millions of people don't know where their next check is coming from? She is happy? She is happy that plane crashes can't be investigated? She is happy that Superfund sites can't be cleaned? She is happy that veterans are scared? She is happy that 65-year-olds and 62-year-olds who are new to Social Security can't get their checks on time? She is happy? She needs to look into her heart. That whole party has to look into its heart. Every once in a while you can see into someone's soul, and you know it when it has happened to you.

I got into a conversation with one colleague, who shall remain nameless. I was so excited. I came home from California, and I saw tens of thousands of my people who were signing up for health insurance that never had it before. I could tell so many beautiful stories. There were people with preexisting conditions, people who had lifetime caps, people who were scared, and little kids whose parents finally were able to save their lives.

There was one incredible woman who wrote an op-ed piece in the Washington Post about this. And you know what my colleague, who shall remain nameless, said? I told him I went to a signup place, and it was exciting. There were so many people who were signing up. We were at a Hispanic community, and everybody had a smile on their face. He said: I was happy to read in one of your papers that two people had their premiums doubled. I stopped and said: You were happy? That made you happy? Look into your soul.

Why are people happy over there? How do they say they love their country, but they don't care if their country defaults on its obligations?

I want to show my colleagues what President Ronald Reagan said about defaulting—not paying our bills—President Ronald Reagan, the beloved President of the Republicans, and many Democrats. He came from my State. He is one of the most popular Presidents in the history of our country. We have airports named after him. We have buildings named after him. Why don't we see what President Reagan said about default? And just know, when he was President, Republicans and Democrats raised the debt ceiling no less than 18 times, I say to my colleagues. Eighteen times we raised the debt ceiling because, yes, we had debt from prior bills and Ronald Reagan said, Send me a debt ceiling increase. Here is what he says:

> The full consequences of a default—or even the serious prospect of a default—by the United States are impossible to predict and awesome to contemplate. Denigration of the full faith and credit of the United States would have substantial effects on the domestic financial markets and the value of the dollar.

Ronald Reagan, 1983. That is when our economy was much smaller than it is today.

So how does the party of Ronald Reagan now get us to this place where in 3 days we are about to default? I didn't hear one word out of them when they decided to put two wars on the credit card and a huge tax break for billionaires on the credit card and a big medical prescription drug benefit on the credit card—not one word out of them. Oh, vote, vote, vote, vote, vote.

What happened? We had a surplus under Bill Clinton. We had a huge increase in the deficits under George W. Bush. And, by the way, President Obama got handed an enormous deficit which he has cut in half.

So all of this talk about how the Republicans are the party of fiscal responsibility bears scrutiny. There

wasn't one Republican who voted for the budget, I say to my colleagues, that Bill Clinton wanted us to vote for. We did it all with Democratic votes. Then we got not only a balanced budget, but a surplus, and tens of millions of new jobs. George Bush came in, put two wars on the credit card, prescription drug benefit on the credit card, tax breaks to billionaires on the credit card, and the debt was off and running. But not one Republican said: Don't pass a debt ceiling. Not one Republican said: Don't default. What changed? Could it be they don't like this President? Do my colleagues think that has something to do with it? I will let people decide that.

We now know what Ronald Reagan said. He said, in other words, we need to pay our bills. We need to avoid default. There isn't one respected economist who doesn't agree with what Ronald Reagan said in 1983. The cost to taxpayers of default is enormous—billions upon billions of dollars—even the thought of it. We are still paying off what it cost us the last time.

Experts warn us against default. Warren Buffett: ''It ought to be banned as a weapon.'' It, meaning a default, ought to be banned as a weapon. ''It should be like nuclear bombs, basically too horrible to use.''

Warren Buffett knows a thing or two about this economy.

Mark Zandi, who advised JOHN MCCAIN in his Presidential run: ''Breaching the limit would be an economic disaster.''

What would happen to average folks? Mortgage rates could go sky high. Small business, big business couldn't expand. We would go into a recession. And they are happy over there about the prospect. They need to look into their souls.

The president of the World Bank, Jim Kim: ''Please consider politics beyond the Beltway, politics beyond your districts . . . This is not a theoretical impact. It's very real.''

Again, Mark Zandi: ''The dark scenario is so dark I can't imagine it.'' That is what he said.

So we pray now, as our leadership goes to the White House—and they are probably there right now meeting with the President—that they come out of that meeting with a plan—a plan to pay our bills, a plan to reopen government, and a plan to negotiate on anything Republicans and Democrats want to negotiate on. I pray so that this works out. But until it does, I am going to be here every day making the record for future Senators and for the history books that shutting down the government and threatening default, those kinds of weapons should be banned.

It is our job to pay the bills. It is our job to keep the government open, just as it is a pilot's job to fly the plane. He has to show up and fly it. We have to show up, pay the bills, keep the government open, and then negotiate our differences.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, once again I wish to thank Senator BOXER for her comments and for her strength in coming to the floor and pointing out the danger and harm caused by the government shutdown and the risk of defaulting on our debt.

Let me make it clear: Open government. Keep it open at the level the Republicans had in their budget as we continue to negotiate. We want to negotiate a budget for fiscal year 2014. We want that budget to be fair. We have been trying to do that for 7 months. We are not going to negotiate a budget in the next 48 hours. It is going to take more time than that.

We need to extend the ability to pay our bills. That should be done for a long time—for a longer period of time—because of the predictability here. We don't want to go from crisis to crisis. There should be no concessions for either one of those two issues; that is, opening government or paying our bills.

Let's work back and forth, Democrats and Republicans, on a budget in which there will be give and take. That is what we are encouraging our colleagues to do.

I join Senator BOXER in hoping there is a productive meeting at the White House today. I hope we find a game plan that will allow us to open government and pay our bills in a way in which we can sit down and negotiate the fiscal year 2014 budget, respecting each other's views and doing what our political system always envisioned; that is, true compromise, particularly when we have a House of Representatives controlled by Republicans and a Senate controlled by Democrats.

With that, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I rise to continue the series of comments my colleagues have been making about the situation we find ourselves in at this moment, with our government shut down and with the possibility of a default on the payments of our Federal Government. This situation is virtually unprecedented, to be in a situation of near default.

I want to step back from the immediate arguments over what the answer looks like to understand that we have wandered far outside the normal, orderly lines of legislative debate. Legislative debate is like a baseball game. Folks come together, and some want plan A, some want to oppose plan A, and one team wins and one team loses. In this case, we can go back to the health care debate. Some folks wanted a health care plan that would put millions of folks without insurance into insurance and have a number of systematic reforms that would help Americans and to end abuses in the insurance industry. They wanted to create competition between companies so that customers; that is, citizens, could compare policies and thereby get a better deal, and encourage companies to drop their prices.

This debate now goes back quite a while, to 2009, 2010. The side that wanted the improved health care won. The other side normally says, Well, we will be back next year. We will be back with some changes in team members, as in baseball, and we will debate this again.

Instead of calling to have another legislative debate down the line, those who lost asked for the umpire to declare that the losing team had won. This is acceptable; that is, turning to our Supreme Court and asking them if we had violated any of the constitutional provisions that guide our Nation. In this case the answer came back, and the answer was, no, the health care plan was constitutional and it would go forward.

So now the losing team, instead of saying we are going to debate this with the public, we are going to try to get our point of view across and get people elected who support it, said, We are going to hold the crowd hostage and threaten to burn down the stadium. If a person is attending a baseball game, we know that is outside the normal rules of competition. We create these rules in a democracy so we can have an orderly process by which to consider the viewpoints of our constituents and make decisions, but threatening to hold the American people hostage is outside of the rules. Threatening to have our national government default and burn down our economy is outside the rules. Yet that is where we stand today.

Great harm, even as I speak, is coming to our communities across the Nation. This harm may not touch some of the Members of this body who may have the financial foundation to not be particularly concerned about what happens to others. But I would encourage them to go live a few days in a working-class community and find out how this impacts families across our Nation. Not only are those families who work for the government not getting their salaries as well as being furloughed, but they are not then spending their funds in the local community, which creates an impact on all kinds of other groups. It isn't just in that direct employment. We have a situation with, say, those who are affected by food stamps. If the first day of the month comes and food stamps are not available, they don't go to the stores and buy groceries, so the stores are affected. The list goes on and on in all kinds of ways.

In fact, I can turn to my home State of Oregon to demonstrate some things known to me that maybe folks haven't considered. I have here a letter from the Port of Astoria. The Port of Astoria, in order for them to receive oceangoing ships, has to have its slips dredged to a certain depth; otherwise,

those ships can't dock. This letter basically is about how the government shutdown is affecting their ability to dredge and how the inability to dredge may have a profound economic consequence on the community.

The port writes, ''Every year the Port of Astoria is required to dredge to maintain operations.''

They have done that in various ways for the last 23 years. The letter goes on through all kinds of details of the process through which dredging occurs. On the third page, it gets down to this: ''Our biggest issue at this stage is the government shutdown has prevented our consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service. . . . '' Without that consultation, they cannot satisfy the ESA requirements of section 7 of the Clean Water Act.

The letter goes on to say:

> This is the only element that is holding us up. . . .

You may think: Well, if they do not dredge on time, what is the big deal? To Astoria it is a very big deal. I continue with the letter:

> If we are not able to dredge soon, this Port and this community could suffer immense economic damages to the tune of 5–6 million dollars of direct economic funds per vessel that fails to dock at the Port of Astoria or 10–12 million dollars of direct economic impact per month.

That is based on the fact that there are a couple major vessels per month.

The letter goes on to say:

> Furthermore, if one vessel strikes the bottom [of the river] the industry and our investors, clients and tenants will be in an uproar and our entire business will be blacklisted on the international trade market.

That would be terrible, to have a ship hit the bottom and have the Port of Astoria completely shut down as a result of the fact that they cannot consult—as they point out, that part of this is their ability to consult with the National Marine Fisheries Service.

That is just one sizable impact for a community. There are thousands of these occurring across the country.

Let me take another example. We have a company in Oregon that produces a particular device that it exports, and it needs an export license to do so; otherwise, it cannot send its items abroad to its customer. Right now it has a big stockpile of a shipment it needs to send out.

Well, they cannot get the export license because the government is shut down. This is creating a big cashflow issue because they cannot receive the funds until they ship the item, which means huge potential damage to the company—in other words, something that may not have been thoroughly thought through.

What about the rural areas in our States? Some will be surprised to find out that you have a lot more government workers per capita in rural areas than in urban areas. Many parts of my State are forested, and the forests are owned either by the Bureau of Land Management or the U.S. Forest Service—it is owned by the national government, in other words. If the folks are not there because the government is shut down, it has a direct impact. In fact, right now, the U.S. Forest Service is issuing directions on how folks who are in the middle of logging have to shut down, skid the logs they have cut, quit felling any more, and basically clean up and clear out—in the middle of an operation. That does not just mean losses for the company that is logging, it also means a loss of saw logs for the sawmill, which means layoffs or a shutdown at the sawmill.

Well, you can start to see how the consequences roll through the economy.

How about the superfund site in the Portland Harbor? There is an intense effort going on to get a plan to be able to clean up that superfund site. Negotiations are underway between the industries that populate that stretch and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Well, it is very important to move forward to meet deadlines. How are you going to move forward if the folks are not at the EPA?

If we go back to a timber company, it is not just the immediate impact, it is the impact a year out, because the folks who are planning the sales for a year out cannot plan those sales if they are shut down or if they are furloughed. They cannot plan those sales. And they have to have teams of biologists and folks evaluate every aspect of every sale to prepare it, put it up for auction. If you cannot put it up for auction, somebody does not buy it, there is no cutting, and then the logging companies and the mills are hurt.

This is not acceptable. What we have is a series of fiscal irresponsibilities by the group within the Senate and the House that has been blocking the budget and appropriations process. Fiscally irresponsible—let me lay that out. It is fiscally irresponsible to block the Budget Committee for the last 6 months from having a conference committee. Yet a small group has come to this floor and repeatedly objected to the conference committee meeting. Without that budget, you cannot have common numbers for the Senate and the House. That blocks the spending bills—known here as appropriations bills—so the spending bills cannot be put together. Or if they are put together, they are based on a different number than the House has, which means those become deadlocked.

That leads to a continuing resolution, which means continuing what we are already doing rather than having a new spending bill. That is a waste of money because it means we are going to keep doing things that we know are not working instead of doing the things we know are working better. That is why you have an annual appropriations or spending process so you can cast aside the things that are not working and do the things that are working. So it is wasteful to block the budget and appropriations process.

Then we have this government shutdown. What does this mean? This means less income because of less economic activity, and it means more expenses because of more safety net responsibilities, which means more deficit and more debt. So this group that is blocking the budget and appropriations process is responsible for increasing the deficit and increasing our debt.

Then let's fast forward to the threat of not paying our bills. I think everyone in America knows, as a family, if you do not pay your bills, your credit score goes down and you have to pay a higher interest rate when you borrow. It is the same with the Federal Government.

There are some in this body who have said: Well, let's make sure we pay our Treasury bonds, make good on our debt obligations, and let's just not pay other obligations. Anyone who has had a credit score knows that no matter what obligation you fail in, it becomes part of your credit score. It raises the interest. You can go for your home loan and say: I have always made my house payment, and they are like: Yes, but you did not pay your utility bill, you did not pay your car payment. That means you are a higher risk. You say: But I have always paid my house bill, always paid my mortgage. It does not matter. It shows that you are stressed and you do not have a consistent exercise of responsibility in paying your bills.

So there is no easy out, despite that my colleagues have come to this floor, this Chamber, and said: It is not a big deal. They are, simply put, wrong. If they had come to the Committee on Banking, they could have heard expert after expert after expert say, essentially: You are wrong. All your bills matter. All your bills affect your credit rating. When your credit rating goes down, your interest rates go up.

It is very expensive for the government, and it is wasted money, money that is buying us nothing—nothing. It is just paying more for the borrowing you have to do.

It is not just government that pays. It is the families who pay. They have to pay higher interest on their mortgage, a higher payment on their home loan, if you will, their home equity loan, a higher payment on their car loan, a higher payment on their business loan. Everyone wastes money because of this group of incredibly irresponsible, fiscally irresponsible Members of the House and Senate who have brought us to this point.

I can see my colleague has come to the floor, and I am sure he has stories from his State, and he has his insights on why this is an unacceptable, irresponsible place we find ourselves. All we really need—all we need is a short-term continuing resolution at this point to reopen government while we negotiate, and we should have a long-term resolution of the default issue because that is something that should never be threatened.

It is Ronald Reagan who said: Do not mess with the good faith and credit of the United States of America. It is time everyone on both sides of the aisle listens to what President Reagan said, because he was right on on this, that that is just a shoot-yourself-in-the foot, self-inflicted wound that does no one in America any good at all.

Let's return to the normal process of understanding there are bounds on the legislative debate. If you lose with your perspective in a legislative battle, you can come back again next time around. You can come back the next year, you can come back 2 years later, you can come back 3 months later if the votes shift. You can propose amendments. But you do not—you do not—hold the crowd hostage. You do not threaten to burn down the stadium. You do not hold the American people hostage. And you do not threaten to burn down our economy and our international standing by proposing that we not pay our bills.

Thank you very much.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Oregon for speaking so forcefully and ably about the real-life stories in his State—stories of people affected very directly by the shutdown and the prospect of the greatest Nation in the history of the world failing to pay its bills on time. As powerfully as he spoke, so did our colleagues from California and Maryland, emphasizing again the evidence of how deep and broad the cumulative effect is of the shutdown.

I had occasion to speak to people across Connecticut, as I know my colleague, the Acting President pro tempore, has done over the past 10 days. He and I have talked about how Connecticut is affected and about the individuals there who have borne the burden of this shutdown. As in Oregon and California and Maryland, there are real-life stories of people who have been affected not just temporarily but lastingly and enduringly.

I had occasion over the last 48 or 24 hours to talk with many of them out of the glare of the public eye—privately, candidly—and I want to tell some of their stories today, beginning with a meeting I had this morning in East Hartford at VFW Post 2083, at the invitation of my good friend CDR John Hollis of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and a group he helped to invite—veterans of conflicts ranging from Korea, to Iraq, to Vietnam, to Afghanistan—all ages, all races, religions—more than 20 of those veterans telling me their stories and imparting to me their message: Get the job done. Reach a bipartisan compromise and make sure the government opens and end the shutdown and pays its bills on time, as befits the United States of America, for which they fought, the Nation they served and sacrificed to keep free.

I was drawn by young men such as Micah Welintukonis, Jordan Massa, Michael Scavetta, David Alexander, veterans of the most recent conflict in Afghanistan; and John Hollis, Ed Dettore, Lester Yarmiel, Richard Kennedy, Mel Huston, Lucius Miles, who have fought in previous wars.

As a matter of fact, Micah Welintukonis has recently returned from Walter Reed, where he had to undergo the latest round of surgery to his arm, which was severely wounded in Afghanistan in combat there. That wound led him to receive the Purple Heart. He was there with his wife Camilla and his three children to talk to me about his fear that he will be denied benefits and compensation that he is due, he deserves, and needs—the disability claim that he may apply for.

Of course, Jordan Massa is also a Purple Heart recipient as a result of a wound that he likewise received in combat. He waited for 2 years to receive approval of his disability claim, only to learn on October 1 that he will very likely have to wait longer because of the VA furloughing so many of its employees.

Others who came to this meeting: Mike Scavetta from Wethersfield—a veteran who served in an Air Force military police unit deployed to Afghanistan, who needs the GI bill, which he credits as reconnecting him to a civil society after his return. He has applied for a higher disability rating with the Department of Veterans Affairs based on his continued experience of post-traumatic stress.

Jake Demaskiewicz in Rocky Hill, who has served not only in the Army in Operation Enduring Freedom, but on his return now in a nonprofit organization, is assisting other veterans. Thirty percent of his paycheck comes from the VA's vocational rehabilitation program, and he receives disability payments.

These payments, compensation claims will run out at the end of October, and the delays are present even now, discouraging and failing these brave combat veterans who have endured so much for our Nation—the Nation that now has shut down these services because of a small fringe of extremist ideologues in one House of this Congress, one branch of this government, who have succeeded in paralyzing the process.

There are many other impacts on veterans in the denial of programs that are so important, many of which I have mentioned on the floor, such as the Education Call Center, personal interviews at regional offices, education and vocational counseling, outreach programs, including at military facilities and VetSuccess on Campus.

These programs and benefits and claims cannot be sustained by a piecemeal allocation of money. The claims need to be verified by going to other agencies such as the IRS. The labor training programs need to be provided by the Department of Labor. Opening one agency is no substitute for a comprehensive approach to serve these veterans and the people of the United States, whether it is Head Start children who depend on that program, or seniors who depend on nutritional services.

Over these past 2 weeks, I have spoken to home buyers whose loans cannot be processed by government agencies or by banks, business owners whose borrowing cannot be approved, potential victims of health threats who cannot be protected by the FDA or the CDC. There are researchers at the NIH and at places such as Yale who cannot continue their vital work to learn of new treatments, of advances in medicine that can help save people's lives and prevent suffering, and medical school applicants and Ph.D. candidates whose financial aid is in jeopardy and who cannot even, many of them, travel with government support to interview for their next possible assignment and study.

These ramifications are not limited to veterans. They affect our economy at its core. I warned about the effect on job growth and economic recovery and now it is visible, literally visible in the businesses and offices and places of employ throughout Connecticut.

Just yesterday in the Connecticut Post there was this story. The picture is of Robin Imbrogno. This picture of Robin Imbrogno from the Connecticut Post in yesterday's newspaper is of her at a meeting with her staff, preparing for their work. Their office in Seymour, CT, provides human resource services for businesses from California to Maine, across the country, to more than 150 business clients.

It begins:

> Robin Imbrogno pulled her staff together after work on Thursday for an update. How, she asked, has the federal government's partial shutdown impacted business at her company, the Human Resources Consulting Group. ''Even more ways than I'd thought,'' she said moments later.

I am going to quote the article.

> At the company's office in downtown Seymour, the staff of about 30 was having trouble carrying out a host of tasks for their more than 150 clients located from California to Maine: For one, they can't access [the central source of information in the government.] For another, they can't finish background checks or file equal employment opportunity reports. Most vexingly, perhaps, they got more phone calls than ever on Monday complaining that paychecks hadn't arrived in people's mailboxes across America—even though the U.S. Postal Service is supposed to be fully staffed.

Their report is about new businesses that cannot open, retail businesses that cannot go into business because they cannot ''procure the necessary business license.''

As Robin said, ''It wasn't a fun phone call.''

There is evidence of this effect on employment in businesses across this country, across the State of Connecticut. This relatively modest-size business in Seymore, CT, the Human Resources Consulting Group, founded and headed by Robin Imbrogno, is just one of many across the country.

Her reports about the effects on jobs—we are talking jobs—is a wake-up call for this body. It is a wake-up call for not only the Congress but for everyone in positions of leadership, because this effect will be enduring.

In the same article from the Connecticut Post, it talks about the SBA not providing loans to small businesses: $150,000 worth of loans every day in one Congressional district in Connecticut alone. Eight companies slated to get SBA-backed loans from a private nonprofit organization will not receive them because of this shutdown.

There are other individuals. I cannot share all of their stories, but just a few. Mary Brady in Durham is trying to buy a home. She cannot do it because she is unable to verify Social Security numbers and income with the Internal Revenue Service; Jesse Pannell, who contacted my office because the buyer of his home in Union, CT, cannot process a loan from the USDA because the USDA employees are furloughed and there is no one to process his buyer's application.

In the city of New Haven, which I visited over the weekend, urban renewal is halted because of the shutdown. This city relies on the Department of Housing and Urban Development to proceed with foreclosure actions on developers. Those developers are subject to foreclosure actions when they fail to maintain their property, when that property becomes a blight on the neighborhood. But, of course, HUD employees are furloughed and they are not at their desks to help the city of New Haven.

This ripple effect spans the State and the country. It goes from loans to a physical therapy company, a car wash, a catering company, a dental firm, small businesses that populate Main Street. As much as we focus on the markets, on Wall Street, we are talking about Main Street in jeopardy because of this shutdown. These are real-life tragedies. There are real consequences to real people, real harm and hardship in real lives. This body has to listen to them, as I did, and as I have done over the past couple of weeks.

Behind all of this real harm to real people is the prospect of an even more horrendous possible harm resulting from this Nation failing to pay its bills on time. The havoc and chaos that would result, the calamity and catastrophe across the globe, the lasting impact on our Nation, on our credibility as a world power, simply is unthinkable and unimaginable.

How would we face our children if we were to allow this Nation to go into default? How would this generation explain itself to the next and the one after? Every generation enters into a compact in America that we will leave this Nation better than we found it, just as the World War II generation fought to preserve freedom and democracy and gave of itself in combat and then came back to build the interstates and desegregate our schools and put a man on the Moon. In peace as well as war, our veterans are coming back eager and ready to contribute to this country.

The men I just mentioned and met with in East Hartford at VFW Post 283, veterans across Connecticut, veterans across the country, expect more from this government and are eager to leave this Nation greater than it was left to them, and there are millions of other Americans who also are contributing and giving back in their own ways and who are committed to following that model of courage and dedication that has characterized previous generations. How do we face the next generation if we allow this great Nation to fail to fulfill its most basic obligation that every family meets—paying its bills on time.

It is often said America always does the right thing, after it tries everything else. I know I am paraphrasing, not quoting directly. Winston Churchill said democracy is the worst of all possible governments, except for all the others.

We do not have the luxury today of trying everything else before America does the right thing. We do not have the luxury of failing democracy and failing to pay our bills on time. We must meet this challenge and follow the example of those veterans and millions of other courageous Americans who have said to all of us, as they did to me this morning: Get the job done. Make sure the Government of the United States serves the people and pays its bills on time.

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I will be speaking later this afternoon with regard to the judges, but I have heard a number of people, including the distinguished senior Senator from Connecticut and others on the floor, speaking about the effect of the shutdown. I appreciate my colleagues who come and give real-world statements of how what is happening here impacts their constituents.

I was just in Vermont and had the opportunity to talk with people, many of whom I have known for years, about how they are being effected by the shutdown. These are hard-working people who work for our government. They have skills our government needs. They are being furloughed through no fault of their own.

They said: I know I am getting paid less in the government, but I have a skill and the country has done so much for me and my family, it is a way to give back, but I am not going to tell my children to do that. They are well educated. I am not going to tell them to do that, to get treated this way.

What is going to happen is we are going to have a lot of these furloughed people who will say the heck with it. They will leave government service. These are experts in our intelligence services, the Department of Defense, medical research, and other areas. What will happen when we try to replace them? We will be scrambling around, hiring contractors, paying a lot more for people without the skills and experience.

The private sector is being impacted. I have used the example of a person who has a microbrewery in Vermont. He put a lot of money and effort into a seasonal brew and was prepared to go with it during what we call the leaf-peeping season, the fall foliage season, in Vermont, but he needs an approval stamp from the Department of Agriculture, but the people who would give him the approval he needs have been furloughed.

There are a number of people who may need a passport for an emergency, a family member is abroad and ill and somebody has to get on a plane. A lot passports get issued in St. Albans, Vermont, but the employees at the passport office are not allowed to go to work and get their job done.

Those who have questions of the IRS that they need for their businesses, normally they could call them, but the IRS is closed.

In another area—and someone in the press asked me about this a few moments ago—what about the court system. Our Federal court system is facing some very serious problems. If there is a criminal case, because of our speedy trial rules, that goes to the head of the line. We also have, since Gideon v. Wainwright, the fact that criminal defendants are entitled to counsel. But the counsel might not be there. Defenders' offices might have to furlough staff.

Courts can't keep asking the same lawyers to just volunteer their time; maybe they will get paid and maybe they will not, and if they do, it is going to be far less than they make otherwise.

What happens is that those criminal cases start backing up. Then if there is a legitimate civil case one wishes to bring, good luck in the Federal courts. They could wait year after year after year to have their case heard. By the time their case makes it in front of a judge, whatever remedy they might have is going to be inadequate because of the delay. Justice delayed is justice denied.

This is happening in our Federal courts as the money runs out because we have not passed a Continuing Resolution to fund our co-equal branch of government. Combined with the funding cuts to the courts due to sequestration and the 93 current Federal district and circuit judgeships that are vacant 39 of which have been deemed judicial emergency vacancies because the caseloads are so high and it is not difficult

to see that our courts need us act. Fortunately, we will have one judge from Illinois and one judge from Alabama confirmed this afternoon—but we have a shortage of judges because of vacancies and because we are having to wait months and months before we are able to vote on uncontroversial nominees, who in the past would have been confirmed within days.

I could give 1,000 examples, but the ripple effect on real Americans is awful. We see a salmonella outbreak in the West. We know our Department of Agriculture inspectors are out there checking—oh, wait a minute, they are not. They are furloughed or many of them are. What do we do there?

As to areas where there are ports, normally busy ports, is shipping coming in and out or is it being slowed because there are suddenly less people?

I know when I talk to the FBI, they tell me about investigations they can't go forward with or can't complete because of furloughs.

We had this horrific bus accident in the South a couple of weeks ago. I cannot imagine the grief those families must feel for those who were lost. What I found shocking was that after the accident our National Transportation Safety Board couldn't send a team down to find out what happened and whether there is anything that can be learned to prevent similar crashes because their investigators are furloughed.

I know the distinguished Presiding Officer has stood and worked hard on this floor, in our caucuses, and with others to get the government back open and to get us to do the right thing. I am preaching to the converted.

I see our deputy leader, the distinguished senior leader from Illinois, who has spoken not only on this floor but in the national media for the need to reopen.

I yield the floor to the distinguished Senator from Illinois. I thank the Senator for what he is doing, as I stopped in to thank our majority leader for standing strongly on this to reopen the government.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The assistant majority leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Let me first thank the senior Senator from Vermont and the President pro tempore of the Senate.

I wish to say to the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, it has been my great honor for 15 or 16 years to work with the Senator from Vermont. He is an extraordinary person and an extraordinary leader on one of the most important committees in Congress.

I see Senator BARRASSO on the floor. I have about a 10-minute statement if the Senator's schedule allows. I thank the Senator.

NOMINATION OF ANDREA WOOD

In a short time, a little more than 1 hour, the Senate will come to consider two judicial nominees. I will speak to one of these nominees from the State of Illinois. The other I am sure will be addressed by other Members of the Senate.

I rise to speak in support of the nomination of Andrea Wood to serve on the U.S. District Court in the Northern District Illinois.

Ms. Wood has the qualifications, integrity, and judgment to be an outstanding Federal district court judge. I was proud to recommend Ms. Wood's name to the President of the United States to be considered for this position. I was prouder still when the President concurred in that recommendation. She has my support and the support of my Colleague Senator MARK KIRK to fill the Chicago-based judgeship which was left vacant by the untimely death of Judge Bill Hibbler.

I wish to say a word about Judge Bill Hibbler. Judge Hibbler was one of my earlier appointments, a State judge who became an important asset to the Federal bench in Chicago. His untimely death left an extraordinary vacancy. I was at his memorial service, and the tributes that were paid to him for his life of public service were truly fitting. Ms. Wood now has difficult shoes to fill, and it may be impossible, but I think in her own special way she will make an extraordinary contribution to the court as well.

This vacancy has been designated as a judicial emergency by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, and I am pleased the Senate is moving to confirm Ms. Wood today.

Ms. Wood currently serves as a senior trial counsel at the Securities and Exchange Commission's Division of Enforcement in Chicago. In this capacity she represents the SEC in complex litigation matters. She is a native of St. Louis, and she received her B.A. from the University of Chicago, where she was selected as one of the student convocation speakers. She received her law degree from Yale, where she served on The Yale Law Journal.

After graduating from law school, Ms. Wood clerked for Judge Diane Wood of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. She then joined the Chicago law firm of Kirkland & Ellis, where she worked on securities, bankruptcies, tax, and other litigation matters.

She joined the SEC in 2004 as a senior attorney in the Division of Enforcement, where she investigated and litigated securities law violations, including fraud, insider trading, and other misconduct. In 2007, she became a senior trial counsel, serving as the lead SEC attorney on litigation matters and coordinating with the U.S. Attorney's Office and other regulators on parallel enforcement actions.

Ms. Wood knows the world of litigation at the highest levels. She has received numerous awards for her work at the SEC, including the Director's Award from the Director of the Division of Enforcement, as well as eight Special Act Awards for her work on individual matters. In addition to her busy government service, Ms. Wood has found time to serve the Chicago community through a variety of charitable causes.

She appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee for a hearing on June 19 and was reported out of the committee on July 18 by a unanimous voice vote. She is an outstanding nominee for the Federal bench, and I urge my colleagues to support her nomination when it comes to the floor of the Senate later this afternoon.

I see on the floor the Senator from North Dakota, who has asked permission to speak.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. HOEVEN. I wish to thank my esteemed colleague from Illinois and take this opportunity to offer some remarks on the debt ceiling and the continuing operations of the government.

I come to the floor to make an appeal for action, action on opening the government and action on addressing the debt ceiling. Of course, that requires bipartisan effort. This is something our colleagues on both sides of the aisle have to work together to accomplish. We have been negotiating, not only our leadership, Senator REID and Senator MCCONNELL, but the Members of this body, Republican and Democratic, both sides of the aisle. We have been negotiating and talking about many different ideas, but now we need to come together and find a way to both address the debt ceiling and to reopen the government.

The kinds of ideas we have discussed include a short-term extension of the debt ceiling. Certainly Members on my side of the aisle feel we have to also address the underlying problems that are leading to our growing debt and deficit.

We need savings and reforms as part of addressing that debt ceiling. Also, we have talked about ideas for a continuing resolution to reopen the government, one that follows established law. By that I mean the Budget Control Act, which establishes budgetary caps that need to be kept in place and honored as part of this agreement.

The continuing resolution we have talked about would also include flexibility for agencies to prioritize spending subject to congressional oversight, but we have to have budget discipline. We are spending more than we are taking in. Whether it is a family, whether it is a business, whether it is the Federal Government, that doesn't work. We must exercise budget discipline.

Also, we have talked about ideas that might include addressing the medical device tax, possibly repealing the medical device tax or at least deferring it for 2 years and paying for it with pension smoothing under provisions similar to those in MAP–21. We have looked at and talked about requiring income verification under the Affordable Care Act to avoid fraud, ideas Republicans have put forward. I think there has been broad support for it on the Democratic side of the aisle.

An agreement composed of these kinds of ideas would open government and address the debt ceiling on a short-term basis, but the reality is we need to find savings and reforms to address the underlying problems that are driving our deficit and our debt. As part of a debt ceiling agreement, we need to have savings and reforms that underlie our problem. Our problem is that we are spending more than we take in. We can't raise the debt ceiling for another year and add $1 trillion in debt to the debt that we already have of $17 trillion. It is kind of like going to the bank. When you go to the bank and you talk to the banker, you say: Hey, I want a loan. I want to increase the loan I have, and I want to raise my credit limit.

The banker may be willing to give you the loan, but he is going to say to you: What are you going to do to address the underlying problem, the problem you have that you are spending more than you are taking in? What are you going to do to address that?

If you said to the banker: I am not going to do anything to address it, you might have a hard time getting the loan, right? That is true whether you are a family, that is true whether you are a business, and that should be true for the Federal Government. So let's put the necessary savings and reforms in place.

In his budget, the President identified more than $600 billion in changes and savings and reforms that he could support to mandatory spending programs, and we have talked to him about those time and again. Now is the time to implement those savings and reforms to those mandatory spending programs.

Let me cite an example of one I have been hard at work on for the last 2 years; that is, the farm bill. The farm bill is a mandatory spending program. I am a member of the agriculture committee, and we have worked hard on changes, on improvements, on actually strengthening the farm bill by strengthening crop insurance under the farm bill, which is what our farmers and ranchers want. As we worked through that, at the same time we identified on the order of $25 billion to $30 billion in savings that we can generate by reforming the farm program.

I am a member of the conference committee on the Senate side. The House has now appointed their conferees. We are ready to go and resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of the farm bill, and we can have a stronger farm program and save billions of dollars.

Those are the kinds of mandatory spending program reforms we need to put in place as part of the debt ceiling agreement. And we need to find a common commitment, a bipartisan commitment, and a commitment on the part of the administration as well as the Congress to do that.

When we talk about addressing the debt ceiling, that is what it really means. It doesn't just mean raising the debt ceiling. It doesn't just mean borrowing more money. It means fixing the problem. So we need to act. We need to address the debt ceiling. We need to get the government open, but we need to have a common commitment, a bipartisan commitment to solving the underlying problems and to getting the reforms and the savings that will ensure we aren't spending more than we are taking in.

Of course, a big part of that is economic growth as well. We understand that. And at the point where we truly come together in a bipartisan way—and I would argue this is that point and this is that time—I think the markets will react, and I think business across this country will react. Businesses large and small will react because the certainty of knowing we truly are dealing with our debt and our deficit will give them the confidence to invest and hire more people, not only bringing people back to work, reducing unemployment, but getting economic growth—economic growth not by raising taxes but, with economic growth, broadening and growing the base and generating revenue to help with our deficit and our debt.

By putting these commonsense reforms, these solutions, these savings in place as part of this debt ceiling agreement—a commitment to doing that on both sides of the aisle—we will help unleash the power of the strongest economy in the world, and that economic growth will be a huge part of solving our deficit and our debt as well. It is vitally important that we do it. It is vitally important that we do it for the strength of our country, to get people back to work, but most of all for our children and for future generations. I don't believe there is anybody here in Congress—in the Senate, in the House—or anywhere else who wants to leave our children with a $17 trillion debt. So let's solve this. We can do it, and now is the time.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HARKIN. 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. HARKIN. Mr. President, here we are, it is October 14, and the government has been shut down for 2 full weeks. We are about 3 days away from a debt ceiling deadline. I keep hearing rumors that a deal is close. I certainly hope that is true, that we do make some breakthroughs and we get through this impasse, but I have some observations on that, and I thought I might take a moment to set the record straight based on what I have been hearing over the weekend on some of the talk shows and some things that came out over the weekend.

In the last day or so there was talk about Democrats putting ''a new issue'' on the table, that Democrats are now putting sequestration on the table in these talks. Well, I don't know how anyone could think this is a new issue.

In March the Senate approved a budget that replaced sequestration with a mix of entitlement reform and revenue increases.

In April the President put forward a budget that replaced sequestration with again a mix of spending cuts and revenue increases.

Throughout the spring and summer the Appropriations Committee, on which I serve, debated and passed bills that conformed to the budget resolution replacing sequestration. Republicans in the House and Senate have taken part in this debate. Republicans on the Senate Appropriations Committee responded with a letter objecting to our policy of replacing the sequestration cuts.

The House passed its own budget, the Ryan budget, which also takes their position on sequestration. They even made it worse by preventing cuts in the military and taking all the rest out of nondefense discretionary spending. I know that sounds like a big word, but it is spending that comes out of things such as education and social services and health, NIH, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and all those other things.

Now, again, we heard a lot of talk by Republicans on the Senate side that we Democrats were violating the Budget Control Act by coming in at a higher level than what sequestration called for. At the same time, the Republicans on the House side violated the Budget Control Act by not taking 50–50. In other words, the Budget Control Act said that if sequestration goes into effect, then the cuts have to be made 50 percent from defense and 50 percent from nondefense. The Ryan budget—what they did in the House—left defense whole and took everything out of—as I said, everything else, mainly out of health, education, labor, and that pot of money.

So I guess you might ask whether both sides violated the Budget Control Act. No. Both sides had their approach on how to deal with the Budget Control Act. The Budget Control Act is not the Ten Commandments written in stone for all eternity. It is a law. And when we have laws around here, periodically, guess what. We change them or modify them, of course.

So the Budget Control Act was passed, the supercommittee was set up, it didn't hit its goals, so sequestration went into effect. Now that we have seen the disastrous consequences of sequestration for this year, those on my side of the aisle said: Well, look, it is time to get rid of sequestration, and let's make our decisions as legislators on how we want to spend the taxpayers' money and how we might want to raise revenues.

The Republicans on the House side—I don't say they violated anything,

they just did their own thing. They said: To heck with the Budget Control Act. We don't want to take any money out of defense. We will leave that whole and take it out of everything else.

That would have been the proper time for the House and Senate Budget Committees to get together in a conference so they could work out their differences. But 19 times we have come to the floor to ask to go to conference on the budget, and 19 times the Republicans have refused to let us go to conference to even talk about it. So sequestration is the biggest difference between these two budgets.

I might add, with regard to the budget Mr. RYAN came up with in the House, the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, a Republican, called it ''unworkable,'' for whatever that is worth.

Nonetheless, sequestration is the biggest difference between our two budgets. Again, that is why we asked to go to conference time and time again. So sequestration is not some kind of new issue. It is the issue of the year. It will be the issue of next year. Do we blindly cut everything? Sequestration is a blind cut of everything, even programs everyone here might agree are worthwhile and should be funded. But that is what we are elected to do. We are elected to make those kind of choices and work them out in a conference committee.

If you think sequestration is some kind of a new issue, I guess it is only a new issue if your memory is only 2 weeks long. If you know what has been going on for this year, sequestration is the major difference.

Two weeks ago Senate Democrats compromised in an attempt to keep the government open. How did we do that? We agreed to keep the government open for 6 weeks—at that time, until November 15—at the current levels, which included the sequestration cuts. It was not in our budget, but we agreed, to give us time before Christmas to go to conference and work out the differences. We passed it at the same level which was included in the continuing resolution passed by the House of Representatives. We agreed to compromise our level down to the House level for 6 weeks to keep the government open. We passed it and sent it over to the House. It has been sitting there ever since. Speaker BOEHNER will not permit it to come to the floor for a vote. Why? Perhaps he knows if he brings it up for a vote, it will pass and the President will sign it.

Instead, they began this by saying we had to change ObamaCare. We had to make changes in the Affordable Care Act—which has nothing to do with this budget, by the way. That didn't work. So now they have shifted to a whole bunch of other demands. And we have never really gone to conference. What the Republicans are now saying is we should give up a whole year. Forget about the budget resolution we passed here, and agree to what they passed in the House for the next year without even going to conference.

So first the Republicans in the House won't agree to negotiate on the budget unless we agree to their top priority—no revenue increases. Then Republicans insist upon shutting down the government to stop ObamaCare. Now this weekend Republicans have been saying they won't agree to reopen government or lift the debt ceiling until Democrats agree to the total spending level in the Ryan budget. This is truly unprecedented.

We heard over and over Republicans wanted the Democrats to produce a budget. We did. Now they are doing everything in their power to avoid discussing our budget. But what is truly incredible is that Republicans want the world to believe Democrats agreeing to a compromise for 6 weeks was an agreement to give up our entire budget for the whole next year. I don't know why the press is playing into this. They seem to be saying it is tit for tat. It is one side; it is the other.

No, it is not. We agreed to 6 weeks. Now the House says that we must agree to it for 1 year. That was never part of our budget we sent to the House. So that is not a compromise.

I will happily vote for a bill that extends the current level for 6 weeks or so. We have already voted for that. The House wanted 10 weeks. But I think a debate over whether to keep or change sequestration for the year—which is the entire debate between the Senate and the House budget resolution—is too important to be used as a bargaining chip for basic government operations.

I didn't watch the Sunday shows. I rarely ever do. I have better things to do on Sunday. But I couldn't help but read the paper this morning, and there was a statement in the paper made by the senior Senator from Arizona. I guess he was on a talk show, and they were quoting him.

Senator MCCAIN said: I guess we could go lower in the polls. Right now we are down to blood relatives and paid staffers.

That is kind of cute. And I am quoting the newspapers, so I don't know if he said it this way or not. He said: But we have got to turn this around and the Democrats had better help us.

What does that mean? They are the ones that shut the government down. As I said, there is a bill before the House right now. If the Speaker would put it on the floor, it would open the government. We passed that here. We helped them. We agreed to their level for 6 weeks. How much more help do they need?

The more I read about this in the print and watch the news programs, the more it becomes clear to me there is an attitude being pushed by the Republicans that if they agree to reopen the government and if they agree to extend the debt limit, they are doing us Democrats a favor. Read between the lines. It is like they are doing us a big favor to do this. Therefore, we have to give them all these concessions because they are doing us a favor.

I tell my Republican friends, they are not doing us Democrats a favor whatsoever. If they agree to reopen the government and extend the debt limit, they are doing the Nation a favor, not the Democrats. So get that out of your head that somehow, because you are willing to do that, we have to give concessions on something else. We can talk about concessions, and we can talk about sequestration and other budgets when we go to conference—if they will let us go to conference. Nineteen times they have opposed us going to conference. But talking about concessions now as a means of reopening government or extending the debt limit—that shouldn't even be a part of the equation. Somehow the press continues to report this as a legitimate demand on the part of Republicans; that if we want to open the government, then they get to demand certain concessions. Why is that legitimate? The legitimate thing is to reopen the government. It is very simple.

Other people have come to the floor to talk about the impact of sequestration, and I thought I would just take a moment again—I did the other day, I will do it again today, and I will continue to do this—to alert people as to what another year of sequestration would mean for programs which come under the jurisdiction of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, which I have been privileged to chair or be the ranking member of since 1989. Here is what would happen next year if we continued sequestration: Some 177,000 fewer children will get Head Start services. Maybe that is not your kid or my grandkids. Everybody here has plenty of money. But it affects a lot of low-income families in this country.

And 1.3 million fewer students would get title I education assistance—no kids of anybody in this body or the House, none of our grandkids. We have plenty of money. But low-income families all across this country, in urban areas as well as rural, get title I assistance.

And 760,000 fewer households will receive heating or cooling assistance under what we call LIHEAP, Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program. Again, it won't affect anybody in this body, it won't affect anybody in the House, and probably none of our families. But it will affect 760,000 households with an elderly person without much money, maybe just living off a Social Security check and nothing else.

Special education programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. We fund a portion which goes out to the States. By sequestration, the less money we put out will mean 9,000 special education staff will be cut from classrooms. Maybe the

States will come up with the money. Maybe local taxpayers will come up with the money. I am just saying, under sequestration we will not be paying for 9,000 special education teachers and staff.

Sequestration next year means $291 million less for child care subsidies for working families. These are families that go to work every day, and many are single parents. These are low-paying jobs, and the only way they can go to work is to have some kind of child care subsidy, and $291 million will be taken out of that. Again, it won't affect anybody here.

Two billion dollars less for the National Institutes of Health. That is 1,300 fewer research grants next year. Which one of those grants will lead to breakthrough discoveries in medicine and cures?

We have a fraud and abuse program in Medicare. It recovers $7.90 for every $1 we appropriate. A lot of that comes because of overcharges from drug companies. We have seen cases in Wisconsin and a number of other States with huge settlements because the drug companies were overcharging. For every $1 that we put in, we recover $7.90. Because of the cut, because of sequestration, we will lose about $2.7 billion next year in funds that we would assume we would get back. Aside from that, drug companies know we won't have enough cops on the beat, and that will be an excuse for them to just start overcharging again.

So those are just a few of the things that will happen if we continue sequestration. There are probably some on the other side who just don't care. For example, one Member of the House Republican caucus asked Representative BACHMANN about the government shut down, and she said: We are very excited. It is exactly what we wanted, and we got it.

Then there is Representative CULBERSON who reportedly said: It is wonderful. We are 100 percent united.

What are they excited about? They are excited about the government shutdown. They are probably excited about sequestration. They are excited about hundreds of thousands of low-income kids not getting Head Start. They are excited about low-income families not getting heating and cooling assistance. They are excited that special education teachers will be cut. They are excited about this. This is their vision of America.

The tea party had some big gathering here in Washington the last few days. I happened to be reading about it. There was one woman there talking to reporters. She said we need to go back to the late 1800s in this country when we grew our own vegetables.

I thought to myself, fine. If you want to, you can do that. There is nothing restricting her from going out and living without electricity or running water, health care. She can go find a cabin someplace in the woods, I suppose, have a little plot of land, grow her vegetables, do her own canning. You can do that, if you like.

But why does she insist that we all want to do that? I don't think a lot of people want to go back to the late 1800s in this country. Think of what life was like then: child labor, people working 60, 70 hours a week, no minimum wage, no Social Security, no Medicare, no education for a lot of low-income kids. If you had money, you were fine. Disease was rampant—polio, measles, smallpox. That was the late 1800s. That is what the tea party wants. They want to go back to that. They keep up this hue and cry about that; things have just gotten out of hand.

Things have not gotten out of hand. We are a big country. We are a big nation—powerful, big. We have a lot of economic assets, but we have a lot of human assets too. We have to take care not just of the economic assets but our human assets as well. There are no economic assets without human assets. We need to invest in our people and not listen to those who want to turn the clock back to the 1800s. That is what sequestration would start to do. It would start to turn the clock back—oh, maybe not to the 1800s—I don't want to exaggerate—but certainly before the Great Society and certainly, probably, even before the New Deal. They do want to get rid of Social Security. They do want to get rid of Medicare.

I guess Grover Norquist, who is sort of their patron saint, said: We want to reduce the size of government so small we can drown it in the bathtub. That is what they want. That is their vision of America. That is their vision of our future.

I am hoping we do reach some agreements and we can get out of this. But the Republicans have dug themselves in this hole, not us. Now they say they want us to help them. We already have. We passed a bill and sent it to the House to open the government. We now have before us, as we did on Saturday, a bill to extend the debt limit without strings attached until December 2014. Every single Republican voted against even going to that bill to even discuss it on Saturday. I opened the newspapers on Sunday to read about it, and there is very little talk about that. Is there something I missed? Did we not have a vote here on Saturday on a motion to proceed to raising the debt limit for 1 year—just to go to the bill so we can discuss it? People could offer amendments. Every single Republican voted against even going to that bill, even discussing it.

We have thrown plenty of lifelines out there. If what the senior Senator from Arizona meant by ''help'' is that we have to give up on everything in terms of our budget, sequestration, all that other stuff, that is nonsense. I made a counterproposal. I said if they are going to keep putting all that stuff on there as conditions, we ought to start putting conditions on it too.

If they want some help, how about raising the minimum wage right now? That would be something we could do. Wouldn't that be neat? If they want to reopen the government and extend the debt ceiling, let's raise the minimum wage right now for people in this country. I would put that on the table right now. I would put on the table that we need to put more money into special education to help our local taxpayers and more money, certainly, into early childhood education. Maybe those are the things we ought to put on the table, saying: If you want help, agree to these things. I will not go there. But if they continue to push this idea, if the Republicans continue to push this idea that somehow we have to capitulate on everything else, then I think we just throw these things on the table and say: OK, you want us to agree to that? You agree to this. We will have a little tit-for-tat on that and see how far it goes.

That is why this whole talk about giving up on sequestration and budget matters is a nonstarter. Open the government—very simple. Extend the debt limit—very simple. Then go to conference and talk about this. That is the way out of this. That is the real, adult, democratic—with a small ''d''—way out of this mess. I call upon the Republicans not to do us a favor. Do the country a favor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, in just 3 days, barring some action by Congress, the Treasury Department of the United States will run out of options for preventing default on this Nation's debts for the first time in our history, setting off a chain of economic events that will be felt around the world and by every family and business and State and community in our country.

We have heard a great deal on this floor the last few days about how we arrived at this point and who is to blame. There is a lot of concern and consternation about exactly who owns this and how we got here. I am not going to spend time today on that. I am going to skip the politics and the drama for now and just talk about the facts and the policy. I just want to talk to Delawareans about what would happen if we actually go over this impending cliff, if we do default, and which of the options for addressing this are viable.

First, let's be clear about what we are talking about.

What is the debt ceiling? Defaulting on our debt by failing to raise the debt ceiling is not the same as cutting up America's credit cards. It is not the same as denying the President the right to sign more checks into the future. Raising the debt ceiling does not give Congress or the President a blank check to spend more money. It allows the United States to borrow more money, yes, but only to pay bills for goods and services already incurred, to meet pledges already made.

We have had some kind of a national debt ceiling since 1917, when Congress

allowed the Treasury Department to issue long-term Liberty bonds to pay for our engagement in the First World War. Over the course of the next two decades, caps were placed on other kinds of debt as well, and finally, in 1939, Congress decided to place a ceiling on the total amount of debt the country could have.

The last time Congress raised the debt ceiling, it was up to $16.99 trillion. Technically, we reached that limit a few months ago—actually on May 19 of this year. The Treasury Department has since been using what it calls ''extraordinary measures'' to keep paying our bills, but, as Secretary Lew has communicated to this Congress over and over in letter and in testimony, in just a few days the Treasury Department will no longer have enough money to keep up. These extraordinary measures will have run out, and in a week or two later we will have come up to zero.

What are the bills we need to raise the ceiling in order to pay? It is the salaries of all Federal employees, including our military; it is Social Security and Medicare payments; it is unemployment benefits, tax refunds, and interest on our sovereign debt. Raising the debt limit allows the Treasury to borrow the money it needs to pay these bills. That is it.

If on any particular day more bills come due than we have cash in our accounts to cover, then the United States of America will default on some or all of its obligations. That day is coming and coming quickly. Frankly, we cannot let it happen.

For decades investors have bought U.S. debt because it was seen as a sure thing, a safe investment. When people buy a Treasury bill, a T-bill, they do so because they know they are going to earn interest on one of the safest investments in the world. American debt is considered unimpeachable. That is what makes the dollar the reserve currency for much of the world, which is something that benefits every American company and community and family in ways that are hard to see but cumulatively powerful—the absolute certainty that we will repay our national debt.

Who are these investors? Who are the folks who buy these T-bills? Some are everyday Americans. A large number of retirees invest in our government bonds because they are such a safe bet. Pension funds and mutual funds invest in government bonds for the same reason. Some investors are the governments of other nations that look at the United States as such a good investment that they tie their financial stability to ours. So when it starts to look as if Congress will not live up to that standard, will not take the steps necessary to pay all of our bills on time and might actually default on some of our debts and transform us into a deadbeat nation, it makes investors really nervous.

Just the talk of defaulting on our debts sends a shockwave through our economy and through the markets. For proof we need only look back to August of 2001, when Congress last brought the Nation to the brink of default. Although we didn't cross the line, just the talk of it, the mere possibility that we might for the first time default had an array of consequences.

First, it slowed job growth and led to an increase in part-time employment.

Second, consumer confidence in our economy fell. The Consumer Confidence Index—the index of consumer confidence—is a reliable indicator of Americans' willingness to spend money and fuel our economic growth. We want consumers buying products at their local stores and keeping people employed, right? The index was already on the pessimistic side of the line when this last crisis began but has fallen substantially since the government shutdown. Instability and uncertainty reduces consumer confidence and takes money out of our economy.

Third, the yield of our Treasury bills had to increase in order to prop up demand. As U.S. debt becomes perceived as a riskier investment, we have to incentivize investors by increasing what we will pay them. That means taxpayers will have to pay more over time in order to compensate. The debate in 2011 will cost American taxpayers an additional $19 billion over the next decade. Again, just the debate as we ran up to the possibility of default in 2011 added $19 billion in debt service costs to the bonds that were issued in the days and months after.

Fourth, the credit rating agency Standard & Poor's—one of the big three—lowered the credit rating of the United States, causing markets to drop more than 5 percent in a single day and 17 percent over the course of that crisis. It was one of the worst declines in the equities markets in history, and it was only because we talked about defaulting.

Just threatening to default is terrible for our economy in all these four different ways.

Financial analysts across the world have said Congress is already causing potentially lasting damage to the strength of the dollar just by repeatedly threatening to default. Said one:

> There is a negative confidence shock rippling through the economy, and foreign investors have taken fright at developments in Washington.

Said another:

> A U.S. government default is not a zero-probability event now. Although it remains very unlikely, a low-probability high-impact event like this is naturally making investors cautious.

So we simply cannot afford this talk. We cannot let our Nation default.

What happens if we do? What would actually happen if we get to the end of this week and have not resolved this crisis? I am encouraged by rumors of some resolution. I am encouraged that there are negotiations and conversations going on. But I think we need to look in a clear-eyed way at what would happen if default should happen to occur.

For starters, we don't really know. The situation has never been this bad before this, and the United States has never defaulted on its debt.

Here is what the managing director of the International Monetary Fund said this weekend:

> If there is that degree of disruption, that lack of certainty, that lack of trust in the U.S. signature, it would mean massive disruption the world over, and we would be at risk of tipping yet again into global recession.

We simply cannot afford that.

Let me share another quote from history, from President Ronald Reagan, who back in 1983 had this to say about the potential threat of default and its impact on our economy:

> The full consequences of a default—or even the serious prospect of a default—by the United States are impossible to predict and awesome to contemplate. Denigration of the full faith and credit of the United States would have substantial effects on the domestic financial markets and the value of the dollar.

As it was true back in 1983, so it is true again today. The comments from the head of the IMF and from a whole array of economists and bankers this past week remind us of the simple and enduring truth that the modern era has been one where the dollar has been the reserve currency for the world, and the strength of the American market has been critical to the strength of the American nation, our communities, and our economy. Frankly, to put that at risk over short-term political differences is reckless indeed.

What we know is we will wake up this coming Friday with about $30 billion in the Federal Government's account, according to Treasury Secretary Lew. What we don't know is how long it will last. The moment we can't pay one of our bills, we will default. That is what is known as X date. The government will still collect revenue, but it won't be enough to keep pace with our daily bills.

Over the last year, the government collected $7.5 billion a day and spent an average of $9.7 billion a day. That means we come up about $2.2 billion short on our bills every day if we are not borrowing enough to make up the difference.

Analysts at the Bipartisan Policy Center suggest that we will run out of cash—hitting the X date—roughly on October 22. To be clear, part of why we don't know exactly what date this would occur is because money flows into the Federal Treasury at uneven rates, and it flows out at uneven rates.

Let's look at a few of the bills that are about to come due in the next few weeks. On October 23, $12 billion in Social Security benefits are due; on October 28, $3 billion in Federal salaries would go unpaid. On October 30, $2 billion in Medicaid payments are due; on October 31, $6 billion in interest payments on our sovereign debt are due; on November 1, $58 billion in Medicare,

Social Security, and SSI payments, as well as veterans' benefits and military pay.

Those are just the major bills. There are thousands, even millions, of smaller payments that are due from every agency and entity of the Federal Government that go up and down day in and day out and where our failure to pay in a timely fashion, while technically not defaulting on our sovereign debt, would put into question our ability and willingness as a government to pay our bills when due.

With what we have left, we will not be able to pay them all, and we will be in violation of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which says that the debt of the United States of America shall not be questioned.

If we have not raised the debt ceiling by this Thursday, we are likely to see disturbing losses in global markets. We have already started to see them as uncertainty takes over and volatility begins to spread. Investors are already pulling money out of our T-bills. If 2011 is an indication, stock prices will soon begin to drop in the absence of some progress toward a resolution.

Deutsche Bank, one of the world's most prominent investment banks, predicted the S&P 500 index will fall by a staggering 45 percent if we default. We heard loudly and clearly when we met with the credit ratings agencies after the 2011 incident that they would almost certainly downgrade the credit rating of the United States, which would reduce demand for Treasurys, particularly among investment funds that are required to hold a large number of AAA-rated securities.

With the Nation pressed against its debt ceiling and future interest payments uncertain, investors will be hesitant to buy more T-bills. The toxicity of U.S. debt may spread to Treasury notes and bonds, and investors will almost certainly demand higher yields, which will cost our country significantly more over time. This is exactly what happened in 2011 when we flirted with default.

Right now, the dollar is the world's reserve currency. Instead of keeping their money in cash, other nations buy our debt in order to get interest without risk. America has been a great investment. A default would cause other nations to sell our debt and then sell our dollars, weakening our dollars against foreign currencies, and raising the costs on every single good imported into the United States.

If Treasury interest rates go up just 1 percentage point, it would add over $1 trillion in the next decade to our debt service cost. Anything we saved because of sequestration would be gone, and there is no reason to think that default would cause interest rates to go up by one single point. It could add $2 trillion or $3 trillion to our debt over the next decade. This affects everyone in our community and our country from large to small, from companies to communities to families. When Treasury interest rates go up, your interest rates go up. Mortgage rates, auto loans, student loans, business loans—they all go up, and they would go up fast. Default would make it harder for all of us to use credit responsibly. As consumers buy less, business profits would fall, GDP would fall, and the Nation once again would enter a recession. Defaulting on our debt would be an unimaginable drag on the economic health of our country, our community, and families. We cannot let it happen.

Mr. President, I see my colleague Senator MIKULSKI has joined me on the floor. If I might, with her forbearance, I will take a few minutes to review a few points here, and then I will yield to her.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I am happy to yield and have the Senator from Delaware continue. He is the newest member of the Appropriations Committee. He has really articulated something everybody needs to understand. I am happy to wait my turn.

Mr. COONS. In conclusion, I will briefly touch on our options. We have all heard on this floor Senators suggest that default is really not that big a deal, that we are not really going to default, that there are other ways around this, and that we need not be scared into making some hurried deal. At the end of the day, several Senators have accused the President of fearmongering and have accused my party of suggesting that default is a major threat to our country and our economy when, in fact, it is not.

Let me briefly touch on the options that have been discussed by other Senators and, frankly, to my surprise. First, some have suggested we can pay our bills not when they are due but when we have the money—sort of on a first-come, first-serve payment approach. Let's say we ran out of money, as I suggested, on the 20th of this month and could not pay our bills on the 21st. By the 23rd we would have enough money so we would pay the bills from the 21st, late, but go delinquent on the bills for the 22nd and 23rd, and so on. This is crazy. Payments would be delinquent and the United States would fall behind on its debt.

This option would only make our situation worse. We would keep adding over $2 billion in debt every single day while going delinquent on our bills to Americans.

The second way forward. Some have suggested we prioritize certain bills but ignore others. The Treasury Department would continue to make payments on our sovereign debt so the Chinese would get paid, but they would avoid or default on lots and lots of other obligations. Which payments would we choose in this body not to make? Social Security? Medicare? Military salaries? Payments for cancer research? Veterans' benefits? Food inspectors? Air traffic controllers? Who goes first and who would we possibly choose? These are the ludicrous choices that have been sent to us by the other Chamber as they have attempted to fund the government in piecemeal slices in the past week.

The Treasury Department makes 100 million individual payments per month, making this option a logistical nightmare. If we prioritize our payments, it is not a question of if we go into recession, it would be a question of when. We would be taking $2.2 billion out of the economy a day—4 percent of our GDP out of our Nation's economy on an annualized basis. This would push us back into recession, we would still be defaulting on our obligations, and the markets and the credit rating agencies would know it.

The other thing that has been suggested is to work around the debt ceiling. There are a whole lot of creative but legally questionable ideas: The minting of a $1 trillion coin, avoiding the 14th Amendment, a fire sale of U.S. assets, superpremium Treasurys. Each has pros and cons that I won't go into, but they would face legal scrutiny and would radically increase uncertainty in the market.

There is no better option for us going forward than to reopen the government, pay our national debt on time, raise the debt ceiling, and honor our obligations as a country. That is the fourth and only good option: pay our bills, to prevent default, to put a floor under our economy, to stop these games, and to stop suggesting that there is any way out of this other than doing our jobs, preserving the AAA credit rating of this country, and making this country worthy of global respect again.

In conclusion, I can't believe that Members in this Chamber, who had the chance to avoid default, on Saturday voted in a way that suggested they chose not to. Not only did it rattle me, it rattled the markets. The idea that a sovereign government would have the ability to pay its debts but actively chose not to is unprecedented.

We cannot allow that to happen. We cannot allow this country to become a bad investment. We will not become a deadbeat nation. We need to pay our bills, do the right thing, and avoid default. We need to stop playing games and do right by the American people.

With that, I yield the floor and look forward to the comments from the senior Senator from Maryland.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I have permission to speak for 15 minutes.

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, there is a misguided myth out there—not all myths are misguided, but this myth is—by those who believe that the government shutdown is actually saving us money. I am not going to go into all those details about why that is not true, but I can tell everybody one area where government shutdown is absolutely being negatively impacted in

protecting the taxpayer dollar and fulfilling the mission of the agency—particularly in Social Security, Medicare, veterans' benefits, and some others.

The Presiding Officer was the attorney general and the U.S. attorney of the Ocean State, Rhode Island, so he knows about scammers and schemers and that where there is need, there is greed. Where there are large government programs, they are open to waste and particularly to fraud.

I have been an adamant opponent of fraud, and often that is dismissed with comments such as: Oh, everybody says you are against fraud. But what are we doing about it?

Let me say this: As the chairperson of the Appropriations Committee, I was insistent that at every one of my hearings there be an inspector general testifying. I have an inspector general who advises us appropriators, who actually put money in the Federal checkbook, about how we can stop fraud in our own government. I am the first chairman of that committee ever to institute that process where we take the watchdogs of our Federal spending very seriously.

The watchdogs who protect taxpayers' funds are known as inspectors general. They are independently appointed, independently confirmed, and independently do their job. Look at the inspector general for the IRS who brought a national scandal to our attention.

But guess what. In this shutdown the ability of inspectors general to root out fraud and abuse has been severely compromised. We are not catching criminals who are trying to get a quick buck off the back of taxpayers.

I will give an example: The Social Security administration has furloughed 250 investigators and auditors in the Office of the Inspector General. This is crippling the inspector general's ability to investigate allegations of fraud and to detect improper payments in Social Security.

Just recently headlines have made the news about fraud in West Virginia field offices in Social Security where judges and others who were administering the program—administrative judges—were taking kickbacks. Thanks to law enforcement, and the inspector general, we grabbed that.

There were actually people in Federal prisons who used the Internet and created phony identities to get both taxpayer refunds and also Social Security checks. Thanks to inspectors general being on the job, we were able to nip that in the bud.

Each year the Social Security inspector general receives 135,000 allegations of fraud and abuse. Last year the inspector general at the Social Security Administration saved the program $500 million—a half billion dollars was saved in fraud at the Social Security Administration. But instead of pinning medals on people, we have furloughed them. They are sitting at home waiting and itching to be back on the job because they are so proud of what they do.

They believe that Social Security is a sacred trust, and anybody who tries to scheme or scam the system, they are going to come after.

During the normal operations, the Social Security inspector general saves $9 for every $1 spent in oversight.

Let's look at some of the other agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture. Every minute of this shutdown taxpayer dollars are being lost to fraud. When we look at the Department of Agriculture, we see that last year their inspector general investigated 331 possible frauds. They conducted 76 audits. Guess what it resulted in: 800 indictments resulting from people trying to scam various aspects of the Department of Agriculture, including food stamp fraud. Of the 800 indictments, they got 538 convictions. Guess what. They saved our Federal Government $1.5 billion. I said $1.5 billion, 800 indictments, and 540 convictions.

The Office of the Inspector General at the Department of Agriculture is on furlough. A minimum number of investigators are on the job. All of the Department of Agriculture inspector general audit staff is furloughed. That is not a wise use of the taxpayer dollars.

Let's go to the VA. The VA Inspector General's Office has furloughed 70 percent of its staff. The VA operates the largest integrated hospital system in the country, including 152 hospitals and 1,000 clinics. It also operates a mortgage program and an educational voucher program. It operates a disability claims and survivor benefit program. Their inspector general routinely audits this complex system. What do they look for? Possible criminal activity. They look for fraud. They make sure there is no misconduct by senior VA officials, and they are doing their job, but they have been furloughed.

We also have the General Services Administration, which is essentially the real estate arm of the Federal Government. It plays a crucial role. Guess what. Last year they handled 450 cases. They got 3,000 hotline complaints about possible fraud. Their staff is on furlough. So they are not looking out for fraud in real estate, automobile leasing, technology, gaming the system, and furniture. Their cases range from bribery to embezzlement, to kickback schemes. Most—99 percent—of our GSA employees are honest. So are our contractors. But guess what. In just 6 months alone, from October 2012 to March of 2013, they were able to crack down and recover over $100 million in schemes and scams.

Look at what I have outlined already: a couple billion dollars, including Social Security, Agriculture, GSA. They are on the job.

I could go to agency after agency. Guess what. The very agency that involves us and advises us is the Government Accountability Office. That is Congress's watchdog. That is where we ask for studies on how we can do a better job and where they identify programs that are dated, duplicative or dysfunctional—dated, duplicative or dysfunctional. If they are dated, goodbye to them. If they are dysfunctional, reform or goodbye. Dysfunctional—dated, dysfunctional, and duplicative, that is our mantra on the Appropriations Committee. We are the guardians of the purse, but we need our tool. The Government Accountability Office, which we rely on, has furloughed 98 percent of its staff.

I could elaborate on agency after agency, but what I wish to show is just this: The consequences of shutdown are affecting people. If they are not on the job, they are not doing the job.

The job of our inspectors general offices—they are independent. They are supposed to come with incredible fiscal background. They are investigators. They are auditors. They are people who have to know how to find a problem, see if it is criminal or civil, whether we can get our money back, so we can make sure it doesn't happen again. Those people want to work. They love their job. It is a calling to them, and we need to call them and say: You are back to work.

So let's reopen government. Let's find a way. Let's fund government at a level that makes sure it can function the way it should. Let's also pay our debts. I do not want our T-bills to become junk bonds. I do not want our T-bills to be so shaky in terms of our ability to pay them back that they arrive at junk bond status. So let's get rid of junk politics and junk talking points. Let's get those clunkers off the road. Let's get America rolling again, pay our bills, honor our T-bills. Let's get government working and let America be America again.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF ANDREA R. WOOD TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

NOMINATION OF MADELINE HUGHES HAIKALA TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MANCHIN). Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Andrea R. Wood, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois, and Madeline Hughes Haikala, of Alabama, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Alabama.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 30

minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I know it is several minutes past 5. I doubt very much if we will use the 30 minutes. We will probably be able to yield back time so the vote can be at 5:30, although I am not making that request at this point.

Listening to the distinguished chair of the Appropriations Committee, the senior Senator from Maryland, I had to agree with everything she was saying. This is the fourteenth day of the government shutdown, and by refusing to pass a clean continuing resolution to fund the operations of the Federal government, Republicans continue to threaten the critical functioning of all three branches of government.

With this ongoing shutdown of the entire Federal government, a handful of ideologues in the House of Representatives are holding the entire judicial system hostage and this threatens our entire democracy.

One critical problem is that we have more than 90 judicial vacancies, including 39 that have been designated as emergency vacancies due to high caseloads by the non-partisan Administrative Office of the Courts.

While we will vote to confirm two additional judges today, we are moving far too slowly and are not keeping pace with the urgent needs of our Federal judiciary. We must do better.

Both of the district court nominees we are voting on today have been nominated to fill vacancies that were named judicial emergencies by the nonpartisan Administrative Office of the Courts. Andrea Wood is nominated to a judicial emergency vacancy in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. Since 2004, Ms. Wood has served in the Division of Enforcement of the Securities and Exchange Commission, currently as a senior trial counsel and previously as a senior attorney. Before joining the SEC, she spent 5 years in private practice as an associate at Kirkland & Ellis LLP. Following law school, Ms. Wood served as a law clerk for Judge Diane P. Wood of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

Ms. Wood earned her B.A., with honors, from the University of Chicago, and her J.D. from Yale Law School, where she served as articles editor of the Yale Law Journal. She has the bipartisan support of her home State Senators, Senator DURBIN and Senator KIRK. Her nomination was approved by the Judiciary Committee by voice vote with no opposition to her confirmation expressed more than 2 months ago.

Madeline Haikala is nominated to a judicial emergency vacancy in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama, where she has served as a magistrate judge since 2012. Prior to her appointment, she worked at the Birmingham law firm of Lightfoot, Franklin, & White for 22 years, first as an associate and subsequently as a partner. In addition, Judge Haikala has taught for approximately 7 years as an adjunct professor at the Cumberland School of Law.

The ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary unanimously rated Judge Haikala well qualified to serve on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama, its highest rating. Judge Haikala also has the strong support of both of her Republican home State Senators, Senator SHELBY and Senator SESSIONS. Like the other nomination we are voting on today, Judge Haikala's nomination was approved by the Judiciary Committee by voice vote with no opposition to her confirmation expressed more than 2 months ago.

While I am pleased that we are finally getting to vote on these nominees, there remain far too many judicial vacancies. Because of the government shutdown, we have been unable to hold hearings, process, and approve nominees in the Judiciary Committee for the last two weeks. It does our country a serious injustice when we fail to provide our Federal courts with the resources it needs. Let us end this shutdown now so we can do what we were elected to do and carry out business on behalf of the American people.

Let me tell my colleagues another thing that has happened. This afternoon, I got a call from the chief judge of the District of Vermont, the Federal district court. She wanted me to know they are going to run out of funds on Thursday. She is very worried about the growing opiate crisis in Vermont. If the courts run out of money, they are not going to be able to monitor and test those awaiting trials in serious drug trafficking cases.

Judge Reiss made it very clear that we are going to hear this from courts all over the country. We forget there are things our courts have to do and should do to keep the Presiding Officer safer and me safer, as well as everybody else. But we are saying, sorry, we are having this little political snit and we are not going to give you the money.

I have always been proud of being a member of the Vermont bar. I have been proud of that membership during the time I was in private practice and during the time I was a prosecutor, but throughout it all, we always relied on the courts to do their work. We expected that if after Gideon v. Wainwright it was necessary to appoint counsel for a criminal defendant, the counsel would be there. We expected that if one had a case they wanted heard, there would be a court that could hear it. That is not going to happen. We are going to have criminal cases that are going to get backed up because we don't have the personnel there, and behind those criminal cases are going to be people—Republicans, Democrats, Independents—who are going to have legitimate civil cases that they need to bring to court to be resolved and they are not going to be heard for years and years and years.

Some of the handful of ideologues who are holding up our ability to fund the government go down and have a disturbing and disgraceful rally on the Mall, where they ridicule the President of the United States. They distort their own roles in how they closed down the government, and then they try to use brave veterans as pawns, do they know what they are doing to the image of the United States?

I see the distinguished Senator from Illinois on the floor. One of these judges is from his state. I don't know if he wishes to speak.

I would say once more, all Americans who rely on our court and our judicial system know our system of justice is facing a great danger not because of anything the courts have done but because of a small group of ideologues in the House of Representatives who are holding this budget hostage.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MERKLEY. 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. MERKLEY. I ask unanimous consent to yield back all remaining time.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Hearing no further debate, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Andrea R. Wood, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Madeline Hughes Haikala, of Alabama, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Alabama?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

Further, if present and voting. the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted ''yea.''

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

The result was announced—yeas 90, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 217 Ex.]

YEAS—90

Ayotte	Flake	Murkowski
Baldwin	Franken	Murphy
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Murray
Baucus	Grassley	Nelson
Begich	Hagan	Paul
Bennet	Harkin	Portman
Blumenthal	Hatch	Pryor
Blunt	Heinrich	Reed
Boozman	Heitkamp	Reid
Boxer	Heller	Risch
Brown	Hirono	Roberts
Cantwell	Hoeven	Rockefeller
Cardin	Johanns	Sanders
Carper	Johnson (SD)	Schatz
Casey	Johnson (WI)	Schumer
Chambliss	Kaine	Scott
Chiesa	King	Sessions
Coats	Kirk	Shaheen
Cochran	Klobuchar	Shelby
Collins	Landrieu	Stabenow
Coons	Leahy	Tester
Corker	Lee	Thune
Cornyn	Levin	Toomey
Crapo	Manchin	Udall (CO)
Cruz	Markey	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	McCain	Warner
Durbin	McConnell	Warren
Enzi	Menendez	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Merkley	Wicker
Fischer	Mikulski	Wyden

NOT VOTING—10

Alexander	Inhofe	Rubio
Burr	Isakson	Vitter
Coburn	McCaskill	
Graham	Moran	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table. The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Vermont.

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONTINUING NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we know this has been a difficult time for everyone, and Senator MCCONNELL and I have been working diligently over the last few days trying to arrive at the culmination of efforts that have been ongoing for quite some time now. We have made tremendous progress. We are not there yet, but tremendous progress, and everyone just needs to be patient.

We will have no more votes tonight. We hope, with good fortune and the support of all of you, recognizing how hard this is for everybody, that perhaps tomorrow will be a bright day. We are not there yet, but we hope we will be.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, if I may echo the remarks of the majority leader, we had a good day yesterday. We had another good day today. I think it is safe to say we have made substantial progress, and we look forward to making more progress in the near future.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would just close by saying this: We are doing our best to make everybody happy, but everyone knows we are not going to be able to do that. So, everybody understand that we are doing the very best we can with all of the frailties we have as people and legislators.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 1306

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1306, a bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 in order to improve environmental literacy to better prepare students for postsecondary education and careers, and for other purposes.

ORDERS FOR TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2013

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Tuesday, October 15, 2013; 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; that following any leader remarks, Senators be permitted to speak therein for up 10 minutes each, and that the Senate recess from 12:30 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly caucus meetings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. REID. 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 6:11 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, October 15, 2013, at 10 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate October 14, 2013:

THE JUDICIARY

ANDREA R. WOOD, OF ILLINOIS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS.

MADELINE HUGHES HAIKALA, OF ALABAMA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA.