

government programs. I wholeheartedly support efforts to save taxpayer money by eliminating waste, fraud, abuse and inefficiency within the Federal Government. A congressional responsibility that I take very seriously is our day to conduct oversight of Federal agencies.

I recognize that Senator COBURN's amendment is based on a Government Accountability Office report to Congress which identified programs and initiatives that have duplicative goals or activities. The report included 34 areas where billions of dollars could be saved. It included seven areas within Defense Department programs. It proposes saving millions by consolidating Federal data centers that today are spread across 24 Federal agencies. It identifies duplication in 44 separate employment and training programs, which could save millions of dollars. I also understand that the blender's credit for ethanol was singled out in the report.

In voting in favor of the amendment, I want to make clear that I do not consider the ethanol blender's credit to be a duplicative program, nor do I believe it should simply be eliminated. I would also like to make clear that the GAO report suggested a number of policy options that Congress could consider when revising the tax incentive. My colleagues should know that I, along with other Members of the Senate, are currently working to reform and restructure the tax incentives for ethanol production and consumption. Many of the reforms we are exploring are the same options suggested by the GAO report.

It is my hope then, that the Senate will consider thoughtful, constructive reforms to the ethanol tax incentive, rather than the proposal put forth by Senator COBURN with amendment No. 220 that would end the incentive immediately.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this budget we have spent so much time talking about is really about making tough choices, hard choices, difficult choices. The American people understand this. They understand tough choices. They have to make them every day, especially now with the economy being in the shape it is in. So should their representatives in Congress make tough choices.

We are being honest with ourselves over here. We know we can't get 100

percent of what we want. That is what this negotiation is all about. That is why this is a negotiation. It is not a winner-take-all situation.

Democrats have made tough choices because we want to get this agreement finished. We want it completed. We want to keep the country running and keep the momentum in the economy that is now creating jobs. We want to avoid a shutdown and the terrible consequences that would follow.

The only thing Republicans are trying to avoid is making the tough choices we need to make. We have been more than reasonable. We have been more than fair. We meet them halfway, and they say no. We meet them more than halfway, and they still say no. We meet them all the way, and they still say no. If Republicans were serious about keeping the country running, all they would have to do is say yes.

Now we learn House Republicans are going to make another excuse, create another diversion, and avoid another tough choice. Instead of solving the crisis the way we should, instead of saying yes, they say, in fact, what they are going to do is pass what they will call another short-term stopgap measure. They will say it is short term, but what that really means is it is a short cut—a short cut around doing our jobs. Instead of solving problems, they are stalling. They are procrastinating. That is not just bad policy, it is a fantasy.

We all heard the President of the United States say yesterday that he won't accept anything short of a full solution. And why should he? We are 6 months into the fiscal year now. President Obama is right. We can't keep funding our great country with one stopgap after another. The United States of America, this great country of ours, shouldn't have to live paycheck to paycheck. We are not going to give up. We are going to keep talking and keep trying to find middle ground. The Speaker and I will go back to the White House tonight in 2 hours and 20 minutes to meet with him again to continue the conversation we have been having for weeks with this administration.

We know the Republicans are afraid of the tea party. That has been established. Now it looks as though they are also afraid of making the tough choices we have to make. But tough choices are what governing is all about. They are what leadership is all about. It is time for my friends in the House of Representatives to stop campaigning and start governing.

And remember what one of the greatest Speakers of all time said. In fact, he was Speaker three times. He was from the State of Kentucky. Henry Clay. He was known as the "great compromiser." He said that all legislation is based on mutual consensus. That is what this is all about. But remember, let's focus on the word "mutual." It takes both of us.

Mr. President, it is time to lead.

I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

GOOD FAITH NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to spend a moment or two talking about how devastating it would be for our country and for the people of our country if, in fact, we have a government shutdown.

I represent Maryland, and there are a lot of Federal workers in Maryland. They are very concerned because it will affect them. A government shutdown will affect everyone in this country. It will affect people who depend upon their government being there to serve them.

If you are depending upon a timely IRS refund check and the government is shut down and you need that money and are counting on it—it is your money—you may find out, if the government is shut down, there is no one to talk to and that check will be delayed.

If you are a person who is entitled to Social Security disability payments and you have a case that is pending, there will not be people there to resolve that case and you will have to wait. That could also very well affect your ability to literally pay your bills.

If you are doing research at NIH—cutting-edge research—which depends upon the continuity of the work in order to discover the answers to many of the problems we face in health care, that will be disrupted if we have a shutdown of the government.

The bottom line is, everyone loses if we have a shutdown of our governmental body. The taxpayers lose. Study after study shows that a shutdown of the government will actually cost the taxpayers more money. It makes no sense at all. Yet there are some in the House who say: Look, bring on a shutdown. They are not negotiating in good faith. They are saying it is our way or the highway. Basically, they want to shut down the government.

We need to negotiate in good faith. It is not going to be what the Democrats or the Republicans want. That is how the system works. You have to negotiate in good faith. I know our leaders are doing that. I urge all of us to understand the consequences of a shutdown and make sure we take steps to negotiate in good faith and have a budget agreement completed by Friday of this week.

I want my colleagues to understand why people in my State should be very concerned about the budget that passed the House of Representatives—the Republican budget. It would hurt children