in the Senate and my great pleasure at having successfully gotten two amendments into this bill.

I raised several additional issues and it is my hope that there will be continued opportunities to address these issues going forward.

I yield the floor.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 250, S. 1940, an original bill to amend the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, to restore the financial solvency of the flood insurance fund, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Tim Johnson, Al Franken, Patrick J. Leahy, Christopher A. Coons, Tom Harkin, Barbara A. Mikulski, Kent Conrad, Robert Menendez, Jack Reed, Barbara Boxer, Ben Nelson of Nebraska, Michael F. Bennet, Max Baucus, Mark Begich, Richard Blumenthal, Kay R. Hagan.

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 proceed to S. 1940, an original bill to amend the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, to restore the financial solvency of the insurance fund, and for other purposes, 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.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) is necessarily absent.

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

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 96, nays 2, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 165 Leg.]

YEAS—96

Akaka	Carper	Franken
Alexander	Casey	Gillibrand
Ayotte	Chambliss	Graham
Barrasso	Coats	Grassley
Baucus	Coburn	Hagan
Begich	Cochran	Harkin
Bennet	Collins	Hatch
Bingaman	Conrad	Heller
Blumenthal	Coons	Hoeven
Blunt	Corker	Hutchison
Boozman	Cornyn	Inhofe
Brown (MA)	Crapo	Inouye
Brown (OH)	DeMint	Isakson
Burr	Durbin	Johanns
Cantwell	Enzi	Johnson (SD)
Cardin	Feinstein	Johnson (WI)
Kerry	Merkley	Sessions
Klobuchar	Mikulski	Shaheen
Kohl	Moran	Shelby
Kyl	Murkowski	Snowe
Landrieu	Murray	Stabenow
Lautenberg	Nelson (NE)	Tester
Leahy	Nelson (FL)	Thune
Lee	Portman	Toomey
Levin	Reed	Udall (CO)
Lieberman	Reid	Udall (NM)
Lugar	Risch	Vitter
Manchin	Roberts	Warner
McCain	Rockefeller	Webb
McCaskill	Rubio	Whitehouse
McConnell	Sanders	Wicker
Menendez	Schumer	Wyden

NAYS—2

Paul	Pryor

NOT VOTING—2

Boxer	Kirk

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 96, the nays are 2. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Louisiana.

CHANGE OF VOTE

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I rise for a procedural request and a statement on the farm bill. On Rollcall Vote No. 153, yesterday, I voted ''yes.'' It was my intention to vote ''no.'' I therefore ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to change my vote since it will not affect the outcome of the amendment or the bill.

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. I had the Rollcall Vote number wrong. It is not Rollcall Vote No. 153. It is Rollcall Vote No. 143. I voted ''yes.'' I would like to change my vote to ''no.'' I ask unanimous consent that be the order.

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. Thank you Mr. President.

AGRICULTURE REFORM

Mr. President, I will be brief. I know other Members are on the floor who want to speak on other subjects.

First, I want to thank the Senator from Michigan and the Senator from Kansas for an extraordinary job on a very difficult bill, a very complicated bill—and difficult because it is not just a Republican-Democratic debate or a Democratic-Republican debate, it is a regional debate that has to take place, and there is a lot of give-and-take.

I have been proud to vote for every farm bill that has been before the Senate to my knowledge, but I voted ''no'' today, and I want to say why.

Despite the great work of Senator STABENOW and Senator ROBERTS, there was a weak part of this bill, in my view, related to rice farming, and it is such a significant and important part of our farming structure in Louisiana that I cast a vote against the bill to send a signal that more work needs to be done.

This bill passed the Senate with an overwhelming vote. I voted for many of the amendments that I think helped to shape it to be even better than when it came out of committee.

We beat back several attacks to uproot, destroy, or significantly modify the U.S. Sugar Program, which has been very important to the State of Louisiana—one of the Nation's great sugar growers. As I have tried to explain to people who continue to attack this program, why would you want to end a program in this bill that does not cost the taxpayers a single dime?

There are no direct subsidies for sugar, as there are for all the other crops. The U.S. Sugar Program provides American consumers with low, stable sugar prices and ensures that our sugarcane and sugar beet growers receive a fair price for their crop.

I am happy to say that American growers of sugar can provide almost 85 percent of domestic demand. So why not use domestic sugar if we can supply our domestic demand? We only import what we need to import. We do not want to flood the market with cheap imports coming into America and undermining our jobs. I was proud to stand with our sugar industry and beat back those amendments.

Louisiana farmers and ranchers make a significant contribution to our State, generating over $10.8 billion in economic activity alone. Agriculture—including fisheries and, of course, forestry—and energy are the backbone of Louisiana's economy.

This farm bill is an important bill. As I said, I was happy to vote for literally dozens of amendments that strengthened it. But I held out my final support, hoping that, as it travels to the House and goes through the conference process, the farm provisions related to our rice growers could be perfected.

People like to say the United States grows the cheapest, safest, and most abundant food, fiber, and energy supply in the world. They are right. The people in my State who do that day in and day out are proud. They have every reason to be proud because farming is more than a business, it is more than a job; it is a way of life. It is a way of life that is important and precious and should be honored. There are many families—cousins and aunts and uncles and fathers and mothers and children who are involved in farming. In Louisiana, in our forest lands, and along our coastal lands, these families follow a preferred way of life, even though it means hard work, long hours, high risks, and sometimes heart-breakingly limited returns.

So from sugar and rice in the south to cotton and poultry in the north, and all the areas in between, Louisiana needs a farm bill that supports all of

our farmers. This one failed in one important area, which is why I cast a ''no'' vote.

This bill did not support adequately, in my view, the 2,000 rice farmers we have in Louisiana. Our rice industry generates $638 million in our State alone. Along with Arkansas, we are one of the major rice producing states. Nationally, U.S. rice supports about 128,000 jobs. It is $34 billion of economic input each year.

This bill did reduce the deficit by $23 billion, and that is something I support. However, it took a larger chunk out of rice than was asked for any other commodity. Rice took a 65% reduction when the other crops, on average, took a 30% reduction. And I know some of the peanut growers in Georgia have some of the same concerns we do.

So let me end by saying that I hope the position of our rice farmers and the important industry that rice represents can be strengthened in the House. If so, I will proudly put my name on this bill, because there is some very good that was done to protect our nutrition programs, to help our middle-class families who find themselves in the unusual situation of having to get some food relief in these difficult times. I want to thank Senator STABENOW particularly for her help in that way.

But for my rice growers, my rice producers, the important mills we have from Crowley, LA, to other places, for companies such as Kellogg in Battle Creek, MI, that depend on strong rice production from Louisiana, I cast a ''no'' vote.

Finally, I will say, I hope we can find a way to open some more markets for our rice growers. We are interested—very interested—in trade with Cuba. And the politics sometimes prevents us from opening more trade relations with a nation that I know has not met our standard of democracy but most certainly would be an open market for many of my farmers.

So for my farmers who are looking for markets where we can sell and compete on the world market, if you give us an opportunity to compete and open these markets, then we may be able to adjust our program. But until then, our farmers need the support of other farmers and did not receive it in this bill.

I so appreciate my colleague from Rhode Island giving me this opportunity to speak. I thank the chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PELL GRANT

Mr. REED. Mr. President, 1972 was a watershed year for expanding educational opportunities in this country.

The Education Amendments of 1972 included title IX—now known as the Patsy T. Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act—guaranteeing educational opportunities for women and girls in federally supported educational institutions.

But 1972 also saw, within the Education Amendments, the creation of the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant. Today we know it as the Pell Grant. It was named in honor and in recognition of the extraordinary vision and service of my colleague, my predecessor from Rhode Island, Claiborne Pell. He authored this provision.

Forty years later, we can see how these two key changes to our educational laws have transformed our Nation and transformed the aspirations of millions of Americans.

It is also a good time to reflect on the challenges that remain and to renew our commitment to fulfilling the promise of opportunity represented in the Education Amendments of 1972.

Senator Pell's vision was that no student with the talent, drive, and desire should be denied the opportunity for a post-secondary education solely because of a lack of financial resources. Pell grants have opened the doors to a college education for millions of Americans.

In the 1973–1974 academic year—the first year students received grants—176,000 Pell grants were awarded. In the school year that began in the fall of 2010, that number grew to over 9.6 million.

Pell grants constitute approximately 23 percent of all Federal student aid, which includes grants, loans, and work study programs.

The Pell grant is the cornerstone of our Federal student aid programs. For needy students, it is the foundation for making college affordable. Unfortunately, reduced State support for higher education and rising college costs have eroded that foundation.

In 1976, the maximum Pell grant was $1,400, which was enough to cover 72 percent of the cost of attendance at a public 4-year college. In 2010, the maximum Pell Grant was $5,550, which was only enough to cover 34 percent of the cost of attendance at a public 4-year college.

We have seen an erosion of the buying power of the Pell grant. If we were matching the effort that he initiated in the 1970s, we would be providing more opportunities and more support for college students across this Nation.

Senator Pell understood that grant aid was critical for low-income students and families. The goal was to minimize the need for loans. Frankly, back in the 1970s, most young people with a Pell grant—working through the summer, and working the extra hours they had to during the academic year—could pay their way through school, leave school without huge debt.

Today, regrettably, there are students graduating from school with $10,000, $20,000, $30,000 worth of debt because the Pell grants have not kept up, because college costs have accelerated, and because they have been forced to borrow. Today, low-income students and middle-income students rely heavily on student loans to pay for college.

And we are seeing another burden; and, frankly, this ripples throughout our economy. In the 1970s and 1980s, if you left college owing a few thousand dollars, you could pay that off very quickly. So by your late twenties, you were ready to settle down, to buy the house. Today, we have a generation of students who are struggling with debt that might take them 10 or more years to pay off. Effectively, they cannot begin to buy the home, to settle down, to do the things that are so important to our overall economy.

Unless we are able to come to an agreement over the next several days, we also face the prospect of seeing the rate on subsidized student loans double by July 1.

That would deal another blow to moderate- and low-income families. Leader REID has proposed a very reasonable compromise. I hope that the Republicans will let that compromise go forward. I am hopeful my Republican colleagues can use this opportunity not only to continue to keep the lending rate low for Stafford loans but renew our own pledge on the Pell grant.

It would be ironic to see, on the 40th anniversary of the Pell grant, a further undermining of the ability of middle- to low-income Americans to go to college. In fact, this should be an opportunity to do much more. Senator Pell's words ring as true today as when he spoke them in 1995, one of the last years of his tenure in the Senate.

In his words:

> As I have stated on many occasions, few things in life are more important than the education of our children. They are the living legacy that we leave behind and their education determines the future of the American Nation. . . .

He continued.

> . . . Every day families are making decisions about sending their children to college. Certainly one of, if not the major obstacle they face is how to pay for college. The loan is their last resort. It provides the extra but necessary money they must have after exhausting their own resources and obtaining any grants for which their children might be eligible. Increasing the amount that children owe after graduation may well place the dream of a college education beyond their reach. That, to my mind, would be a tragedy of truly immense proportions. . . .

Senator Pell was right. Increasing student debt, especially during these difficult economic times, would be a tragedy for students, their families, and our Nation. I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, on our side of the aisle, all my colleagues, to work together to prevent an increase in the student loan interest rate from doubling on July 1.

That would, indeed, be a fitting tribute to Senator Pell on the 40th anniversary of the Pell grant.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am honored to join my senior Senator to commemorate such an important milestone as he has described in American education.

It was 40 years ago this week that President Nixon signed into law the

Education Amendments Act of 1972, including a provision establishing for the first time the basic educational opportunity grant, which came to be called the Pell grant for its sponsor, Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island.

Over the next four decades, Pell grants would turn the dream of college education into a reality for millions of Americans. Today, more than ever, a college diploma is important to a young person's success. The unemployment rate for those 25 and older with a bachelor's degree is less than 4 percent and over 8 percent for those with only a high school diploma. The value of that college degree could not be more apparent. Higher education provides the skills and credentials that many employers require in today's economy.

In the decades following World War II, the U.S. Government made college and occupational mobility a reality for more Americans than ever before. Claiborne Pell was a veteran of that war, and he saw how the GI bill enabled millions of his fellow veterans to better themselves through education. He recognized that many of his Coast Guard shipmates had as much talent as his Princeton classmates but not the privilege or resources to go to college.

Given the opportunity, this Greatest Generation would not only provide a better life for their families with that access to college, but they would contribute mightily to the growth of this Nation, a growth we still enjoy today.

Claiborne Pell resolved then that all Americans should have such an opportunity, and his vision would become a reality for millions through the Pell grant. In 1976, the first year the Pell grants were fully funded, a full Pell grant paid 72 percent of the cost of attendance at a typical 4-year public college. Today, a full Pell grant covers just 32 percent of those costs, but still, for many, this vital assistance can mean the difference between being able to attend college or not.

As grant aid has fallen and tuition has soared, families have had to borrow to make up the difference to send their kids to college. The total amount of student loan debt carried by Americans has recently surpassed $1 trillion, more than Americans now owe on their credit cards.

I have talked to students around my State and I have read many heartfelt letters. It is clear Pell grants serve as a gateway to the opportunities available with a college degree, a gate that would be shut if not for Pell grants.

I received a letter from Phil in Wakefield, RI, the oldest of five children. Last year, Phil graduated from Cornell. Phil worked his way through college, including summers. His parents chipped in when they could. Phil's father is still paying off student loans, and Phil was lucky enough to earn private scholarships and receive grants from his school. He said:

> But there's no way my education would have been possible without Pell Grants. We just wouldn't have been able to afford it.

I also heard from Anthony, who has been working as a waiter in Providence. Thanks to the Pell grant, he and his wife Jen have been able to go back to school at the University of Rhode Island for degrees in biotechnology. They say their education will enable them to build a better future together in Rhode Island's rapidly expanding biotech sector.

Leann is a single mother of two from Pawtucket, already carrying student loan debt, although she has not been able to finish her undergraduate program. Last year, Leann enrolled in the School of Continuing Education at Roger Williams University, and when she graduates with a bachelor's degree next year, she plans on opening her own small business. ''None of this would be happening'' she wrote, ''if I were not receiving a Pell Grant.''

The simple fact is this: Pell grants help millions of people achieve the dream of college and improve their prospects for employment. It is a wise investment in the future of our country. Congress has, in recent years, increased the buying power of Pell Grants, increasing the maximum grant from $4,050 in academic year 2006–2007 to $5,550 in 2012–2013.

We also increased the minimum family income that automatically qualifies a student for the maximum Pell grant, a change that better reflects today's economic realities. Sadly, however, we are seeing a truly misguided assault on Pell grants.

The editorial board of the Wall Street Journal marked the 40th anniversary of Pell grants this week by printing claims about the Pell grant that, simply to be polite, do not withstand scrutiny. The Journal says the Pell grant is rife with abuse, with students engaging in ''creative accounting'' to qualify by feigning financial independence.

The most common way one gets deemed independent under the Pell Grant Program is by being 24 years of age or older. It is hard to imagine doing much creative accounting with one's date of birth. The other major proofs of independence are being married and having children. Maybe when they said ''creative accounting'' they meant ''procreative accounting.''

The Wall Street Journal implies that better off students can win larger grants by attending more expensive institutions. But the cost of tuition cannot increase the maximum size of a grant. The maximum Pell grant, as I said, is $5,550, regardless of the school one attends. As we all know, $5,550 is far from sufficient to cover the cost of most higher education.

Perhaps the most misleading claim from the Journal is to pick out the period when Pell grant costs rose significantly, between 2008 and 2010, due largely to the enactment of a funding expansion that has since been repealed and the fact that more eligible students applied for assistance as the economy worsened in those years. What they left out is that the Congressional Budget Office projects almost no average annual growth in program costs over the next 10 years.

The Republican budget in the House of Representatives slashes funding and eligibility for Pell grants and eliminates all mandatory funding for the program over the next 10 years. We all understand the need to find savings in the Federal budget. We all understand the need to make difficult choices. But of all the bad choices we could make, of all unintelligent choices we could make, failing to invest in Pell grants would be among the worst.

It is, frankly, shameful that Federal financial aid has not kept pace with the rising cost of college. It is truly misguided to roll back financial aid for a generation of young Americans preparing to compete in an evermore global economy. We need a highly trained workforce. Pell grants are very often the keystone in the arch that students must build to afford college, as Phil and Anthony and Jen and Leann all showed.

Rhode Island is a small State. But over the years we have had some towering and remarkable Senators. Claiborne Pell was one. Claiborne Pell believed, as he once told the Providence Journal, ''that government—and the federal government in particular—can, should, and does make a positive impact on the lives of most Americans.''

The Pell grant's positive impact is that people who cannot afford college have the chance to go to college, and it lifts off their backs a little bit of that burden of debt. That is something we want in this country, not just for the sake of the individual Pell grant recipient, not just for the sake of the next generation but for the sake of the good of our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

AGRICULTURE REFORM

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask to be recognized to speak as in morning business.

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

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I wish to talk about the farm bill. As we can see from an open Senate, I think we have done our work, and we have been successful. Most of what we can say on this bill has already been said.

After final passage, I simply wish to reiterate what the chairwoman has said, what I have said all along: This is a reform bill. We cut $23 billion in mandatory spending. These are real cuts, no gimmicks. We have eliminated four commodity programs—four commodity programs. We have streamlined conservation programs from 23 to 13. We have eliminated numerous other authorizations.

In total, approximately 100 authorizations for spending and appropriations are eliminated. This is real reform. I also wish to take a quick moment to thank all the staff who have worked so hard on this legislation, especially the committee staff on both the majority and the minority sides.

I especially wish to thank the legislative magician, if I may call him that—expert—David Schiappa and his staff. They are no longer here, but they guided us through some difficult times, as he always does—as they always do.

I would like to take a few moments to recognize the members of my staff who worked on this bill. For me, this is a very special occasion. We are only as good as our staff. I have been blessed with the very best, and I have been a bucket toter. That is what a staff member is. When someone totes buckets, they try not to spill anything.

Sometimes they are successful and other times they may trip and fall. Other times it is just the way it is. I was administrative assistant to Senator Frank Carlson, the only man in Kansas to serve us as a Member of Congress, as a Governor, and a Senator, prior to our current Governor, Sam Brownback.

I was the administrative assistant for Congressman Keith Sebelius, who was on the House Agriculture Committee, and learned an awful lot about agriculture with Keith as we went through those days. Obviously, if someone is from Kansas, they are a legislative assistant or a bucket toter or whatever description you want for Bob Dole forever.

These people, as far as I am concerned, are not only my staff, they are my family. They have persevered. Anne Hazlett, my chief counsel, in my opinion, is the best chief counsel in the Senate, one of the top legislative drafters in the Senate, former director of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture under Gov. Mitch Daniels. When she is at my door, I know I am going to be told no on something.

I actually had better listen to her.

Eric Steiner. Eric has charged me with cruel and unusual punishment for putting him in the charge of dairy policy. After the 1996 farm bill and all that—and the 2002 and 2008 farm bills—I said I don't do dairy anymore. Then, in came Eric. He also became a dad for the first time earlier this year as we worked on this bill—talk about working 24/7 and giving up your family.

Keira Franz is a former Bob Dole staffer. Bob still tells her what to do so she can tell me what he says I am supposed to be doing.

Autumn Veazey, our southern bell and specialty crop guru, has also had the pleasure of getting to know places such as Dodge City and the inside of a meat processing plant—something that should be required of every agriculture assistant. Don't ask her.

Gregg Doud. Here is a real Kansas cowboy and one of the top agriculture trade experts in Washington, and he still wears his boots.

Tara Smith, our commodities and crop insurance expert, helps me navigate the minefields of both. Thank you so much, Tara. You have been wonderful.

Janae Brady keeps our staff—and, most importantly, my staff—director organized.

Andrew Vlasity, a great young man and a tremendous writer, has helped create a research title for the future.

Max Fisher, our No. 1 crunching guru, also became a dad for the third time as we worked on this bill.

Chris Hicks, our other legal counsel, is a former Senate-confirmed general counsel at the Department of Agriculture and provides the wisdom of that position as we work on complicated matters.

Patty Lawrence is our Department of Agriculture detailee on conservation issues and the ultimate professional.

Also, in my personal office: Ryan Flickner, a young Kansas farm lad who will soon return to Kansas to get married and become my deputy State director.

Wane Stoskopf is another Kansas farm boy who is taking Ryan's position, and Emily Haug.

Also, my communications director, Sarah Little—dear Sarah is never short of work when it comes to cleaning up what I have said and should not have said.

My State agriculture representative is Mel Thompson. I used to work with Mel. He was a legislative assistant and I was administrative assistant with Keith Sebelius. We went through two farm bills. There is no better person to have eyes and ears on the ground than Mel Thompson.

Then, there are Joel and Mike, the ''two musketeers,'' who saw me every morning, every afternoon, and every evening. I have a tendency to wander, to reflect on past farm bill stories, and to occasionally give ranks. These are not particularly helpful in regard to moving legislation forward, and so Joel and Mike would say: Sir—at least they said ''sir''—Sir, keep your eye on the ball. Stay focused. Where there is a will, there is a way. If you rank, if you wander, you will be lost in the midst of the desert farm bill purgatory. Don't be lost in the desert farm bill purgatory. Stay focused.

I tried. I think we succeeded, for the most part.

The chairwoman also has a great staff. Everybody likes to brag on their staffs, and I know she will mention many of them. I especially thank her staff director, Chris Adamo, and chief counsel, Jonathan Coppess, for their outstanding work on this legislation. They have been professional throughout. I don't know what you guys are going to do now that we are not breaking into your office in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings to see your smiling faces—and then we wonder why you are not smiling. Thank you for a top job.

I also thank all those in Senate legislative counsel and the Congressional Budget Office who helped us get to this point today. They all worked behind the scenes, but we could not be here today without them.

I view my staff as family. I thank my family over here for their tremendous work in achieving what I think is a great farm bill and for doing something to restore the Senate back to the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, we have been looking forward to this day to be able to have the opportunity to celebrate a successful conclusion in the Senate. We have more work to do, but for 1 day we can pause and celebrate what is an important and great day after a tremendous amount of hard work that has gone on by our staffs, my ranking member, myself, along with our colleagues on the committee. We are so grateful for the wonderful effort that has gotten us to this point.

I have said this before and I will say it again: 16 million people count on us. They work in agriculture or food-related industries. That is a lot of people. I am not sure we have had a jobs bill that has come before the Senate that we can say addresses 16 million people's jobs, but certainly this is one. It affects every corner of every State.

I thank everyone in the Senate for their patience with us. I thank the majority leader for his incredible patience and leadership. I thank Senator MCCONNELL for working with us and I thank all those who voted on 73 amendments and everybody who was involved in putting those together and making sure we could move through this process.

Of course, I thank Senator ROBERTS again. Kansas is lucky to have him as a champion in the Senate. I have been very lucky to have him at my side throughout this debate and work, starting in the fall with our deficit reduction proposal up until today. We have come together on a bipartisan basis. I hope we can do that more. I have heard so many comments from colleagues in the last few days, saying it feels good to work through issues, debating issues, having votes, working together, and actually accomplishing something. It feels good and we need to continue to do more of it. Frankly, the American people want us to do more of it. So I am hopeful this will be a sign, as other things have been, frankly, in the Senate moving forward.

I am proud we have been the ones doing a bipartisan transportation bill and the ones passing other bipartisan bills. This is a significant milestone in that process of working together.

I am also very proud of the reforms in the bill we have done on a bipartisan basis. This is $23 billion in spending cuts for deficit reduction. It is true that if every committee within their jurisdiction were to focus on analyzing and reviewing the programs under their jurisdiction and making tough

decisions, ending paperwork duplication, and so on, actually it would end up to be a pretty big deficit reduction plan—if we all did it in those areas we control. That is the way we looked at the process.

We have come up with $23 billion in deficit reduction. We have done that by ending four different subsidies that folks have talked about changing for a long time—direct payments and other subsidies that are paid out regardless of losses. We passed a bill that continues support for healthy local food systems, farmers markets, and local food hubs.

We have passed a bill that strengthens conservation and continues protections that maintain healthy soil, clean water, and fresh air.

We passed a bill that supports America's rural communities. Every State has small rural communities, towns, villages, and counties that are counting on us to continue to have their economic development tools—which is the rural development title of the farm bill—as robust as possible. American energy independence is addressed in this bill. We passed the bill in a bipartisan way. This is an incredibly important step.

Now our bill goes to the House of Representatives. I have great confidence in the chairman and ranking member of the committee. I know they will be successful in moving a bill out of committee, and I am sure they are going to do everything humanly possible to pass it in the House. I believe, ultimately, they will because every American is counting on them in order to maintain food security for our country and the ability for us to have a strong, successful, safe food supply, as well as all the jobs connected to that.

I wish to thank my extraordinary staff. They worked from sunrise to sunset and then another few hours. I think we added hours—I think we changed from 24 hours to 30 a couple of times. It has been an incredible experience, and I am very grateful, truly, to all of them.

No team does it without a great captain. I thank Chris Adamo, who was with me on the last farm bill and is now our staff director. He has provided incredible leadership. He has deep knowledge of agriculture, and he brings a tremendous leadership to this process. He put together a tremendous team. I would not be here, and we would not be here in the Senate without his leadership and hard work and the team effort involved.

I also thank Jonathan Coppess, my great chief counsel, who actually helped bring a baby into the world last August, as we were saying, ''Why don't we do deficit reduction.'' When the supercommittee was put into place, he was helping bring a new baby into the world. So we thank Jonathan for his leadership. I have to say this as a point of personal privilege: Even though he is from Ohio, we still welcomed him into the fold—despite the rivalry between Michigan and Ohio.

I thank all our teams as well. I thank our commodities and dairy teams. It is tough work. We changed the commodity title. I think this is the most reform, probably—I don't know ever but in a long time. Moving from subsidy systems to a risk management system is easy to say, but it is hard to put into place in a way that makes sense. It is fair with commodities and will work in a simple way across the country.

I thank our Joe Shultz, who has been amazing. So many times we said: I don't know how we are going to do this, and he pulled another rabbit out of his hat. We thank Joe for all his wonderful work as our chief economist.

Cory Claussen is on dairy. It is not an easy thing to do—focus on dairy. There are large farms and small dairies. It is an incredible job.

Marcus Graham, as well, did amazing work, as did Chelsea Render. There was great teamwork on commodities and the dairy issues. Thank you so very much.

We had a great team on title II. Thanks to the ''T2 warriors'', Tina May, an amazing person, who reminded me every other day that we had 643 conservation groups from every one of the 50 States. I have it in my memory because Tina said it every time I saw her. The truth is we did have 643 different conservation and environmental groups supporting this bill. It is because of Tina May, Catie Lee and Kevin Norton and the incredible work they brought to what I believe is an extraordinary reform in conservation. We are placing conservation as a priority in a way that has not been in other farm bills. We will see our country provide better opportunities around land and water and air quality and quantity issues as a result of their hard work.

Jacqlyn Schneider and Jesseca Taylor deserve a tremendous amount of credit for their work on the nutrition and healthy food issues. A major area of debate that will be going forward, as we address nutrition and healthy foods issues, is specialty crops, which are so important to me. I know in New Hampshire and other parts of the country it is very important. They did incredible work. We had some hard issues to work through on how we could create savings in our bill in nutrition, while maintaining the strong commitment to families. So I would like to thank them for an extraordinary effort as well.

And then each of our team members—let me go through them because there are so many people who did so many wonderful things.

Jonathan Cordone, who kept me out of trouble at most moments, in his work as general counsel, counseled me well and gave me wonderful words of wisdom as we moved along, both on procedure as well as policy.

Brandon McBride on rural development—we worked through many issues on the floor with Members, many issues that Members who were not on the committee had and wanted to work on and develop further, and Brandon's patience and creativity and hard work really created a rural development title that is extraordinary.

One of the things we worked on, which may sound easy but was not easy at all, was the differing definitions of what rural is. The Secretary of Agriculture told me one time we had 11 different definitions of what rural was. He said: You know, you ought to fix that.

We heard from part-time mayors and village presidents and county commissioners and others who said: We would like to figure this out, how we might use these programs to support our communities, but we don't know whether we fit or under which definition we fit.

Well, we have one definition now, and that may sound simple, but, no, it was very hard. And Brandon deserves a tremendous amount of credit, along with our team, for getting us to that point.

Karla Thieman, who is not here at the moment, did a tremendous job on livestock, livestock disaster assistance, and efforts on the energy title. We thank her and wish she were able to be here to actually celebrate. I don't think she is, is she? No, she is not here, but we thank her so much.

Ben Becker made sure that we were communicating effectively with those in the media, that we were communicating what we were doing. He worked extremely hard to make sure that was happening.

Russ Behnam. We thank Russ so much for all his incredible work as we moved through these amendments and moved through this process. He was absolutely invaluable in his work as well.

We thank Hanna Abou-El-Seoud, who was a terrific part of our team, and Maureen James, Alexis Stanczuk, Ryan Hocker, and Jesse Williams, our chief clerk, Nicole Hertenstein, Jacob Chaney, Seth Buchsbaum, and Alvaro Zarco. They are a terrific team, each one of them playing a very important role in getting us to this point and helping me have the information I needed, making sure things were getting done and the team was able to come together.

We had two great fellows, Lauren Reid and Matt Eldred, whom we thank as well. Also, we thank all of the great interns we have had with us since we began this process: Ryan Smoes, Jasmine Macies, Dawn Lucas, and Seth Collins.

This really is a team effort, with an extraordinary breadth of jurisdiction under this bill that created the need to really make sure we had the smartest people in the room, and I really believe we achieved that with this great team.

Also, I couldn't have gotten it done without my great chief of staff, Amanda Renteria, and the great role she played with Chris Adamo putting together our great agriculture team, and Todd Wooten, legislative director, who was on the phone counting votes every moment right up until the final vote. He did such a great job in bringing that together.

Bill Sweeney, my deputy chief of staff, made sure we were communicating in the right way, being able to tell the story of what it means to have a farm bill, what it means to people back home, to every family, every business, and every farmer. He did an extraordinary job of helping me do that.

Cullen Schwarz, who is a terrific communications director, made sure we were communicating effectively what we were doing and why we were doing it.

I also wish to thank our team in Michigan, led by Teresa Plachetka, a wonderful team that made sure we were focused, as I always am, on Michigan. Our great team consists of Mary Judnich, Kali Fox, and Brandon Fewins, who have done terrific work and outreach around the State, and Korey Hall in urban agriculture. All of our team made sure we were communicating at home with our growers.

We are proud to say we have more diversity of crops than any State but California, so I have always had to pay attention to every page. I have always kind of been jealous of folks who had to only pay attention to one title. We have had to pay attention to everything. The good news is that prepared me well for assuming the chair of the committee. But I do want to thank our Michigan staff because they are terrific as well.

This really is a bipartisan effort. It really, really is. And I have such respect and admiration for the staff of Senator ROBERTS on the committee, led by Mike Seyfert, Joel Leftwich, and Anne Hazlett. I thank them all so much for their terrific work and partnership. Everyone involved whom Senator ROBERTS spoke of is professional, smart, and dedicated. We had some tough things we had to work through, both policy-wise and procedurally, and they were terrific, just absolutely magnificent, and I am very grateful for the wonderful way in which we really have a team. It is not a Democratic team or a Republican team—we have a team.

I also wish to briefly mention our CBO farm team, whom we kept up late at night many times as we tried to get scores and work through how we fit this all together and maintain over $23 billion in deficit reduction. So Doug Elmendorf and his terrific team—Jim Langley, Greg Hitz, Dave Hull, Kathleen FitzGerald, Emily Holcombe, Ann Futrell, Dan Hoople, and Jeff LaFave—we call them the farm team—have been magnificent and worked weekends, have gone above and beyond for us, and I thank them, with a shout-out to everybody at CBO who has helped us.

I thank Michelle Johnson-Wieder and Gary Endicott from Legislative Counsel for their invaluable assistance. And on Senator REID's staff, I thank Kasey Gillette and Nathan Engle. I claim Kasey as my former staff person, so I told Senator REID that I trained her well. But we are very grateful for the incredible team effort there.

All our floor staff, Gary Myrick, Tim Mitchell, David Krone, Bill Dauster, Reema Dodin, Stacy Rich, Meredith Mellody, and everyone involved on the majority team who was so absolutely essential to us, putting in very long days and getting this done—everybody hung in there with us, and we are grateful.

Finally, let me mention the Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, and the USDA Office of General Counsel. We had a lot of technical needs as we worked through this bill, a tremendous need for technical assistance and support, so that when we were done, as we completed the bill, it actually worked for farmers and ranchers, it worked from a Department standpoint to support farmers and ranchers and those involved in every part of this bill, and we received tremendous help and encouragement and support. So I thank them for their leadership.

To all the members of the Agriculture Committee, Democrats and Republicans, and their staffs, I wish to say how very lucky I am to have such a tremendous team who is so knowledgeable and has so much experience and a committee that has so much experience. It has been quite amazing.

So as I conclude, Madam President, I would just say this is a proud day for those who care about having the Senate work together well, for producing a product that is one that has real reforms in it and something that we can look to the American people with pride and say: We worked hard, we worked together, and we got the job done.

I thank everyone, and now we look forward to working with our House colleagues as they move this measure forward.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. SHAHEEN). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded and that I be allowed to speak as if in morning business.

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

TAXMAGEDDON

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I rise to express my growing concern as massive tax increases loom on the horizon, and yet the Senate has not taken a single vote to forestall what many are appropriately calling taxmageddon.

Washington tends to be a place where people speak in hyperbole, but it is hard to overstate the magnitude of the tax increases that will hit our economy starting next year if we do not act. If Congress does not vote to extend the current income-tax rates, the lower tax rates on investment income, relief from the alternative minimum tax, relief from the Federal estate tax, and other expiring tax relief measures, the result will be a tax increase of more than $470 billion on Americans in 2013 alone.

Over the next 10 years this tax increase will result in nearly $4.5 trillion in new taxes on American families and entrepreneurs. This will be the largest tax increase in our Nation's history in absolute dollars and the second largest tax increase since World War II as a percentage of our economy. This massive tax increase does not even take into account the new taxes enacted as part of ObamaCare that will also go into effect in 2013 and that will impose an additional $23 billion in higher taxes on individuals and businesses.

What will these taxes mean to the average American family? The Heritage Foundation recently published a study that estimated the increase per tax return in every State. In my State of South Dakota, Heritage estimates that the average tax increase per tax return will be $3,187 in 2013.

I would say this to my Democratic friends who generally believe in demand-driven Keynesian economics: The average family in South Dakota can do more to stimulate our economy and create new employment by keeping their $3,187 and spending it as they see fit, not as Washington sees fit to spend it on their behalf.

Taxmageddon is an apt description when we consider the impact of these tax increases not just on individual families but on our entire economy. Until recently we could speculate about the impact of these tax increases on our fragile economy, but the magnitude of the damage was not in dispute. Not anymore.

Last month, the Congressional Budget Office gave us the most definitive estimate yet of the impact of the nearly $½ trillion of tax increases in 2013 when combined with the more than $100 billion of spending cuts from the sequester.

The Congressional Budget Office projects that the combination of massive tax increases and the sequester will result in real GDP growth in calendar year 2013 of only one-half of 1 percent. The picture is even bleaker when we consider that the Congressional Budget Office also projects that the economy will actually contract by 1.3 percent in the first half of 2013. According to the CBO, such a contraction and output in the first half of 2013 would ''probably be judged to be a recession.''

So let's be clear about what ''taxmageddon'' means. We are not talking about a slight slowdown in growth of a few tenths of a percent. What we are facing is the difference between positive growth on one hand—which will mean more jobs and higher incomes—and a recession on the other hand.

How big is the difference in economic growth next year if we act to forestall the pending tax increases versus not doing anything about it? According to the Congressional Budget Office, if Congress acted to remove the tax increases and budget cuts, the growth of real GDP in 2013 would be in the range of 4.4 percent.

This sort of robust growth is a far cry from the lackluster economic performance that we have experienced of late. In fact, GDP growth for the first quarter of this year was recently revised downward to just 1.9 percent. This is hardly the magnitude of economic growth necessary to sustain a meaningful recovery that will finally bring the unemployment rate below 8 percent—something the current meager recovery has failed to accomplish.

We can, and must, do better. We can start by providing Americans some certainty as to what their taxes are going to be come next year. Fortunately, we learned recently that the House of Representatives intends to hold a vote on legislation to extend the existing tax rate next month. According to statements by House Speaker BOEHNER and Majority Leader CANTOR, the House is likely to consider a short-term—perhaps for 1 year—extension of existing tax rates as a bridge to fundamental tax reform next year.

Some may question why we need to vote on an extension of the tax rates now because they assume these tax issues can simply be dealt with as a part of the postelection lameduck session. The answer is that we need a vote now because the delay in extending current tax policy is having a very real impact on our economy today.

In fact, the Congressional Budget Office again estimates that the mere possibility of pending tax increases and spending cuts will lower U.S. GDP by one-half of 1 percent in the second half of this year—not next year, this year. The reason for this is simple. Americans, whether they be investors, small business owners, or simply consumers, understand that they may have a larger tax bill come next year, meaning they will have less aftertax income. Faced with that possibility, we should not be surprised if Americans are choosing to consume less or put off business investments until they know what their tax situation is going to be.

Just this week there was a Bloomberg article entitled ''Fiscal Cliff Concerns Hurting Economy As Companies Hold Back.'' The article quoted a senior economist at Bank of America who said, ''You don't board up the windows when the hurricane is there. You board up the windows in anticipation.'' This economist predicted U.S. growth decelerating to 1.3 percent in the third quarter of this year and 1 percent in the fourth quarter.

The moral of the story is clear. The sooner we act to extend the current tax rates, the better off our economy will be and the better off will be the 12.7 million Americans who are currently unemployed. The sooner we act, the better off will be the 5.4 million Americans who have been unemployed long term or the 46.2 million Americans living in poverty or the record 46 million Americans who receive food stamps.

I agree with President Obama when he said in August of 2009, ''You don't raise taxes in a recession.'' End quote of President Obama in August of 2009.

If you should not raise taxes in a recession, it stands to reason you also should not raise taxes that will cause a recession. I also agree with a number of my Democratic colleagues quoted earlier this week in an article about these pending tax increases. I agree with Senator JIM WEBB, who is quoted as saying, ''We shouldn't raise taxes on ordinary income.'' I agree with Senator BEN NELSON, ''My druthers is to extend the tax cuts for everybody.''

I agree with former Senator Pete Domenici and former OMB Director Alice Rivlin, who appeared before the Finance Committee earlier this week, and who both agreed we need a short-term extension of current tax law in order to get us to a place where we can consider fundamental reforms to our Tax Code and our entitlement programs.

Even former President Bill Clinton, a major surrogate for the Obama campaign, admitted the obvious when he said recently that a short-term extension of the tax cuts might be necessary.

Former President Clinton and other Democratic Members whom I mentioned have not suddenly become supply-side tax cutters. But they realize it is simply common sense that with the economy slowing, the last thing the Congress should do is slam on the brakes by allowing massive tax increases.

We were reminded earlier this week just how destructive the proposed income tax rate increases would be on the sector of our economy responsible for the bulk of new job creation, and that is our small businesses. According to an analysis by the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation released on June 18, the tax increases that President Obama has proposed would hit more than half—53 percent, to be precise—of all flowthrough business income. The Joint Tax Committee estimates that 40,000 business owners would find themselves subject to higher tax rates next year.

Does anyone think, with unemployment above 8 percent for 41 straight months, that higher taxes on nearly a million business owners is the right policy? Yet that is exactly where we are headed if we do not act.

Of course, extending current tax law temporarily is only a short-term fix. What is needed is comprehensive tax reform, much like the Tax Reform Act of 1986. Real tax reform will drive economic growth higher, will lead to robust job creation, and result in more revenue to the Federal Government. But real tax reform will require Presidential leadership, something that has been unfortunately lacking over the past 3½ years. Perhaps next year we will have a President truly willing to commit to tax reform, a President who is not content with simply releasing a 23-page framework for corporate tax reform. But until we get to comprehensive tax reform, the least we can do now is ensure that Americans do not face a massive new tax hike.

In conclusion, we are facing a moment of truth. We can choose to put our heads in the sand and pretend as though Taxmaggedon is not real, we can choose to accept slower economic growth for the remainder of this year and a recession in the first half of next year or we can choose to take action in a way that says, loudly and clearly to all Americans, now is not the time for a massive new tax increase.

I am hopeful we will see a bill from the House of Representatives in the coming weeks to extend the tax rates in order to avert Taxmaggedon. If the Senate majority is serious in its rhetoric of getting our economy back on track, they will allow a straight up-or-down vote on this measure. Fundamental tax reform may need to wait until the next Congress, but we can and we should act immediately to forestall the looming tax increases that we know will throw this economy back into a recession. It is not a Republican or a Democratic thing to do, it is simply common sense. I am hopeful the Democratic majority will allow for debate and vote on an extension of the current tax rates sooner rather than later. Every day we wait is another day our economy suffers unnecessarily.

I do not have to tell anybody here, if you look at all the economic data that comes in month after month, we have the weakest economic recovery in 60 years. We have 23 million unemployed or underemployed Americans. We have, as I said, 41 consecutive months now of unemployment over 8 percent, and we have anemic, sluggish growth projections next year by the Congressional Budget Office if in fact we do not take the steps necessary to avert Taxmaggedon.

I hope the House of Representatives will vote. I hope the U.S. Senate will follow suit. I hope the President of the United States will join us in recognizing that we cannot afford to allow taxes to go up—the largest tax increase in American history—on January 1 of next year.

We cannot wait until a lameduck session to address it, because every single day we do, Americans, investors, small businesses are putting off decisions about hiring, about putting their capital to work and growing this economy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

DEBT AND TAXES

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, next week I will probably speak more about this. But looking at tax policy and debt and whatnot—I urge Senators to look at the article written by Walter Pincus in today's Washington Post. The two wars we have been in, Iraq and Afghanistan—the two longest wars in America's history—are noted not just for their length but for the fact that it is the only time America has gone to war where we have not had a special tax to pay for the war. In fact, it is the only time America has gone to war where we not only have not had a tax to pay

for the war but we have ended up with a tax cut, and we ended up trillions of dollars in debt as a result.

I hope we will come to the time that we will say—especially with wars of choice, these were not cases where we were attacked that there was a totally unnecessary war in Iraq—totally unnecessary. We went to war in Iraq and said we will put it on our credit card.

Of course, there were no weapons of mass destruction. Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11. A bad guy was running it, but there are a lot of countries we support with bad guys running them. There are $1 trillion and thousands of American lives—tens of thousands of coalition and Iraqi lives—gone, and our children are going to have a $1 trillion bill to pay for it and we got absolutely nothing out of it.

We went in Afghanistan to get Osama bin Laden. We got him. We have been stuck there for years—another $1 trillion to beef up a corrupt government, and our children and grandchildren will be given the bill. Then we talk about what else can we do that we will not pay for? We should think about it. Let me speak now about a more positive thing.

AGRICULTURE REFORM

Earlier today, the Senate passed legislation to address one of the most significant legislative issues on our agenda this year—making needed reforms to our Nation's agriculture and food systems.

I have been both chairman and ranking member of the Agriculture Committee and I think I can say, probably as well as anybody here, how much thanks the U.S. Senate and the country owe to Chairwoman STABENOW and Ranking Member ROBERTS, who did what Senators are supposed to do. They worked together in a bipartisan way to advance the farm bill, the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012.

A lot of what people criticize about the Congress today would disappear if everyone acted the way Senator DEBBIE STABENOW of Michigan did, and Senator PAT ROBERTS of Kansas did, working across party lines, across ideologies, to try to put together a farm bill that is not a Democratic or Republican farm bill, but a farm bill for the United States of America. I am so proud of them.

I mentioned earlier today to Chairwoman STABENOW, I don't know how many times she called me weekends when I was at my home in Vermont, or sent me e-mails late in the evening, because she was trying to keep this coalition going.

The work of these leaders and the passage of this bill proves that the Senate can act in accordance with its greatest traditions and we can reach across the aisle to pass critical legislation that reflects compromise. As a former Chairman of the Agriculture Committee, and having worked closely with Senator LUGAR on many bipartisan Farm Bills, I know how difficult the task can be of forging a comprehensive bill that addresses the many competing needs. I said earlier that Senator RICHARD LUGAR and I traded places back and forth, as either chairman or ranking member on that committee. We passed bipartisan farm bills. We worked closely together, with complete candor and honestness with each other, as one would expect from Senator LUGAR. We forged these comprehensive bills.

The Senate's action today could not have been accomplished without the hard work of many dedicated, wonderful staffers, mine and others, both here in Washington and back home in Vermont. Being such a large and far reaching bill there were many staff involved throughout its development and final passage. I would like to thank in particular Adrienne Wojciechowski, Michelle Lacko, Aaron Kaigle, Kathryn Toomajian, Kara Leene, Tom Berry, Chris Saunders, Emma Van Susteren, Ted Brady, Lauren Bracket, Nikole Manatt, Greg Cota, Will Goodman, Erica Chabot, and John Dowd from my staff.

I would also like to thank both the Chairwoman and Ranking Member's staff on the Senate Agriculture Committee who worked so closely with my office on many different issues and programs including the dairy reforms, conservation consolidation, nutrition, rural development, forestry, food aid, research, organics, energy, and the wonderful improvements we made to the Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program.

It is not easy to get what we have here, a strong bipartisan bill. So I rise to say I hope the House of Representatives will act swiftly to consider legislation that is going to allow us to move to conference. Because just as it was important to the U.S. Senate to get together and pass this bill by an overwhelming majority, the swift passage of this farm bill is essential. The current Farm Bill expires at the end of September. Before August 31, we must address the serious problem of dairy policy or our dairy farmers will be left without a vital safety net.

Dairy is a crucial industry in Vermont. I hear often from dairy farmers who are worried about the dangerous rollercoaster of price swings that impacts both producers and consumers. This is a roller coaster we have been on in dairy pricing in Vermont since January of 2000. How can any farmer stay in business if this is the way their prices go? How can they plan to buy new equipment? How can they plan to send their children to school? How can they plan to modernize their farm if they never know what day the price will be up, what day prices will be down?

I hear too often from dairy farmers who meet with me or talk to me when I am at the grocery store in Vermont, or just walking down the street. They tell me they are worried about the dangerous roller coaster of prices. These swings impact both consumers and the producers.

For our farmers in Vermont, the dairy reforms included in the 2012 farm bill will bring some relief. We simply must free our dairy farmers from this destructive cycle of volatile price changes.

The current Federal safety net provides no protection for dairy farmers from this roller coaster of price volatility.

The 2009 dairy crisis brought plummeting milk prices and sky-high feed costs that combined to devastate dairy farmers in ways that many were unable to recover from. Many had to close down. Let's stop the roller coaster. Let's give stability to the hard-working men and women who are dairy farmers. Dairy farmers have come together to identify ways to move us away from the regional dairy fights and the constant policy conflicts between small and large farms. The results are the changes included in the 2012 Farm Bill, which will help farmers and consumers move away from these volatile price swings. Now we will have some protection.

The 2012 Farm Bill scraps outdated price supports and the Milk Income Loss Contract Program. It establishes a new risk management plan that protects farm income when margins shrink dangerously, and a stabilization program to allow farmers to take a proactive role in easing the instability in our dairy markets. And it accomplishes this at a lower cost than the current program that it replaces while contributing to the savings to this bill. It is a voluntary program, and can be tailored by the farmer to fit their individual needs.

Dairy is Vermont's largest agricultural commodity. Dairy products account for upward of 83 percent—or 90 percent depending on market prices—of Vermont's agricultural products sales. I am proud the dairy farmers of Vermont have had a voice in developing this farm bill, and enacting it is going to bring long-needed relief to the industry.

I hope that the House can now come together in a bipartisan way, just as we did in the Senate, to quickly pass a bipartisan Farm Bill. Republicans and Democrats alike came together in this body, so surely it can be done. We know the impact of this legislation goes well beyond our farms and forests to our economy, our families, and our kitchen tables.

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO GOVERNOR GASTON CAPERTON

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate former West Virginia Gov. Gaston Caperton on 30 years of outstanding leadership as the president of the College Board.

It is my privilege to honor Governor Caperton, a native of Charleston, WV, for his leadership in the field of education. Governor Caperton's own childhood experience instilled in him the importance of education at a very young age. As a child who struggled with dyslexia, he was able to overcome the hurdles he faced in the classroom and truly achieve educational excellence. He earned his bachelor's degree in business from the University of North Carolina and has taught at prestigious institutions, including Harvard and Columbia University. He also holds 10 honorary doctoral degrees.

Governor Caperton returned to the great State of West Virginia and served as Governor from 1989 to 1997. During his two terms in office, Governor Caperton made education a top priority and improved the lives of thousands of West Virginia students. He supported an $800 million school renovation program that directly benefited two-thirds of West Virginia's public school students, facilitating classroom upgrades and additional renovations in all of our schools. Governor Caperton has been recognized nationally for working to upgrade our State's classroom technology to keep West Virginia students competitive in an increasingly global economy. In addition, he helped raise teacher salaries from 49th place to 31st place in the Nation.

Governor Caperton's leadership in education left a lasting legacy in our State, and I am so proud of the work he did for West Virginia schools and all of our students.

In 1999 Gaston Caperton was appointed the eighth president of the College Board. Over the past 13 years Governor Caperton has done such important work to make higher education available to a greater number of students, especially those from underserved areas, and that is truly something of which to be proud. No matter their background, we need to do all we can to help our students achieve a higher level of education if we are going to create the jobs and train the workforce that makes America the greatest Nation in the world.

Since 1999 the College Board has reached a total of 23,000 high schools and 3,800 colleges and has served 7 million students and parents. The organization continues to provide college preparatory materials and has dramatically changed college entrance exams. In addition, the College Board has enabled students' enrollment in advanced placement courses, and Governor Caperton is responsible for more than tripling the number of students from low-income backgrounds taking AP courses.

Governor Caperton has continued to be a champion for students as he supports financial aid policies and programs, while advocating for tuition equity. From his tenure as Governor, to his work at Harvard and Columbia Universities, to his 13 years of leadership at the College Board, providing equal opportunities in the classroom has been the driving force behind Gaston Caperton's career. I am proud to honor this outstanding West Virginian and recognize his achievements in the field of education. I am also extremely proud to call him my friend, as do most all West Virginians.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

Mr. President, I also rise today to express my deep concern and my disappointment that the special interest groups who have a vested financial interest have derailed a strong effort to fight prescription drug abuse. It is an epidemic that is devastating communities all across this Nation. They got their victory—but not at my expense. The people who will pay the price are the young boys and girls in communities all across this Nation who are seeing their families and their schools and their neighborhoods wrecked by abuse and addiction.

What my amendment would do is simply this: It would require patients to get a new prescription to get their pills refilled. What we have right now in trying to schedule hydrocodone from a schedule III to a schedule II is the ease of availability and the prescriptions that are being refilled without any visits to their doctors. It is of an epidemic proportion. The pills would have to be stored and transported more securely, and traffickers would be subject to increased fines and penalties.

I am not trying to put anyone out of business. In fighting for this amendment, I asked anyone and everyone who was opposed to come to see me, and if we could find a way to work together, we would do that. We tried to accommodate the groups who were worried about additional administrative costs, such as new security requirements for storing hydrocodone, or additional paperwork that would come as a result of rescheduling. But at the end of the day these groups seemed more concerned with their business plans and the ability to sell more pills than the responsibility we all have to protect the future of this country and the future of the generation we are counting on to lead and defend this country.

Since the moment the Senate adopted my hydrocodone rescheduling amendment, lobbyists have been turning out in droves to fight this effort to limit people's ability to get pills too easily and abuse them. Yesterday these lobbyists got a victory when the House of Representatives passed a compromise version of the FDA bill that does not contain my amendment, and I assume the Senate will do the same.

Just a few weeks ago it was a different story. I was so proud when the Senate unanimously adopted this amendment because this is a problem that affects every single Member in every single State. I don't know of a person in this country who doesn't have somebody in their immediate family, extended family, or a close friend who has not been affected by the abuse of prescription drugs. Where I come from, that is an epidemic. It is an epidemic we all have and we all are facing. In fact, prescription drug abuse is responsible for about 75 percent of drug-related deaths in the United States and 90 percent in my State of West Virginia. According to the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, prescription drug abuse is the fastest growing drug problem in the United States, and it is claiming the lives of thousands of Americans every day.

I understand that limiting access to hydrocodone pills doesn't necessarily fit into the model of selling more product, but I also understand this: We have a responsibility to this Nation and, most importantly, to the next generation to win the war on drugs.

I have been a businessperson all of my life. I understand that in business one has to have a good business plan to be successful. One should also have the ability to alter that plan when necessary, while still being successful. I assure my colleagues that this is one of those necessary times. The health of our country and the public good are at stake.

I am hearing on a daily basis from people and businesses—small, medium-sized, and large—that are having a hard time finding qualified workers—qualified workers who can pass a drug test.

We have folks who cannot get the type of education they need to be part of the workforce of the 21st century because they are drug impaired.

I have been in Washington a short time compared to some of my colleagues, but I have been here long enough to know the pressures Members face around here when special interest groups get entrenched—it is no different in the Presiding Officer's beautiful State of Delaware and my State of West Virginia—and it does not look like my amendment will go into this bill. But I can assure you, it will not go away and neither will the problem of drug abuse. I am determined to see this thing through. This measure will pass. It might not be this year, it might not be next year, but I assure you it will pass.

Until we do something, there are going to be families who are separated and torn apart because of drug abuse and little kids who come to me and the Chair and plead for help because their daddy is addicted or their mother is hooked on drugs or they have had a brother or a sister or a friend who has overdosed or died.

I do not pretend this amendment will solve the entire problem of prescription drug abuse. But when every law enforcement agency—listen, every law enforcement agency in America, every

one of them to a T, which we rely on to fight the war on drugs—has supported this amendment openly and spoken out loudly and clearly that it would help them tremendously, I do not know how we can ignore this problem much longer.

The fact is we must act. I can assure you that working together, as we do, we will find a way to move forward with this vital piece of legislation.

I promise the Presiding Officer this: I will continue to fight this war on drugs with him, and I urge all my colleagues to do the same. This is a war we cannot afford to lose.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. I thank the Chair.

A SECOND OPINION

Mr. President, I come to the floor to do what I have done week after week since the health care bill was signed into law by President Obama, to offer a doctor's second opinion about the health care law, a law that I believe is bad for patients, bad for providers—the nurses and the doctors who take care of those patients—and I believe it is terrible for the American taxpayers.

I come to the floor because the Supreme Court is soon going to rule on the constitutionality of the President's health care law.

The Court's decision will revolve around, primarily, the individual mandate, the component of the law requiring all individuals to purchase not just health insurance but government-approved health insurance.

Never in the history of this country has the Federal Government required individuals to purchase a product, to come into our homes and tell us we must buy a government-approved product. Why? Simply because we happen to be a citizen of the United States.

The American people are not happy with this mandate. As a matter of fact, a recent Gallup poll found that 72 percent of Americans believe the mandate is unconstitutional. The results of the Gallup poll, however, are not surprising.

As I travel across Wyoming, I hear constantly from people who are opposed to the mandate.

It is not just the mandate they are opposed to. But, specifically, the mandate is what brings people all across the country together to be opposed to the law.

It is interesting when I go and have meetings and talk to folks. I will ask them: Under the President's health care law—remember, the one where he promised insurance rates would drop by $2,500 per family—how many of you actually believe your own insurance rates will go up, and every hand goes up.

Then, when I ask: How many of you think the quality and availability of care for you and your family is going to go down, again, the hands go up.

It is not just the mandate; it is the entire health care law that is a problem for patients and providers and the taxpayers.

But the mandate is interesting. I bring this to the attention of the Senate because President Obama, at one point, was opposed to the mandate. When he was running for President, during his campaign for the White House, then the Senator from Illinois, Mr. Obama, quipped: ''If a mandate was the solution, we can try to solve homelessness by mandating everybody to buy a house.''

Now the President's tune has obviously changed.

I believe the mandate is unconstitutional. I believe if the Court strikes down the mandate, the rest of the law should also be found unconstitutional.

During the health care debate 2 years ago, supporters of the law repeatedly stated—repeatedly stated—that the mandate was an essential component of the law. So let's review what folks have said.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius and Attorney General Eric Holder, in an op-ed in the Washington Post, wrote: ''Without an individual responsibility provision''—is what they called the individual mandate—the law ''doesn't work.''

The law ''doesn't work.''

Former Speaker NANCY PELOSI also came to this same conclusion. In two separate blog posts, she stated that without the individual mandate, the math, she said, behind the health care law does not work.

The current chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator BAUCUS, also came to this same conclusion during the debate on the health care law.

During a committee hearing, Chairman BAUCUS stated that allowing individuals to opt out of the individual mandate would ''strike at the heart of health care reform.''

Finally, Senate Democrats in their amicus curiae brief filed with the Supreme Court argued that the individual mandate is an ''integral part'' of the health care law.

It seems to me that supporters of the law from the very beginning of this debate recognized that without the individual mandate, the rest of the health care law would need to go away.

Now it seems Washington Democrats are changing their tune and coming to a different conclusion.

In a story published by the Associated Press on June 18 of this year, it was reported that ''the Obama Administration plans to move ahead with major parts of the President's health care law if its most controversial provision''—obviously, the individual mandate—''does not survive.'' In fact, an anonymous, high-level Democratic official declared that the administration would move ''full speed ahead'' with implementation of the health care law.

It seems the administration only views the mandate as essential when it is politically convenient.

As I have stated many times before, I believe the entire health care law needs to be completely repealed and replaced. This law does not address runaway health care spending, it increases taxes, and it hurts job creation at a time of 8.2 percent unemployment across the country, at a time when college graduates are moving back home because they cannot find work, when people are underemployed, people have given up looking for work. Yet the health care law adds to the costs and adds to the uncertainty of these uncertain times and a weak economy.

The American people want a healthy economy, and this health care law is making it worse. If the law's individual mandate is struck down, the President should not implement whatever is left standing. Instead, he should work with Congress—both sides of the aisle—to implement commonsense, step-by-step reforms that will actually lower the cost of health care for all Americans.

It seems to be lost on many that the original goal of health care reform was actually to lower the cost of care. It is what the President talked about in his initial speech to the joint session of Congress. But it is something that was ignored when the 2,700-page health care law was presented to Congress and the American people.

Americans know what they want. They know what they have been looking for in a health care law, and this is not it. Americans deserve a law that helps them get the care they need, from the doctor they choose—not that the government chooses, not that the insurance company chooses: the doctor they choose—and at lower cost.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION SAFETY AND INNOVATION ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask the Chair to lay before the Senate a message from the House with respect to S. 3187.

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

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 3187) entitled ''An Act to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to revise and extend the user-fee programs for prescription drugs and medical devices, to establish user-fee programs for generic drugs and biosimilars, and for other purposes.,'' do pass with an amendment.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to concur in the House amendment to S. 3187, and ask for the yeas and nays on my motion.