

McCaskill, Mazie K. Hirono, Christopher A. Coons, Jon Tester, Brian Schatz, Martin Heinrich, Joe Donnelly, Heidi Heitkamp, Kirsten E. Gillibrand.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.J. Res. 59, making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2014, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 67, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 279 Leg.]

YEAS—67

Alexander	Hagan	Murkowski
Baldwin	Harkin	Murphy
Baucus	Hatch	Murray
Begich	Heinrich	Nelson
Bennet	Heitkamp	Portman
Blumenthal	Hirono	Pryor
Blunt	Hoeben	Reed
Booker	Isakson	Reid
Boxer	Johnson (SD)	Rockefeller
Brown	Johnson (WI)	Sanders
Cantwell	Kaine	Schatz
Cardin	King	Schumer
Carper	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Casey	Landrieu	Stabenow
Chambliss	Leahy	Tester
Collins	Levin	Udall (CO)
Coons	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	Markey	Warner
Durbin	McCain	Warren
Feinstein	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Flake	Menendez	Wyden
Franken	Merkley	
Gillibrand	Mikulski	

NAYS—33

Ayotte	Enzi	Paul
Barrasso	Fischer	Risch
Boozman	Graham	Roberts
Burr	Grassley	Rubio
Coats	Heller	Scott
Coburn	Inhofe	Sessions
Cochran	Johanns	Shelby
Corker	Kirk	Thune
Cornyn	Lee	Toomey
Crapo	McConnell	Vitter
Cruz	Moran	Wicker

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 67 and the nays are 33. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

MAKING CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair lays before the Senate a message from the House which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Resolved, that the House recede from its amendment to the amendment of the Senate to the resolution (H.J. Res. 59) entitled, "A joint resolution making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2014, and for other purposes," and concur with a House amendment to the Senate amendment.

Pending:

Reid motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate

to the joint resolution, with Reid amendment No. 2547, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 2548 (to amendment No. 2547), of a perfecting nature.

Reid motion to refer the message of the House on the joint resolution to Committee on the Budget, with instructions, Reid amendment No. 2549, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 2550 (to (the instructions of the motion to refer) amendment No. 2549), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 2551 (to amendment No. 2550), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Cloture having been invoked on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment, the motion to refer falls as it is inconsistent with cloture.

The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, am I correct we are in postcloture time now?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I take this time to talk about the budget agreement that was negotiated by Senator MURRAY and Congressman RYAN and the work they did, but I first wish to relate to my colleagues conversations I had with numerous Marylanders over this past weekend—people I didn't know who came up to me and said how pleased they were that Congress was on the verge of getting something done—something that will make a difference in our budget over the next 2 years. They were pleased that Democrats and Republicans were actually able to reach a compromise and that we were actually able to get our business done in some regular order. They were hopeful that it would not only make a difference in the budget of our Nation this year and next, but that it was a sign that Democrats and Republicans were prepared to work together to do the people's business. They were pleased this was truly bipartisan—a real compromise—something we haven't seen enough of in this Congress.

The American people understand that the Congress is controlled—the House by Republicans and the Senate by Democrats. They understand that. What they do not understand is how we have not been able to get together and compromise on our differences in order to move forward on the important issues of our time. They are very encouraged by this action.

So I intend to support the final vote on the budget agreement, and I hope my colleagues will support this agreement. It provides the framework for appropriations bills for the next 2 years without sequestration. That is regular order. The appropriations committees can now meet and decide the policy of our country through the appropriations bills as to where we believe priorities should be on Federal resources.

It allows us to operate, hopefully, without a continuing resolution. The number of continuing resolutions that

we have passed indicate a failure because when we pass a continuing resolution, we do not adopt the priorities for the current time. Instead, we just freeze in prior years' priorities. We now have the opportunity to enact priorities that are important today, recognizing that some of the past spending is not necessary and there are other areas that we need now to adopt, considering the changes in our own communities and considering the international changes.

It allows us to operate without the fear of a government shutdown. Before I said a fear of a government shutdown because we thought we would not see a government shutdown, but as we know, in October we saw a government shutdown, and we saw people who were hurt, and we saw our economy that was hurt as a result of that shutdown. Now this budget agreement gives us the opportunity to use regular order so we can pass appropriations bills or an omnibus bill that sets current priorities. It allows us to do that without the fear of closing government, which is inefficient, costly, and harms our economy and people.

The framework that was adopted in this budget agreement allows us to protect our Nation's seniors, disabled children, and the disadvantaged. The resources can be made available to deal with our most vulnerable to allow us to move forward as a nation, and it shows we can work together.

So I strongly support this budget agreement. I do so but I want to express my disappointments. I am sure that every Member of the Senate will have disappointments. But I am concerned about what is included in this budget agreement and what is not included, and I want to spend a few minutes talking about it.

I am disappointed that this is a 2-year agreement, that it does not completely remove sequestration. I think all of us would acknowledge that sequestration is something we do not want to see in effect because it is mindless across-the-board cuts. It does not set priorities. We are responsible to set priorities. If you ran into a problem with your own home budget in your family, if you lost some income, you would not cut every expenditure item identically. You would make decisions. You would make sure your family had a roof over them. You would make sure they had food on the table. Maybe you would postpone a weekend trip. You do not treat every expenditure the same. Sequestration treats every expenditure the same.

The good news in this budget agreement—the good news—we do not worry about that for the next 2 years. The bad news: It returns after 2 years. I know Senator MURRAY has worked very hard to get rid of sequestration. I know she is going to continue to work on that as the chair of the Budget Committee and, as I said earlier, I applaud

her greatly for being able to reach an agreement with the Republicans, particularly in the House. But I would hope we could get rid of sequestration once and for all. Unfortunately, this budget agreement does not do it. It is for only 2 years. I would have liked to see a long-term budget agreement.

On that, I would like to see us enact a long-term budget agreement. We talk frequently about the fact that one of the most damaging parts to our inaction is uncertainty. When businesses have to make decisions and individuals have to make decisions, the uncertainty of our Federal budget causes them harm, extra costs, anxiety. We need a long-term budget agreement, the so-called grand bargain. Yes, we will get an agreement for these 2 years, but it does not take us beyond that. We all understand we need a responsible budget, one that deals with the investments that are important for job growth, but also reduces the budget deficit.

I know Chairman MURRAY has mentioned this frequently, but let me just repeat this. During the past 2 years, we have reduced the deficit by \$2.8 trillion. We have done a good job in reining in the Federal deficit. That is over the period of fiscal years 2014 to 2023, and that is before sequestration.

So when you go back to Simpson-Bowles and the amount of deficit reduction we were trying to get, we are about three-fourths of the way there in reducing the deficit. Yes, we have to do more. We have to continue to reduce the deficit. But let us acknowledge that we have done a pretty good job in reining in the Federal deficit, and I applaud the Chair of the Budget Committee for her leadership in that regard.

We also must allow for critical investment for job growth. We are in a global economy today. We have to invest in modernization. We need new investments in energy in this country. We need transportation investments, not just in roads and bridges, but in transit systems. We need to invest in education. Education is the great equalizer in America. We are in a global competition. We know we are behind in the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering, and math. We have passed legislation to try to catch up. We have to fund those initiatives. The Federal Government has to be an active partner in education.

I can mention many agencies, but I always like to mention the National Institutes of Health, which happens to be headquartered in my State of Maryland. It is very important to New Jersey, the Presiding Officer's State, and very important to every part of our country. Why? Because they do the basic research which is the building block for the type of technology growth which is critically important in America.

We have the best trained people here in America. We need to invest in the basic research so we can continue to lead the world. Yes, the budget for NIH has not been as strong as it needs to be. We have to invest more money in that.

There are many reasons we need a long-term budget agreement. We need it for predictability, so we do not govern from one manufactured crisis to another manufactured crisis. But we also need it so we can invest in critical investments for job growth in America. That is another reason why I hope we are able to build on this 2-year agreement for a longer-term budget agreement.

We also need to protect the safety nets as we do that. We need a balance here, and those who are most vulnerable need to be assured their government is on their side to help them, whether they are our seniors, whether they are people with disabilities, whether it is young people who need an opportunity to be able to take advantage of the opportunities in America.

We need to enhance the protection of our environment for future generations and have an energy policy that makes sense not only for America's security and environment but also for our economy.

So a balanced agreement for a long-term budget, which is not in this agreement, would give us that predictability, would give us that ability to move forward. To do that we need to deal with mandatory spending. This budget agreement deals with discretionary spending. It does not deal with mandatory spending.

We have taken steps to move in this direction. The passage of the Affordable Care Act puts in place a manner in which we can deal with health care costs, by reducing the growth rate of health care expenditures, by dealing with the readmissions to hospitals, by managing complicated illnesses, duplicative tests, getting people out of the emergency room into our clinics and into preventive care, having seniors take advantage of preventive health care because they do not have to pay a copayment that they could not afford.

These are ways we improve what we call the delivery system of health care in America, where you bring down the costs of health care. That is the best way to bring down the mandatory spending accounts in Medicare and Medicaid—reduce health care costs. We need to do more of that. We need to reduce the cost of our mandatory spending in this country. We could have done more, and this budget agreement did not deal with that.

Then there is the issue of revenue. I am going to talk about revenue because I was proud to be part of the Congress that balanced the Federal budget when Bill Clinton was President of the United States. Do you know what we did back then? We brought in more revenue,

we reduced spending, and we balanced the budget. What happened? Our economy took off. We were not only growing jobs, we were growing good-paying jobs, and the standard of living for all Americans went up. We have to get back to that.

We are spending too much today, and we do not have enough revenue. Yes, this agreement takes care of reducing some spending, but not all, and does virtually nothing about revenues. We have to get back to that. We can bring in the revenue necessary to balance the Federal budget by reforming our Tax Code. There has been some great work done in the Senate Finance Committee I am privileged to serve on—Democrats and Republicans taking a look at our Code to see ways we can make more sense out of our Tax Code. We can do things about it.

Let me just remind my colleagues that we spend more money in the Tax Code than we do through all the appropriations bills. We spend more in our Tax Code. Over \$1 trillion a year is spent in our Tax Code. These are tax breaks that go to some but not all taxpayers.

So there is no need to raise rates. All we need to do is close loopholes and be more critical of how we spend our money in the Tax Code, as we do on the appropriations side. Every dollar we spend on the appropriations side is scrutinized all the time. We need to do the same on the tax side. Quite frankly, Senator BAUCUS and Senator HATCH have worked out a way that the members of the Finance Committee can take a look at some of those. I think we can reach some agreements on areas of the Tax Code that are not high priorities that can reduce the revenue hemorrhaging we have. Put another way, if we eliminated all the tax breaks that are in the Tax Code, our rates could be one-half of what they are today—one-half of what they are today.

So we not only can bring in the revenue necessary to balance our Federal budget and allow for the types of investments that are important for job growth, we can actually reduce the rates for a large number of Americans. Unfortunately, that is not in this budget agreement. To me, that is a disappointment, that we are not dealing with the balance that is necessary for a long-term budget agreement.

Then there is one other area I want to talk about, and it is not going to be a surprise to my colleagues—a couple of areas I want to talk about, one of which is the Federal workforce.

This agreement provides for a 1.3-percent increase in retirement contributions for new hires under Federal service. That is on top of an increase that was just done a year ago on the extension of the payroll tax, where we increased the retirement contributions for new hires. We also, in this budget

agreement, have a reduction in the COLA increases for military retirees.

I think that is regrettable. I do not believe that should have been in this budget agreement. Our civilian workforce has already contributed. When you add up what will be done by retirement contributions, that is going to be over \$20 billion. We have had 3 years of a pay freeze. We have a way in our law where we make adjustments to our civilian workforce pay each year that reflects not the cost of living, something less than the cost of living. Our Federal workforce has seen a freeze. They have not gotten that for the last 3 years. That is close to \$100 billion in contribution to the deficit. They have already done that. So they have contributed already about \$120 billion-plus, and that does not include—does not include—the fact that many of our Federal workforce have had to endure furloughs as a result of sequestration and government shutdowns.

So our Federal workforce has contributed. These are predominantly middle class families, a large number of veterans, a large number of women, a large number of minorities. They have contributed more than any other group of working Americans already in dealing with this deficit reduction, and I find it very regrettable that this retirement contribution provision was included in the budget agreement.

Let me just quote, if I might, from the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service that commented to Senator MURRAY and Representative RYAN during the budget negotiations. I quote this for what they say because I think it expresses my view and I hope the view of all the Members of the Senate:

As you work to put our federal government on a sustainable fiscal path, we encourage you in the strongest possible terms to treat the federal workforce as the considerable asset that it is, and ensure it is appropriately trained, compensated and resourced to serve the American people with excellence for the long term.

The federal civilian service is smaller today on a per capita basis than at almost any time since the Kennedy Administration—yet its responsibilities are greater than ever. Rather than asking how to make the federal workforce smaller or less expensive, Congress should be asking what we need the Federal Government to do, and what it will take to ensure that we have a workforce with the necessary skills in appropriate quantities to execute those responsibilities with maximum effect at a reasonable expense.

Proposals to freeze federal pay, change retirement contributions or reduce the workforce through attrition do nothing to improve the capacity and performance of the federal government and those who serve in its civilian workforce. These proposals are easy and expedient, but they miss the opportunity to make real and sustained improvements in how the Federal Government manages its people.

I could not agree more with those comments. We have a smaller workforce today, asked to do more ex-

tremely important work. These are people who are protecting our food supply. These are the great scientists who are doing the research to give us what we need, new technologies in health care. These are people making sure our seniors get the services they so richly need and deserve. These are people who are on the frontline in so many different ways.

Our responsibility is to make sure they have the resources to carry out their mission. Yes, we make value judgments as to what are the priorities, but to put our class of Federal workers through additional cuts, to me, is wrong. I regret that was included in the budget agreement.

I also wish to mention I was disappointed that we were not able to use this last train that will reach the finish line before we recess to extend unemployment insurance. Some 1.3 million workers are in danger of losing benefits come January 1. In 2014, as many as 4.7 million workers will not be getting the extended benefit, 83,000 of whom are located in my State of Maryland.

Let my point out, I know the unemployment rates are getting lower. We are all working to make sure to get them as low as we can. But they are still substantially higher than they were when we first recognized that we needed to have extended Federal unemployment benefits because of the softness in our economy. Particularly for those who are long-term unemployed, it is extremely difficult to find a job. If you are unemployed and you are looking for work, it is tough out there.

So the right thing for us to do is to continue these benefits for people who are actively looking for work and cannot find jobs. This is an insurance program. The moneys have been collected during good times so that we pay during these times. The money is there. We need to make sure those benefits are continued. I was disappointed it was not included in the legislation. It will help our economy grow.

There are more and more economic studies that show every dollar we make available in unemployment compensation returns much more to our economy in job growth. So this is hurting ourselves by not extending it, plus we are hurting millions of Americans who are going to be more vulnerable in trying to keep their families together during these very challenging times.

Let me conclude by saying that as I said in the beginning, this is an important budget agreement to get approved. I strongly support it. I applaud the leadership of Senator MURRAY and Congressman RYAN in bringing us to this moment. My constituents believe this is a very important step forward, showing that we can compromise and work together and get our work done.

In a few days we will bring the first session of the 113th Congress to a close

and leave Washington to spend the holidays with our families and friends. I hope each one of us will use that time to reflect on the extraordinary privilege of being a Member of Congress. I hope each one of us will reflect on the extraordinary challenges our Nation faces. I hope each one of us will come to the conclusion that we can do extraordinary things if we work together. The American people demand and deserve no less.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise to express my disappointment that the budget deal we will soon be voting on reflects just that, a deal—not legislation, a deal. It raises spending above the cap. That is the spending limit we put in place just 2 years ago.

It raises revenue from hard-working Americans to pay for this new spending and promises to cut some spending in the future. We have seen before how that story ends. We have already read that book. We will spend more now, we will grow the government more now, and ultimately the spending cuts will never materialize.

I have a favorite retired truckdriver in Pinedale, WY, who has suggested that we need to quit putting people in the wagon and get more people pulling the wagon. What he, of course, is referring to is the way we are growing government. Every time we grow government we put some more people in this wagon that the private sector has to pull. Yes, everybody in government pays taxes. But not one person in the government pays as much in taxes as they earn, so they become a part of the burden in the wagon.

Yes, even Senators are part of that burden in the wagon. But we are getting less and less people pulling the wagon. They are getting a little tired of pulling the wagon. I am going to show some things that are happening in this budget that are making it even tougher for them to pull the wagon.

So this is not the right path forward. My constituents back home in Wyoming and Americans across this country deserve better. We talk about how we have reduced the deficit. Reduced the deficit? Yes, that means we used to be overspending \$1 trillion a year, and now we are only overspending \$500 billion, which is one-half trillion. That is still overspending.

Families across America know you cannot keep spending more than you take in. Is there any indication that this causes a problem? We have been experiencing some of the lowest interest rates in the history of the country, which means the Federal Government has been able to borrow its money for less than it ever has before.

A few months ago I went to one of these bond sales. It was \$40 billion worth of bond sales, sold in 30 minutes.

People in other countries had so much confidence in the United States that they were willing to pay us to take their money. They put in bids of negative interest rates. They paid us to take their money, to keep it, to make sure it was secure. They believed it would be secure. So they paid us a negative interest rate.

At that particular bond sale, the interest rate was .86 percent to borrow \$40 billion. That is what it averaged out at. Last week we did bond sales. Last week we sold \$30 billion worth of bonds. I do not know how many minutes it took to do that, but it was a relatively short period of time, probably less than 30 minutes as well.

Do you know what the interest rate was? It was 3.90 percent. In just a few months it has gone from .86 to 3.90. Is that factored into this budget? I bet you it is not. If that interest rate keeps going up, if it hits 5 percent, we are not going to be able to do nearly as much as we are now. We have to pay our interest first, otherwise we have bankrupted the United States and proven it.

When we talk about raising the debt ceiling, it is a minor issue compared to being able to pay the interest on the debt. If it keeps going up significantly, we and our kids and our grandkids are not going to be able to pay the debt. That is what I hear across Wyoming. That is what I hear across America. So what are we trying to do? We are trying to come up with a reasonable amount of spending for the United States. This budget does not do it.

Because Members are going to be voting on a deal rather than a bill that had the opportunity to be improved through the committee process with feedback from other Members, we will not have the opportunity to discuss the potential unintended consequences and address them before they become law. I just heard 15 minutes of that discussion from the Senator from Maryland who knows a whole bunch of items that are in this bill that he is upset with, and I, quite frankly, think he ought to be upset with.

But I am on that conference committee. When the deal was made, we read about it in the papers just like everybody else. We did not get any special notice that there had been a deal made. On conference committees, I have seen the deals made before. I have never seen one made by so few people before. In this one there was a Democrat from the Senate and a Republican from the House. The two of them came up with a conclusion that this is what we should have.

That is not too bad, provided it goes through a normal process, which means we get to make some amendments. When we make amendments, some pass, some fail. But at least we get to bring up the unintended consequences that we see. That is why we have so many people in Congress: 100 here and

435 on the other side. That is why we have a whole lot of backgrounds looking at everything that happens around here from a whole lot of perspectives so maybe we can stop the unintended consequences.

But that is only if it goes through a normal process. So far the tree is filled on this bill. What does that mean? That means no amendments allowed. Take it or leave it. No matter what you think of it, forget it. We are going to have some unintended consequences that are going to come out of this and they are going to become law.

For example, I applaud the proposal that would limit access to Social Security's Death Master File to prevent identity theft, and individuals from fraudulently claiming government benefits and tax refunds associated with those who have passed away. That is a good idea. However, I am concerned that certain organizations that use that same Death Master File for legitimate business purposes that benefit consumers may have their access restricted.

If we discussed these issues in committee, we might have been able to address them, perhaps with a sensible solution, perhaps in a way that would have protected the identity and still protected the benefits to the consumer.

The budget deal makes a permanent provision that would require States to pay a 2-percent administrative fee to the Federal Government for the collection of mineral royalties. This only affects a few States, particularly Wyoming. The negotiators and the administration see this as an easy pot of money. We saw the same situation play out last year when the Federal Government saw a pot of money associated with the abandoned mine lands, that primarily go to Wyoming, and spent it on an unrelated highway bill.

When the Federal Government first started to withhold the mineral royalty money owed to States, I introduced legislation with Senator BARRASSO and Representative LUMMIS and a bipartisan group of legislators from affected States to stop it. Each of those States is fully capable of collecting its own share of the mineral revenues without help from the Federal Government. We should not have to pay for that. We will continue to reverse this unjust practice.

Another fascinating little item was when we did the sequester, the money that comes in from Federal mineral royalties to the Federal Government was considered to be revenue. The money that went out, which is by law to the States, was considered to be revenue to the States that passed through the Federal Government. The Federal Government took 5.3 percent out of it until, of course, we started having a lot of success at reversing both this 2 percent that I just talked about and the stealing of the Federal mineral royal-

ties. Suddenly the Federal Government said: Oh, that was a mistake. You are going to get your full half of the Federal mineral royalties less, of course, the 2 percent.

Another little problem is the deal raises premiums private companies pay the Federal Government to guarantee their pension benefits. That is something we have also insisted on. We have said companies need to pay a fee so if they go out of business, the people they promised a pension to will get at least 60 percent of what they were promised. That is supposed to be a trust fund, a trust fund to be able to pay those people if the company goes out of business.

We have addressed that a number of times. We have held that sacrosanct until a couple of years ago. This raises the premium. That is gentle for a new tax. A premium is a tax. If every company has to pay another \$200 per employee who receives a pension, that is a tax.

If it goes into the trust fund, maybe it is a fee. But here is the real kicker: This money we raise does not go to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, so it is a tax increase. It does not shore up this trust fund. It will be spent on discretionary programs, and it will be spent this year. But it will be collected for 10 years. How many people in America get to take 10 years of revenue, spend it this year, and then not worry about it? Nobody that I know of.

Employers are still in the process of implementing and paying for a \$9 billion tax increase called for in the highway bill last year. That, again, is a 10-year tax to build highways for 2 years. When that highway bill comes up, where are we going to steal the money next time?

There is always the Social Security trust fund and a whole bunch of other trust funds. I can hear the yelling about that, and I will join the yelling about that if it is even considered. If we can tap it in the private sector, undoubtedly we can tap it in the government sector as well.

A \$9 billion increase, that was for the highway bill. We have another \$200 per employee, so we have another \$900 billion increase that is put on the backs of private industry, the ones pulling the wagon that I talked about. To put it simply, over 2 years the flat-rate premium will have increased 40 percent, and over 3 years the variable-rate premium—which is a tax if it doesn't go where it is supposed to—will have increased over 100 percent. That is a huge tax.

I guarantee that will end the willingness of some companies to continue pensions. Pensions are voluntary.

If the cost to continue them goes up, the companies will reevaluate.

In fact, I can state that they are reevaluating right now. When we are looking at \$200 per year per employee,

we have to take a look at how that affects this. Pensions will change drastically because of this agreement.

A few of the concerns I have just raised could be addressed, if not in committee, then on the Senate floor. Once again, the majority leader has decided that no amendments will be allowed. They won't be allowed to be offered, and they won't be allowed to be voted on.

I filed two amendments to the budget deal that are relevant to this discussion. One was with Senator MURPHY regarding the need to follow congressional intent and to clarify that the funding of the accounting standards-setting bodies is not subject to sequestration.

We have a system where there are rules set up to have generally accepted accounting principles, and we have a body that is supposed to be very independent that is supposed to come up with those rules.

We do force the companies that are in the accounting business to pay for that body, to standardize the accounting process. It comes directly from the accountants, and it is supposed to go directly to this accounting board. We have decided that sequestration should take a little chunk out of that. That should not happen. That is stealing money again. That is one of the amendments.

Another one was to strike the language making it permanent for the Federal Government to withhold 2 percent of mineral royalty owed to the States for administrative expenses. We should have the opportunity to discuss, debate, and vote on them on the Senate floor.

There are a lot of others, but those are the two primary ones. We have to stop dealmaking and we have to start legislating.

Our constituents sent us here to legislate. They deserve better than a deal agreed to behind closed doors without input and improvements from the rest of the legislators, not even the committee to which it was assigned. Even though I am disappointed in the process that has led to this point today, I am even more disappointed in the product that resulted from the dealmaking.

This budget deal breaks the promise we made to our constituents in 2011—as part of the Budget Control Act—that we would reduce spending. It has worked. It hasn't worked the way a lot of people would like for it to work because it has been across-the-board. But for the first time since the Korean War, it has reduced spending 2 consecutive years.

We were close. After 2014, overall discretionary spending would have increased even with the sequester. Yes, we were almost at the end of the part of taking down the spending, but we couldn't find the will to prioritize spending this year under the current

spending levels and, instead, decided to ask Americans to send in more of their hard-earned money to Washington so the Federal Government could spend it the same way we always have—promise the cuts in the end and take more money in the beginning.

I think my constituents in Wyoming know best how to spend their money. Of course, this penalizes them for their principled budgeting which they have been doing and makes it look as if they have money. Every State could have money if they were as careful as Wyoming has been.

Washington, DC, has a spending problem. We don't have a revenue problem. We can think of all kinds of things we would like to spend money on, things that we think would be a good deal and probably that would buy some votes out there. That is wrong. We need to get things under control before that 3.9 percent interest rate goes to 5 percent, 10 percent—or it has been as high as, I think, 18 percent before.

The budget deal increases spending and shows the one thing that some Democrats and Republicans can agree on, and that is putting off our decisions. This plan spends more than the current law. It charges people and States for more and uses the money to increase spending in nonrelated areas.

Spending cuts are scheduled for outlying years, and so the so-called savings are used right away. Yes, just shift that money from out there and put it into the current spending. That isn't real. Nobody else gets to do it. It is only a government trick.

We cannot spend our way to prosperity. We need to prioritize spending cuts. We need to find the spending cuts that will do the least harm, start there, and go through an appropriations process that works. We have been doing omnibus bills around here for a long time. I have constituents who will start coming in January, and they will want me to take a look at their program and add only a few dollars there. I have to tell them the last time I had a look at a line on appropriations was about 5 years ago. We just take one whole lump of \$1 trillion and vote it up or down one time. That is not doing our job. Our main job is spending the money. We need to prioritize those cuts.

I will tell us how Wyoming did it. Wyoming was facing an 8-percent cut, they thought. We are talking about 2.03 percent for the Federal Government. If we compress it down to only a few months, we are talking about 5.3 percent. But the true amount of that sequestration was 2.3 percent.

Wyoming thought they were going to get hit for 8 percent, mostly because of some of the regulations on energy that reduced some of the energy production in Wyoming.

How did they go about doing this? The Governor said to every single

agency: I wish to see from you how you would spend it if you have to cut 2 percent, if you have to cut 4 percent, if you have to cut 6 percent, and if you have to cut 8 percent.

Do you know what he did when he got those four lists from all of the agencies? He looked to see if the items at 2 percent, 4 percent, 6 percent, and 8 percent were the same.

That is the way we find out what the agency thinks they can get rid of. That is a simple way of prioritizing spending. Did we ever do that around here? No. We do have a process by which the President can have his agencies say what they intend to get done and then tell what they got done and how well they were doing.

We never pay attention to that. So the ones that come out rated very badly on this continue spending money as they always did. We need to have a prioritization process. We need to have a way that we can look at some of the details of the spending bills. Putting off spending forever and forever, and then coming in after the fact and saying: OK, this is how much we spent, how much we are going to spend, then we get to vote yes or no, is wrong. That again is dealmaking, not legislating, and it won't rein in the out-of-control spending.

I have talked a little bit about the prioritization we have to start doing around here. When we do the sequestration, the complaints are the agencies will always make it hurt. I watched this when I was in the Wyoming legislature. If we only told them how much of a cut to make and didn't tell them specifically where to take it, they always did something that was very visual that their constituents would notice. Their constituents would complain about, and their constituents would make us put it back into the spending.

They didn't have to do that. There isn't any business, there isn't government agency that doesn't have some waste. That is what ought to go first.

Then the duplication ought to go—and there is about \$900 billion a year in duplication around here, but we ought to take a look at that.

Another thing we can do is the government shutdown legislation. That is the one that needs to tell those spending committees they need to get the leader to bring up their bill and get it finished with the amendments in the appropriate time. If they don't, then they will have to cut another 1 percent off their spending every quarter until they get their work done. Then we don't have a shutdown, but we have a reduction in spending; there is some incentive for them to do that.

We need to do tax reform. I agree with Senator CARDIN. I think that could make a huge difference in how we are doing our revenue.

I also have a penny plan. The penny plan just takes 1 cent off of every Federal dollar the Federal Government spends. When I first started looking at this, the Congressional Budget Office said that it would balance the budget in 7 years. If we did that for 7 consecutive years with 1 percent off every year, it would balance it in 7 years.

The newer valuation is that with the sequestration it balances the budget in 2 years—only 2 years. When I talk to my constituents about it, that it would be 3.3 percent over 2 years, and it comes to almost 7 percent over 3 years—I think that we could do that, and we could do it with so little pain—people would say: Please continue that another couple of years and pay down some of the debt.

Just getting rid of part of the deficit means we are still overspending, but we ought to at some point start paying down that debt so we don't have to pay the interest on the debt.

When we pay down a little bit of the debt so we don't have to pay as much interest, we ought to use that interest that we saved to pay down the debt some more. That is how we pay off things. People who have credit card problems know that is the way to go about it.

I would also like to go to biennial budgeting. We supposedly spend \$1 trillion in discretionary spending and the military every year—\$1 trillion. That is so much money that nobody can look at it, and we don't.

If we divided those 12 spending bills up into two packages of six, and we allowed them to have spending worth 2 years each time, they could plan ahead much better. We would do the six toughest bills right after the election, the year right after the election and we would do the six easy bills just before election. We could get through those.

Then we could do what my constituents think that we are doing, which is to look at every one of those expenditures and decide whether they ought to go up or down—allowing amendments on bills, allowing the spending bills to go through one at a time, maybe a week at a time. We could have them all done before October, and then there wouldn't be any government shutdown anyway.

There are a lot of ideas out there on what we could do. I sit up nights worrying about the Nation's debt and how it will affect the children of Wyoming, how it will affect my children, and how it will affect my grandchildren. This budget conference was an opportunity to apply reasonable constraints to impossibly high future spending, but instead we got more spending and no real plan to solve the problem. Yes, we said, we got some savings from out there in the future. We will spend that now, and we will make those cuts later. It never happens.

For all of those reasons, I cannot support the budget deal. I hope our

next fiscal deadline dealing with the debt limit early next year will provide an opportunity for my colleagues and me to have a real conversation about the spending problems our country faces. The spending issue isn't going away. The longer we put it off, the worse it will become. That is the reality our country faces.

I hope that we continue on the bill that says, no budget, no pay, and actually get that done so that we have the emphasis to actually finish a budget much earlier. Yes, there is blame, blame enough to go around on the budget process. We are actually too late for the budget process to have an impact. We are at the spending part. We are not getting to address that with amendments, and I am deeply disappointed we are not legislating.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank Senator ENZI for his leadership on the Budget Committee. He is a long-time member, a senior member, and he has worked hard on these issues for years.

He is an accountant. He is able to add and subtract. He can see a debt crisis when one is there, and I appreciate the comments he has made. I believe he is exactly correct on so many of those points.

The Senator suggested that something is awry on the pension benefit commission in which we, in effect, tax employers more supposedly to help the guarantee fund be able to honor people's pensions if a company goes bankrupt. But it seems to me in simple dollars and cents if we do that we can't then spend it on other items unrelated to pension guarantees.

Is that the concern the Senator has raised, essentially?

Mr. ENZI. Yes, that is exactly the issue I was raising. We keep promising people that money is going to go to certain places and then we divert it to other places.

I think that under the system of accounting we use, we probably could get it to show up in two places and get to spend it twice. That is double the problem. So we have to start being honest with the public about where we are taking the money and where we are actually putting the money, and that was my purpose in making that comment.

I thank my colleague for his comments and for his dedication on the budget. I don't think anybody spends as much time looking at those numbers as the Senator from Alabama does, and commenting here on the floor. It is an effort to educate America on what is really going on, and my colleague is very good at it. I thank him for his leadership.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank my colleague. And I was referring to the fact that Senator ENZI is the one who has explained to us in a very clear way,

from his accounting background, the problems we have had with the pension guarantee fund, and it is a very real situation. It is actuarially unsound in the long run. It needs to be put on a better basis, but we can't put it on a better basis if we tax the employers. That may even reduce, as the Senator from Wyoming says, the number of employers who provide a pension. That would be a terrible policy error, if we keep driving up the cost to supposedly fix the fund but then spend the money on something else and we therefore disincentivize the businesses from even having retirement plans for their employees. So I thank my colleague for raising that very important issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess from 12:30 until 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly caucus meetings and that the time during the recess count postcloture on the motion to concur in the House message to accompany H.J. Res. 59.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on the bipartisan budget deal that is currently before the Senate.

Chairman RYAN and Chairman MURRAY have shown us true leadership on divisive and complex budget issues. The legislation we have before us today is the embodiment of compromise—something that has, unfortunately, been absent in Washington as of late. They have crafted a bill that sets forth the guidelines for spending for the remainder of this fiscal year and the platform for the next fiscal year.

This deal will set overall discretionary spending for the current fiscal year at \$1.012 trillion—an amount that is approximately halfway between the Senate budget number and the House budget number. This number is also less than the 2014 spending level set forth in Chairman RYAN's 2011 budget. While the overall spending number is higher than what I would have wanted, the House and Senate Budget Committee chairmen were able to craft a budget deal that produces \$23 billion in net deficit reduction. Very honestly, with the deficit we have been running, \$23 billion is a mere pittance, and I think all of us who are concerned about the debt and the deficit of this country would like to see that number higher. But more importantly, they have produced a budget that will set in place some fiscally responsible spending policies and give us a way forward. Regardless of how each Member of this Chamber feels about the resulting policy, we should all recognize the importance of

this agreement and thank the chairmen for their tireless work to end this chapter of political disagreement.

Although I would still prefer a grand bargain to solve our fiscal crisis, this deal marks the first step in that journey. Congress will now be in a better position to tackle the issues of taxation and entitlement reform in the short term, and I truly hope the committees of jurisdictions will take this as a sign that that does need to be what happens next if we are truly going to address our fiscal issues.

The budget deal before us is not perfect. There is a lot in this proposal to like and there is a lot in this proposal to dislike. But there is one provision related to military retirement pay that will certainly have to be addressed after the passage of this bill, and it is one of the provisions that, frankly, I don't like. I am told by Pentagon officials that this provision basically came out of nowhere. I think it is terribly unfair to our men and women in uniform. They should not have a disproportionate share in our deficit reduction measures.

However, I feel confident this issue will be resolved in the near term. I have had a conversation with the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, as well as a number of other members of the Armed Services Committee who are committed to making sure we address this, and hopefully we will come up with some alternative before this provision takes place, which doesn't happen, interestingly enough, until December of 2015.

Many Georgians have served with honor in our military, and while the changes to their annual cost-of-living increase may appear insignificant on paper in this bill, this is real money promised to those who put their lives in harm's way in defense of this Nation. I want to assure our service men and women that there is ample time to address this issue before it takes effect, and I am committed to addressing it, and I will not turn my back on those who fight and have fought for this country.

That said, this budget deal is a necessary and crucial step toward a functioning Congress. With passage of this budget deal, we can close the book on discretionary spending arguments for the next couple of years. We can turn our full attention to entitlement reform and tax reform as Congress debates raising the debt ceiling once again next year.

Also, with this bill we will no longer need to provide additional flexibility for defense spending. This bill will give the defense community the resources they need, No. 1.

In conversations with top officials at the Pentagon and within the intelligence community over the weekend, they have urged the support of this bill as a way to address their current bud-

et crisis, and I am extremely sympathetic to both those communities and wanted to make sure that whatever product came to the floor of the Senate did that. This bill does address the shortfalls and the flexibility issue in the defense community and in the intelligence community.

I was pleased at the approach the budget chairmen took will not turn off sequester but will extend the mandatory cuts for an additional 2 years beyond what the Budget Control Act prescribed because, as I see this, this has been an \$85 billion fix on the sequester that keeps it from going too deep into the defense budget, which had the potential for causing real problems within the Pentagon as well as within the intelligence community.

With this budget deal, we can also put in place a 302(a) budget allocation—the top-line number Congress can spend on discretionary spending. For the first time in several years, this will allow the Appropriations Committee to do the job that it is actually intended to do. Our appropriators have previously been forced to make spending decisions without a top-line number and through continuing resolutions. They had no information and no guidance from Congress. It is no wonder our spending has caught up with us. The country benefits when Congress approaches the appropriations process through regular order and not through last-minute continuing resolutions. This agreement makes that process more likely.

The Budget Committee chairmen have also made a good-faith effort to attack the real problems in our budget by cutting money from mandatory programs rather than searching for more discretionary cuts. In their agreement, they took notice of how often the Federal Government has given special treatment to certain groups and they have taken efforts to curb that. While many outside groups may attack these reforms, they are representative of the types of reforms that will have to be included in any future agreement to achieve entitlement reform, which at the end of the day is where the real problem in our Federal budget lies.

This deal does little to address the \$17 trillion debt, but it is a start down that road, and I truly hope this will lead to more serious discussions on the floor of the Senate about our debt and a solution for how we are going to see that \$17 trillion repaid.

In all, this budget deal represents a partial completion of the work the American people expect from us. It is far from perfect and leaves much to be desired. But the prospect of compromise on the single most important issue of our time requires attention and serious looking at by every Member of this body. I will vote for the passage of this bill because it lays the groundwork for the next chapter in our pursuit of fiscal sanity.

For 3½ years now, Senator WARNER and I have been involved in seeking out a much larger debt and deficit reduction deal than what is currently before us. We know the American people are tired of out-of-control spending and don't understand why Congress can't address our \$17 trillion debt. It is not rocket science. The Bowles-Simpson Commission gave us a roadmap 3 years ago this month, and I regret that the White House has not followed the leadership of its own Commission. This bill represents a small step toward the type of cooperation that will be necessary to comprehensively address our debt and deficit. It is my hope that this agreement allows that effort to restart in a meaningful way.

Mr. President, 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. SESSIONS. 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. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I wish we had an agreement that is grand and great and would do what a lot of people have been dreaming of for some time and would put us on a sound financial path for decades to come. It is within our grasp. But it seems we are unable to make those choices or bring that forward.

I believe if the President has led and given a commitment to fixing our financial problems in America, we could have done it in the last few years. But he has not. So it has put us in a bad position, and we end up with the agreement we have today, which essentially would save some of the risk of a government shutdown and reduce some of the tension, which a lot of people think is great and I do too. It would be good for the country to have more predictability. It would be good for the Defense Department to have more predictability. It would be good for the financial community to have more predictability about what is happening in Washington. But what occurred is not sufficient in any way, and it has been postured to look a good bit better than it is.

Essentially, we remain on an unsustainable financial path in America. The numbers are real clear. We are seeing a reduction in our deficit in the near term, but the Congressional Budget Office tells us in the next several years we will begin to see the relentless increase in deficits every year, reaching almost \$1 trillion again by the end of this 10-year window. That is not a good path to be on.

We pay interest on the debt which we accrue each and every year, plus all the money we have borrowed previously. The amount is notable. We have exceedingly low interest rates, so it is

not impacting us as much as it is likely to impact us in the future, as they will return to the mean and we will see rates go up.

But just to point out that this agreement—the legislation before us—spends \$63 billion to \$70 billion in the next 2 years. Where does that money come from? Essentially, it adds to the debt. But we are told not to worry because we have other cuts in spending, other fees that will come in, which will eventually pay for it. But over half of the pay-fors occur outside the 8 years left on the Budget Control Act window and in the last 2 years of the 10-year budget window for this legislation. But the Congressional Budget Office has scored that, because we are spending more money sooner—money which has to be borrowed—it would add \$10.5 billion to the interest payment of the United States over this 10 year period.

So the claim it is going to reduce the debt over time if every bit of this is adhered to—which our pattern is not to adhere to what we promise. But if we were to adhere to it over the 10 years, the savings wouldn't be \$23 billion as claimed, it would be \$12.5 billion because the legislation supporters haven't discussed the interest cost of this gimmicked-up bill, where we spend more now and save later. It is a very serious matter.

They say the sequester is hard. The sequester is so bad that it cannot be sustained, America will collapse, and we will not be able to act in a compassionate way and be supportive of people in need or meet the basic needs of the government.

The former Speaker PELOSI, now leader of the Democrats in the House, said the cupboard is bare. There are no more cuts to make. She said on September 21 of this year: There are no more cuts to make.

There are plenty more cuts to make. There are ways to save money. For example, the majority in the Senate changed the rules of the Senate using the nuclear option to ram through the appointment of three new Federal judges. Each one of those, with their staff, costs the taxpayers \$1 million a year, and it was for the DC Circuit, which absolutely does not need these judges. They are not needed. The DC Circuit has by far the lowest caseload per judge in America, even with the vacancies on the court.

So what we should have done, and I worked toward previously, is not filled those judges and move them to other circuits which need judges that we are going to have to fill. That would have saved \$3 million a year. That is just one example of the waste of money. It is the equivalent of burning \$1 million to \$3 million a year on the mall out here because those judges were not needed.

So to say there are no cuts to make and we can't reduce spending any more

is not accurate. It is all through the system. As Senator ENZI said, his State was prepared to take an 8-percent cut. But under the Budget Control Act, which includes the sequester, we are not cutting spending over 10 years; we are increasing spending over 10 years. We are just increasing it \$2 trillion less than before. We were on the path to increase spending, at the time the Budget Control Act was passed, by \$10 trillion—from \$37 trillion to \$47 trillion over 10 years. We passed the Budget Control Act and said it would increase to \$45 trillion instead of \$47 trillion.

So we go from \$37 trillion to \$45 trillion. That was essentially what the agreement was. It passed both Houses of Congress. It had no tax increases in it. It was simply a commitment to contain the growth of spending, and it sharply reduced spending. It reduced spending in the near term. But after this year, spending is allowed to continue for the last 7 years or 8 years of the Budget Control Act agreement, a 2.5-percent-a-year annual increase every year after this year.

So the cuts began to bite this year. They were being felt this year. What did Congress do? It folded up like a house of cards. Congress couldn't sustain the heat and couldn't honor the promise we made in August of 2011 to reduce the growth of spending just a little bit. That was the promise. To raise the debt ceiling \$2.1 trillion, we agreed to reduce the growth of spending by \$2.1 trillion over 10 years.

Now we have already hit the debt ceiling. We have already borrowed another \$2.1 trillion. So now we hit the debt ceiling again, but we are not honoring the promise to reduce spending.

What happened? The sequester said we had to have more cuts this year, more reductions this year, and Congress couldn't sustain it—just couldn't—would not take the heat, and we came up with this new plan that is before us to avoid a shutdown. I guess we can say we avoided a shutdown, but we can also say we did not do the right thing about spending in America. We have not faced the challenge we have because we remain on an unsustainable financial path. In a couple years we will be back on a deficit growth pattern which is going to be very serious and will threaten the financial future of America. As President Obama's Simpson-Bowles Debt Commission has told us, nothing fundamentally has changed in that.

So we have our colleagues who are anxious to have more taxes—more revenue they call it. What they are talking about are more taxes.

House Minority Leader PELOSI says that there are no more cuts to make, American people. We have cut all we can cut. There is no more we can cut. So now we have decided the problem is you, American people. You haven't sent us enough money. We demand, we

insist, we require you to send us more money so we don't have to make any tough decisions anymore. We don't have to make the financial choices they made in Wisconsin or Alabama or Wyoming, that every State and city has had to face during this financial crisis, and they are leaner and more productive and more efficient as a result of having to make those choices. But we don't have to because we want to have more revenue.

So after this August of 2011 Budget Control Act passed, which reduced spending over 10 years by \$2.1 trillion, the President signed and agreed to, had no tax increases in it, it was just a commitment that we would contain spending—that is what the agreement was, a spending containment bill. In January, President Obama submitted a budget that wiped it out, busted it wide open. It would have added \$1 trillion in new taxes and \$1 trillion in new spending.

Wow. What kind of commitment was that to the American people; you sign a bill, you say you are going to do something, and before the ink is dry you are proposing a different idea that goes back on the very promise that was made.

Eventually, this year, the Senate Democrats passed a budget increasing spending \$1 trillion and increasing taxes \$1 trillion. It is a tax-and-spend budget, the same budget the President submitted each year.

They said we are going to have a balanced approach. What they wanted the American people to hear when they said a "balanced approach" is: We have a plan to reduce the deficit, and the plan is we are going to cut some spending and increase revenues. That is what they wanted the American people to hear. It was a subtly and carefully crafted message, but it was not the truth. The truth was that they wanted to spend more and tax more. Taxes were not used in a balanced approach to bring down the deficit from the unsustainable path on which we remain. The taxes were used to fund additional spending above the amount we agreed to in the Budget Control Act of August 2011, which is still in effect—unless this legislation passes, and that is going to amend it.

The fundamental fact is that my colleagues want to tax and spend. They say they have cut all they can cut and they want more revenue and more money from the American people. Just send it to us, and we will spread it around and we will do all the good things we can dream of with your money. We don't have enough of it; we want more.

I don't think that is good for America. I don't think that is good for the economy. We need a vibrant private sector with growth possibilities and the opportunity to have innovation and creativity and the efficiencies that

occur in the private sector that are not present in the government sector. We can't run this government. We have never managed the government effectively. It is so massive. We spend so much money. We need to be leaner and more productive. We need to decide which areas in our country we don't need the government to undertake. We need to let the private sector handle that wherever possible. If we do that, we can manage a smaller and more efficient government. We need to extract less money from the American people.

We have commitments. We are committed to Social Security, Medicare, and other funding we need to make sure we are honoring. We can't take money from Medicare, our seniors' health care program, and then spend it and say we have strengthened Medicare and made it better because we reduced its costs. The money that is saved in Medicare needs to be used to strengthen the long-term viability of Medicare, which is in great doubt. It is not on a sound path.

I know we can do better. We are going to have to face up to this. It is not going to be easy. It has challenges for all of us. But reductions in Federal spending can work.

For example, they say we need more revenue. Well, have we gotten more revenue? Yes, we have already. This Budget Control Act did not include more taxes. The Budget Control Act represented a \$2.1 trillion reduction in the growth of spending, but in January of this year we passed a \$650 billion tax on the rich, upper income people, and the ObamaCare legislation included a \$1 trillion tax increase on top of that. This bill has \$34 billion in fees and taxes. Is there not revenue around here? Revenue is being increased, but the problem is that it is not being used to reduce our deficits and it is not being used to put us on a sound financial path. It is being used to advance more spending, and that is the danger we are in, that is the danger we have to watch, and that is the danger that threatens us all.

I know how seductive it is for us to think we just can't reduce spending; the cupboard is bare. Minority Leader PELOSI says that we can't cut any more. Well, we can. There is a lot we can do to make this government leaner and more productive, and we are required to do so.

I yield the floor

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Senator from South Dakota.

OBAMACARE

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I listened to the Senator from Alabama talk about the current budget debate we are having on the floor, and I couldn't help but think of the discussion we had when we were debating the ObamaCare legislation a few years ago and how many of us at the time were

making the argument that this is the biggest expansion of government in literally half a century. I think that it is becoming increasingly clear that was, in fact, the case.

We are seeing dramatically more levels of spending. I think we are going to see dramatically higher levels of debt over time. But you would think that with \$½ trillion in cuts to Medicare, \$½ trillion in tax increases—and when it is fully implemented, it will be much bigger than that. The overall cost of the bill, when it is fully implemented, goes to about \$2.5 trillion. The expansion of government that occurred as a result of the passage of ObamaCare was, frankly, stunning relative to anything we have seen in recent history. You would think with that you would see some relief, if you will, in terms of the burdens being placed upon middle-class Americans, but we are seeing the opposite.

Many Americans are already feeling the effects of ObamaCare, whether it is higher insurance premiums, canceled health plans, or the loss of a doctor they like. Middle-class Americans are going to be hit the hardest.

Lower income families will face steep premiums and deductibles under ObamaCare, but they will get some help in the form of subsidies from the government to pay for some of their health care costs.

Upper income families are also going to face higher health care costs. In fact, the majority leader told a Nevada newspaper that his premiums under ObamaCare will rise by \$4,500 next year. Affluent Americans will be able to absorb those increases. What about a middle-class family facing a \$4,500 increase in health care costs, a family whose budget is already at its limit between housing costs, school expenses, and grocery bills? That family won't be able to absorb those costs. That family doesn't have a spare \$4,500 anywhere in its budget. For that family, the \$4,500 will have to come from money that was allocated for orthodontic payments or college tuition bills or money for a new car.

Back when the President was trying to sell his health care proposal to the American people, he promised that ObamaCare would "cut costs and make coverage more affordable for families and small businesses." Unfortunately, the last few months have made it abundantly clear that this promise is not being kept.

Instead of seeing reduced costs and more affordable coverage, middle-class Americans are seeing steep premium hikes and soaring out-of-pocket costs. Those Americans who have been lucky enough not to have their plans canceled have been receiving insurance plan renewal letters with staggering premium increases. In some cases it has doubled or even tripled what they have been paying before. One con-

stituent emailed me to tell me that thanks to ObamaCare her premiums will increase more than 100 percent, which she goes on to say is equal to 45 percent of her monthly income—45 percent just for health care. That is more than most Americans pay for their mortgage.

Americans whose health care plans have been canceled as a result of ObamaCare and who are being forced to shop on the exchanges are frequently facing higher premiums and drastically increased out-of-pocket costs.

A couple of days ago an article in Chicago Business reported that an average Chicago family with a midlevel health plan in the individual market would go from a \$3,500 deductible to a \$10,000 deductible if they obtained a similar plan in the exchange. That is \$10,000 on top of the \$9,000 a year that family would already be paying in premiums.

In Federal exchanges, many families are facing deductibles as high as \$12,700. Barring catastrophic illness or injury, in many cases a family with a deductible that high might as well not have insurance at all.

Of course, a family could buy a more expensive plan and greatly reduce those out-of-pocket costs. Many of the platinum plans, which are the high-end plans, have no deductible at all. As CBS News points out—and this was for a Houston, TX, family—"that means shelling out almost \$12,400 per year in monthly premiums, or about the same as the deductible for the bronze plans. Either way, families and individuals who don't qualify for tax credits may find ObamaCare failing to deliver on its promise of affordable health care."

That is from CBS News when talking about a specific family in Houston, TX.

What makes it even worse—and this is what the Associated Press reported—many families don't fully understand the expenses they are taking on when they sign up for plans with high out-of-pocket costs. The Associated Press notes that "only 14 percent of American adults with insurance understand deductibles and other key concepts of insurance plans, according to a study published this year in the Journal of Health Economics. If people with insurance don't understand it, it's likely that uninsured Americans' grasp is even fuzzier."

A family shopping on the exchanges may snap up plans with relatively low premiums without realizing that they are, in effect, purchasing nothing more than catastrophic coverage that may leave them on the hook for thousands of dollars in medical costs each year.

So far, I have talked about the direct financial consequences of the President's health care law, but its effects don't end with higher premiums and skyrocketing out-of-pocket costs. Middle-class families will also take a financial hit thanks to the damage ObamaCare does to businesses.

ObamaCare puts in place a slew of new regulations, new taxes, and new fees on businesses large and small. When faced with that, businesses will have two choices: They can absorb the costs of new taxes and fees, thereby reducing the amount of capital they have to expand their businesses, hire new workers, or promote existing ones, or they can pass on these costs directly to their workers, further burdening families already facing steep health care costs. It is a lose-lose situation.

Small businesses are being hit particularly hard. Susan Gabay, cofounder and managing director of a small business investment banking firm, published a column on Saturday in the Washington Times in which she discussed the effect the President's health care law is having on her business. Thanks to ObamaCare, the health plan she offered to her employees was canceled. The new coverage she was offered contains a 48-percent premium increase, which she says "translates into approximately \$1,676 in added costs per year for every individual covered on our plan." That is a \$6,704 premium increase for a family of four. She says that is approximately \$44,000 in added annual costs for her business that otherwise could be used to hire a college graduate.

Maybe her employees are getting better coverage thanks to ObamaCare's regulations, right? Well, actually, the answer is no. Let me read her answer to that observation. She says:

The response to our plight is that we are getting much better coverage. But that isn't true, either. We have historically provided our employees with a generous plan with 100% coverage for in-network preventative care and low out of pocket maximums. Conversely, our new "great alternative" plan offers comparable benefits with much higher out of pocket maximums.

So thanks to ObamaCare, Ms. Gabay's business will pay more for health care and so will her employees without receiving any meaningful increase in benefits.

As every middle-class parent—wondering where money for the next dentist bill or tuition payment will come from—knows, America's economy is still struggling to recover from the last recession. Burdening any business—particularly our Nation's small businesses, which are responsible for a majority of the new job creation in this country—is the worst possible thing we could do for our economic recovery and for the millions of middle-class Americans searching for better jobs and opportunities.

Democrats and the President made the American people a promise. They said: We will make health care more affordable. As long as ObamaCare is in place, that promise will continue to be broken, and middle-class families will suffer as a result. In fact, just recently, when asked a question in an interview about the health care plan, Secretary Sebelius said:

There are some individuals who may be looking at increases. I think you cannot make a statement based on cost unless you compare what they had to what they are going into.

That was Secretary Sebelius saying there are some individuals who may be looking at increases. I think that is the understatement of the year based upon the experience of literally millions of Americans, some of whom have lost coverage entirely, but millions of Americans who are suffering with the sticker shock of dramatic increases in the premiums they pay for their health insurance coverage, dramatic increases in the deductibles now available under their policies, and dramatic decreases in the take-home pay they have to meet the other obligations they have for their families. This is a direct hit to the pocketbooks and the future economic vitality of middle-class Americans.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, earlier this morning the Senate voted to advance a budget agreement that passed the House last week. The legislation has been a topic of much discussion over the past several days, and there are sincere arguments on both sides.

While I appreciate the challenges House and Senate negotiators faced in crafting these budgetary guidelines, I voted against this legislation because in my view Congress should continue to adhere to the fiscal restraints both parties agreed to under the Budget Control Act.

I was the principal Republican negotiator of that agreement. I have been particularly invested in its success, and I was very proud of it. As a result of the Budget Control Act, government spending has declined for 2 years—2 years in a row—for the first time since the Korean war. This was hard-won progress on the road to getting our Nation's fiscal house in order.

As I said, I fully appreciate the constraints Chairman RYAN and Chairman MURRAY faced in their negotiations, and there is clearly some good to be said about their agreement. But we should not go back on the agreement we made under the BCA.

Nonetheless, this has been a very important public debate. Unfortunately, our colleagues on the other side do not seem terribly interested in substantial debate on this or any other substantive issues this week, least of all ObamaCare, which has been wreaking

havoc on our constituents for months now but which Democrats seem entirely uninterested in discussing. Instead, for much of this week the Democrat-run Senate has decided to devote its attention to pushing through nominations—nominations. They want to spend time seating political appointees at places such as the Department of Interior—positions that, while they may be important, are certainly not in any way emergencies that need to be attended to right this second.

Meanwhile, out in the real world, millions of Americans will continue to suffer under a law they told Washington not to pass in the first place, a law that Washington Democrats still stubbornly refuse to change in any meaningful way. Our colleagues on the other side seem to think they have no responsibility to do anything about the impact of ObamaCare since the White House issued a press release declaring partial victory—partial victory—in fixing the Web site. That is their whole approach to this rolling disaster: Let the White House dodge and deflect on any problem that arises until people forget about the last one. Point the finger at some bureaucrat or some Web technician and basically do nothing.

We are now nearly 3 months into this national calamity, and what have Democrats done about this national calamity? Well, they have issued a lot of talking points and some halfhearted apologies. They have mouthed nostrums about "private sector velocity." They have waived laws for fear of the political impact of leaving them in place. And there has hardly been any accountability for the massive consequences faced by American consumers as a result of this failed law. In other words, they haven't done much of anything. They have treated this whole thing like a public relations problem to get past rather than a real-life problem for middle-class Americans to be solved. They are engaged in daily battle aimed at one overriding goal: Protect the law. Yet nearly every day we hear more about its painful impact.

Since the October rollout, millions of Americans have lost their insurance plans. More than 280,000 have lost coverage in Kentucky alone, and so many are feeling the squeeze of this law, folks such as Lana Lynch, a mom from Brandenburg, KY, who told me the annual out-of-pocket expenses for her family rose from \$1,500 to \$7,000 under ObamaCare, and folks such as Barrett Simpson from Sweden, KY.

Barrett had a health plan he liked and wanted to keep, a \$540-a-month policy that was, in his words, "perfect" for his family. The folks responsible for ObamaCare apparently thought they knew better than he did about the needs of his family, so he lost it. Here is what he had to say about that:

[My] plan is being eliminated because of the ACA, and the cheapest, closest plan will

cost [u]s \$1,400 next year. We can keep the plan until the end of next year, but we will have to pick a new one. We don't need the extra coverage for maternity, for vision or dental, but yet we will be forced to pay for it.

He continued:

These changes are absurd. Most people in this country who are content with what they had are now paying for what Obama is trying to do for a very few.

Barrett closed his letter by asking me to work to repeal ObamaCare.

Well, Barrett and Lana should know this—in fact, every Kentuckian should know this, and every American should know this: Members on my side of the aisle hear you loudly and clearly. We are not going to give up this fight. No matter how much the other side tries to distract the country's attention, we won't be fooled and we know you won't be either.

Look. The folks each of us were sent here to represent—not the government—should be the ones choosing plans that make more sense for their families. And when our colleagues on the other side go around referring to insurance being lost as “junk,” that is beyond offensive to the people we represent.

There is a lot of ivory tower thinking that goes on in this city—way too much of it. It is time for our Washington Democratic friends to finally climb out of the ivory tower and see the reality of their ideas in action, witness the failure of their policies firsthand. It is time for Washington Democrats to drop their refusal to change anything of substance in ObamaCare, and it is time for them to listen closely to the people who sent us here in the first place.

Here is what so many Americans are saying. They want Democrats to start working with Republicans to improve our Nation's health care system in a positive way, to help us implement real, patient-centered, commonsense reforms that can actually lower costs and improve the quality of care because we were sent here to solve problems, not to make them worse, as ObamaCare does.

Let's erase that mistake. Let's get rid of it and start over with real reform. Working together, we can do it.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I would like to continue to raise a simple point but a point of profound financial significance to America. One of the things that has happened in the bill that is before us is there has been an

extension in the 10-year BCA plan—which was enacted 2 years ago; there are only 8 years left—an extension of a 2-percent reduction in payments to hospitals and doctors who provide services through Medicare, treat patients, and get paid by the U.S. Government. So they were reduced 2 percent.

This is scored as a savings for the country. In effect, it is perceived as a savings that allows us to spend more money somewhere else. That savings, as was done in this legislation, involved the last 2 years—years 9 and 10—of the 10-year window from today. It creates some money, they say, because we reduced Medicare costs and we can spend that money in this year and next year on nondefense and defense discretionary spending, and we are going to promise to use the money we save in Medicare in years 9 and 10, outside the promised BCA 10-year window which is already moving along.

What I want to raise is a deep and fundamental point. Medicare is already in deficit. Medicare is already spending more money to provide care for seniors than is being taken in off people's paychecks every week. But Medicare does have a trust fund. Medicare Part A does; it's called the Hospital Insurance trust fund. Social Security also has a trust fund. People have that money come off their paychecks every week when they go to work, and they believe, correctly in my opinion, they have a right to receive those benefits in the future.

They are not happy. They believe America is going on the wrong track when we take that money and spend it, therefore, jeopardizing the confidence they should have in retirement that their Medicare and Social Security are going to be in place.

We know there are some deep problems with Medicare and Social Security actuarially because people are living longer and there are more people retiring and we have to deal with some problems there. But what I want to say is, the worst thing you can do is to do the things necessary to make Medicare sound—tighten up payments to providers, perhaps; although there is a limit at some point as to how much you can do there—and do other things that make Medicare more financially stable, but you should not see that savings as something you can spend on a new program. The entitlement programs that went into ObamaCare, the Affordable Care Act, \$500 billion of that money that supposedly was used to fund it was from Medicare and some from Social Security too—saving money in those accounts.

But those programs have trust funds. They have trustees. When they ran a surplus, as they had done for many decades—but not now—when they were running a surplus, the money was loaned to the Federal Treasury and they spent it. But the Federal Treasury

owes it back to them. Now that both of those programs are heading into steep fiscal decline, they are calling the notes, they are calling back the money they loaned. The trustees of those programs know whom they represent. They represent Social Security recipients. They represent Medicare beneficiaries. They are demanding their money, they are going to get it, and we are going to honor it.

So what I am saying is we cannot count that money twice. That is what Mr. Elmendorf, the Director of the CBO, told us on December 23, the night before the ObamaCare bill was passed on the floor of the Senate in 2009. He said: You cannot count the money twice, and to suggest you are strengthening Medicare and simultaneously providing a source of money to spend on the new ObamaCare program is double counting. He used the words “double counting.”

How simple is this? My question to him, when he gave the letter—and I asked him to put it in writing. I insisted he do that. He works for us, and he did what he is supposed to do. He said: Even though the conventions of accounting might suggest otherwise, you cannot simultaneously use the same money to strengthen Medicare and fund ObamaCare. That is what he said.

So under our conventions of accounting, we have what we call a unified budget. The CBO does it both ways, but the one we talk mostly about, the one everybody focuses on, is the unified budget. So if Social Security is a little better off, it is assumed it is in the same pot. Everything is in one pot. So anything that cuts the expenses of Medicare and Social Security to make them strong is utilized and considered to put more money in the pot to be spent somewhere else.

What is happening to us now is the unfunded liabilities in pension funds, retirement funds, Medicare, Social Security, and other accounts are reaching unprecedented levels, some say nearly \$100 trillion, and it is growing considerably. This is the long-term threat to America. This is the thing that several attempts have been made in recent years to fix, to confront, to put us on a sound path financially, but it has always failed. People can blame everybody, and everybody is subject to blame, I assure you. However, I do believe it is quite plain it will not happen unless the President of the United States leads and participates and says: I want to fix it. He is basically saying: We do not have a problem. We are doing fine. He is not willing to call on the American people and use his bully pulpit to lay out the challenges we face in how we could put ourselves on a financially sound path without destroying the country.

We can do that. We really can do that. But it will take belt-tightening in

every aspect of our government, and everybody should share equally in the belt-tightening, not just a few, not just veterans, military people who have served 20 years, and disabled veterans having their retirement cut, as this legislation does. It needs to be something where everybody participates in tightening the belt. We could get the country on a sound path.

But I want to register again—and I am going to continue to talk about this because I think it leads to a false impression. It leads to the impression we have more money than we have. You cannot use Social Security's money, Medicare's money to fund ObamaCare, the Defense Department or nondefense discretionary spending. It is not possible to use that money twice.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes.

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

REMEMBERING ERIKA ROBINSON

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, over the weekend, the State of Connecticut and the country and the world commemorated with grief and continued pain the first year anniversary of the tragic massacre in Newtown.

On the morning of Saturday—1 year after the Newtown tragedy—I attended a church service, a beautiful, moving, powerful celebration of faith at the St. Rose of Lima Church, whose pastor, Monsignor Robert Weiss, has been such a great friend to so many in the community and such a source of strength and comfort.

Later in the weekend, I visited with the family of Erika Robinson of West Haven, Connecticut, who was shot and killed at a nightclub in New Haven on October 26. This seemingly random act of violence left Erika dead and five other individuals injured by gunfire.

I have spent months and have been grateful for the experience with the families of those victims in Newtown. I was equally grateful to spend this time with Erika's family—Celeste and Greg Fulcher—at their home, and I want to thank them for welcoming me to their home on that day.

Erika Robinson was only 26 years old when she became a victim of gun violence. She clearly was a person full of joy and life and goodness for all of her 26 years and including the day she perished.

She was building a business, a clothing line. As her business grew, a local store started selling that line of clothing. Those who knew her described her as hard working and driven.

She was compassionate. Most recently, she released a special collection in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

She had enormous potential. She did everything right. She played by the rules. She stayed out of trouble, and she had the support of her two loving parents.

She was on track to fulfill the American dream, and now her life, tragically, has been reduced to a statistic, unless we make sure it is more than a statistic and that we work and fight to make her legacy one of helping to protect others, helping to prevent gun violence that takes victims like her who are simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, as she was that night in New Haven, when a shooter who was illegally in possession of a firearm—in fact, apparently on bail—turned to take as a victim someone else in the crowd that evening in the nightclub, and she became a victim that night inadvertently, unintentionally, and five others were wounded.

I have her picture here. Erika was more than a statistic. She was a person. Part of her clothing line was this small card she fashioned herself:

It's so regular for us to say "You only live once", but do you deeply understand that it's real. What I'm trying to say is be fearless. Do things you always wanted to do. Never let anyone hold you back. Enjoy this thing we call life while we can. People going to talk regardless, so be you!

Forever, Erika Robinson.

May that legacy be forever. May that legacy be with us forever and inspire us to work as we have done on behalf of the families of Newtown and as we should be doing on behalf of the 10,000 other victims of gun violence since Newtown.

The victims are not only the victims who perished among those 10,000, they are others who have been injured, such as the 5 who were injured that night when the shooter at that nightclub in New Haven was aiming for someone else and sprayed gunfire that killed Erika, took her as a casualty but also injured others severely and traumatized countless others who saw or watched or heard what went on in that nightclub that night, an establishment that was legally licensed by the State of Connecticut, legally licensed to entertain people and charge for them being there, an establishment that was the last place Erika Robinson knew.

Such a promising young woman at the wrong place at the wrong time, a woman who could have contributed so much to New Haven, to Connecticut, to our country. This was a tragic loss for her family that continues to honor her life with courage and strength and a tragic loss for all of us and for the thousands of people who came to her funeral because she had already, in those young 26 years, touched so many lives.

We owe it to her and to her family that her legacy will be one of protecting others such as she, protecting others across America regardless of the neighborhood or the place in that

neighborhood, whether it is downtown New Haven, an urban area, or Newtown, a suburban neighborhood. It should not matter where gun violence is a threat. We should eradicate it everywhere. It should not matter who may be the victim of gun violence, what her background may be, her race, religion, anything about her.

Every human being, every person in the United States of America is deserving of protection that our society failed to give this young woman. We do a great disservice to our Nation when we fail to honor those individuals who may not be in the headlines, who may not be from neighborhoods that we know but others that are unfamiliar to us. We owe it to ourselves, not just to Erika and her family but to ourselves as a nation to do better and to make America safer. She deserved better from the greatest country in the history of the world. We as citizens of that country deserve better and have an obligation to do better. So we will, I hope, leave a legacy for her in her name that speaks to a safer, better America.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:33 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

MAKING CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. I come to the floor to speak in support of the 2-year bipartisan budget agreement reached by Representative RYAN and Senator MURRAY. I am pleased that the budget agreement passed the House of Representatives with overwhelming bipartisan support and that cloture was invoked in the Senate today.

I understand there are many of my colleagues on this side of the aisle who are very unhappy with this deal and intend to vote against it. My only response to that is I respect their vote, but I would like to know what we do in order to avoid another shutdown of the government. The American people steadfastly reject a shutdown of the government. I have concerns about the budget deal—I think everybody does—because of the nature of the way business is done. But to somehow vote against it without an alternative to keep the government from shutting down lacks some intellectual integrity.

My support and vote will be based on two important facts:

It will prevent another government shutdown, which we cannot put the