outgoing, who cared deeply for his family. Army PVT Brent Currier, Eric's brother, describes him as the hero of his seven siblings.

Eric enlisted in the Marine Corps in March 2009 with a desire to serve an important cause and make his family proud. He most certainly accomplished those goals. Private First Class Currier selflessly joined the men and women of our armed services who give of themselves each day so that we, as a nation, might enjoy freedom and security. He has earned our country's enduring gratitude and recognition. While Eric's life may have ended too soon, his legacy lives on through the people who loved him and through all of us, who are forever indebted to him.

No words of mine can diminish the pain of losing such a young soldier, but I hope Eric's family can find solace in knowing that all Americans share a deep appreciation of his service. Daniel Webster's words, first spoken during his eulogy for Presidents Adams and Jefferson in 1826, are fitting: ''Although no sculptured marble should rise to their memory, nor engraved stone bear record of their deeds, yet will their remembrance be as lasting as the land they honored.'' I ask my colleagues and all Americans to join me in honoring Eric's life, service and sacrifice.

Private First Class Currier is survived by his wife Kaila; his father Russell Currier; his mother Helen Boudreau and her husband Kevin; siblings Brent, Dylan, Kevin, Melana, Cassie, Jake and Alyssa; as well as grandparents, in-laws, and others. I offer my deepest sympathies to his entire family for their loss, and my sincere thanks for their loved one's service. This young marine will be dearly missed; his death while deployed far from home is another painful loss for our small State and for this Nation. It is my sad duty to enter the name of PFC Eric Currier in the RECORD of the U.S. Senate in recognition of his sacrifice for this country and his contribution to freedom and lasting peace.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, due to mechanical trouble that delayed my travel to the Senate on March 15, 2010, I regret I was unable to make the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 2847, the legislative vehicle of the HIRE Act. If present I would have voted aye.

TAIWAN SELF-DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, Taiwan is a steadfast ally in a very turbulent region of the world. On January 29, the State Department approved a $6.4 billion arms package to Taiwan that includes 114 Patriot missiles, 60 Black Hawk helicopters, Harpoon antiship training missiles, and Osprey-class minehunter ships.

I am pleased that the administration is taking this important step toward fulfilling the United States' commitment to Taiwan under the Taiwan Relations Act, TRA, which requires us to make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services ''as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.'' However, despite the billions of dollars worth of weapons involved in this sale, it represents little more than a half step in providing Taiwan the defensive arms that it needs—and that we are obligated by law to provide it—to protect itself against rapidly increasing air- and sea-based threats from China. What Taiwan has repeatedly requested—and what was not in the arms package—are new fighter aircraft.

Since 2006, the Taiwanese have made clear their desire to purchase 66 F–16 C/Ds to augment an air fleet that is bordering on obsolescence. On April 22, 2009, Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou reiterated Taiwan's commitment to request the F–16C/Ds from the Obama Administration. And, in a December 29, 2009, letter to Senate and House leaders, members of Taiwan's Parliament stated, ''Though economic and diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China's Communist Party are improving, we face a significant threat from the People's Liberation Army Air Force. Our military must be able to defend our airspace as a further deterioration in the air balance across the Strait will only encourage PRC aggression.''

On January 21, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, DIA, completed a report on the current condition of Taiwan's air force. This formal assessment was required under a provision that I authored in the fiscal year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, NDAA, which received bipartisan support. The report's findings are grim.

The unclassified version of the report concludes that, although Taiwan has an inventory of almost 400 combat aircraft, ''far fewer of these are operationally capable.'' It states that Taiwan's 60 U.S.-made F–5 fighters have already reached the end of their operational service, that its 126 locally produced Indigenous Defense Fighter aircraft lack ''the capability for sustained sorties,'' and that its 56 French-made Mirage 2000–5 fighter jets ''require frequent, expensive maintenance'' while lacking required spare parts. Furthermore, the report found that although some of Taiwan's 146 F–16 A/Bs may receive improvements to enhance avionics and combat effectiveness, the ''extent of the upgrades, and timing and quantity of aircraft is currently unknown.''

In the past, what has kept Taiwan free and allowed its democracy and free enterprise system to flourish has been a qualitative technological advantage in military hardware over Chinese forces. In simple terms, it would have been too costly for Beijing to contemplate an attack on Taiwan. This in and of itself created a stabilizing effect that promoted dialogue and negotiations. Yet due to the massive, nontransparent increase in China's defense spending, the past 10 years have seen a dramatic erosion in this cornerstone of Taiwan's defense strategy. A gauge of how quickly this tide has turned can be found in the Department of Defense's Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China. The 2002 version of this report concluded that Taiwan ''has enjoyed dominance of the airspace over the Taiwan Strait for many years.'' The DOD's 2009 Report now states this conclusion no longer holds true.

Taiwanese defense officials have also recognized this alarming trend, predicting that, in the coming decade, they will completely lose their qualitative edge. Beijing will have an advantage in both troops and arms. This imminent reality holds critical consequences for both our ally Taiwan and the United States. If China becomes emboldened, it might be tempted to try to take Taiwan through outright aggression or cow Taiwan into subservience through intimidation.

How would the U.S. react in the face of Chinese belligerence towards Taiwan? Would we deploy our ships and aircraft to ward off Chinese aggression? Would we decide to counter force with force? These are difficult and tough questions, and the soundest policy option is to ensure they never have to be answered. We know a Taiwan that is properly defended and equipped will raise the stakes for China, and that would serve as the best defense against belligerent acts.

Strategically, assisting Taiwan in maintaining a robust defense capability will help keep the Taiwan Strait stable. We should remember that, in 1996, Beijing rattled its Chinese saber and launched ballistic missiles off Taiwan's coast and initiated amphibious landing training exercises. This prompted President Clinton to dispatch two carrier battle groups as a show of strength. President Ma recently commented on the latest weapons sale by stating, ''The more confidence we have and the safer we feel, the more interactions we can have with mainland China. The new weapons will help us develop cross-strait ties and ensure Taiwan maintains a determined defense and effective deterrence.'' During the Reagan years, we knew this common-sense strategy as ''Peace Through Strength.''

The benefits of an F–16 sale to Taiwan are not limited to national security—this sale also stands to benefit the American economy during a difficult period. The F–16, one of the world's finest tactical aircraft, is proudly assembled in Fort Worth, TX. The overall production effort involves hundreds of suppliers and thousands of workers across the United States. The

sale of 66 aircraft to Taiwan would be worth approximately $4.9 billion and guarantee U.S. jobs for years to come. The ripple effects of this sale through our economy would be significant, especially for workers in states where the recession has hit hard. This sale will also be a shot in the arm to America's defense industrial base, where constructing and equipping the F–16 means high-paying jobs for Americans.

The Obama administration has indicated that it intends to further review Taiwan's request for F–16s. Yet, the time for a decision regarding this sale draws near, and this review cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely. Taiwan needs these F–16 C/D aircraft now. What's more, the F–16 production line is approaching its end, after having manufactured these world-class aircraft for decades and having equipped 25 nations with more than 4,000 aircraft. If hard orders are not received for Taiwan's F–16s this year, the U.S. production line will likely be forced to start shutting down. Once the line begins closing, personnel will be shifted to other programs, inventory orders will be cancelled, and machine tools will be decommissioned. When the F–16 line eventually goes ''cold,'' it is not realistic to expect that it would be restarted. At the same time, through economic and diplomatic threats, China has effectively cut off all other countries from selling arms to Taiwan.

In the months leading up to the administration's recent arms sales announcement, the administration took great pains to telegraph to Beijing their intention that the sale would provide only defensive arms to Taiwan. Nevertheless, China has responded to the sale by threatening U.S. companies, cancelling high-level meetings with U.S. officials, and launching verbal assaults against our country. Beijing's blustering is clearly intended to intimidate the United States and dissuade us from selling new F–16s to Taiwan. This is unacceptable. The United States must not allow Beijing to dictate the terms of any future U.S. arms sales or other support for Taiwan.

President Ma and Taiwan parliamentarians have been clear and direct in their request for these aircraft. It is my hope that they will redouble their efforts here in Congress, as well as with the administration, to make the case and demonstrate the urgent need for the sale of these F–16C/Ds. This is a telling moment for the Obama administration. Our allies are watching carefully, and so are our potential adversaries. Without question, the path of least resistance for the administration would be to not move forward with the sale of F–16s, under the guise of continued analysis of the proposal. Then, once the F–16 production line had shut down, the proposed sale would be a moot issue for the administration. However, that path would ultimately leave Taiwan—and U.S. interests in the region—dangerously exposed. The sale of these F–16s to Taiwan would send a powerful message that the U.S. will stand by our allies, both in the Taiwan Strait and in other parts of the world.

I urge the President to move forward expeditiously with the sale of F–16s to Taiwan. I hope he will do so, and I know that many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle share this sentiment.

RECONCILIATION

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I seek recognition today to address the subject of reconciliation.

I have previously spoken about gridlock in Congress and the negative impact it is having on our stature internationally. We are unable to confirm judicial and executive nominations which is paralyzing the work of the Senate and putting the government's ability to confront the Nation's challenges at risk. It slows the judicial process and leaves many posts empty, including those in defense and national security.

The most central issue at the moment, however, is health care reform. Health care reform passed both the House of Representatives and the Senate. In the Senate, it passed by a supermajority vote of 60–39. The only issue before us now is aligning the already-passed Senate version with the already-passed House version. Despite its passage by 60–39, Republicans are still trying to stop this bill by threatening to filibuster the amendments needed to bring it into a condition that will pass the House of Representatives.

These tactics, which amount to a minority of Senators halting a bill that has overwhelming support, can be overcome by the often used reconciliation process. The reconciliation process is an optional procedure that operates as an adjunct to the budget resolution process established by the Congressional Budget Act of 1974. The reconciliation process has been used by nearly every Congress since its enactment to pass a vast array of legislation.

In their endless efforts to circumvent the will of the majority and thwart the passage of much needed and much supported health care legislation, the Republicans have launched a campaign against the reconciliation process, making it out to be an illegitimate tactic that the Democrats have invented to pass health care legislation. That is simply untrue.

A look back in time, however, shows that the very same Republicans who are now denouncing the use of reconciliation were the very same Republicans who were defending its use not too long ago.

When he was chair of the Budget Committee, Senator JUDD GREGG, in defending the use of reconciliation to try to pass an amendment allowing oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in 2005 said, ''Reconciliation is a rule of the Senate set up under the Budget Act. It has been used before for purposes exactly like this on numerous occasions. The fact is all this rule of the Senate does is allow a majority of the Senate to take a position and pass a piece of legislation, support that position. Is there something wrong with 'majority rules'? I don't think so.''

When using reconciliation to pass Medicare spending, Senator GREGG said, ''You can't get 60 votes because the party on the other side of the aisle simply refuses to do anything constructive in this area.'' Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY, when defending the use of reconciliation to pass the Bush tax cuts, said that reconciliation was ''the way it will have to be done in order to get it done at all.''

Last year Republican Congressman PAUL RYAN said of Democrats using reconciliation, ''It's their right. They did win the election. We don't like it because we don't like what looks like the outcome.''

Republicans are implying that reconciliation is a new idea, and has never been used to pass significant legislation. The fact is, since 1980, Congress has sent 22 reconciliation bills to the President. Of those, 16 enacted into law occurred under Republican majority control.

The 16 reconciliation bills created with a Republican majority included:

FY	Majority	Resultant reconciliation act(s)	Veto?
1981	Republican	Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1980 (P.L. 96–499)	None.
1982	Republican	Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (P.L. 97–35)	None.
1983	Republican	Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982 (P.L. 97–248)	None.
	Republican	Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1982 (P.L. 97–253)	None.
1984	Republican	Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1983 (P.L. 98–270)	None.
1986	Republican	Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (P.L. 99–272)	None.
1996	Republican	Balanced Budget Act of 1995	Vetoed by Clinton.
1997	Republican	Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104–193).	None.
1998	Republican	Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (P.L. 105–33)	None.
	Republican	Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 (P.L. 105–34)	None.
2000	Republican	Taxpayer Refund and Relief Act of 1999 (H.R. 2488)	Vetoed by Clinton.
2001	Republican	Marriage Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2000 (H.R. 4810)	Vetoed by Clinton.
2002	Republican	Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 (P.L. 107–16)	None.
2004	Republican	Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003 (P.L. 108–27)	None.
2006	Republican	Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (P.L. 109–171)	None.
	Republican	Tax Increase Prevention and Reconciliation Act of 2005 (P.L. 109–222)	None.