We are beginning to do what got us into this mess to begin with, looking at al-Qaida as a group of common criminal thugs rather than the warriors they are. These people right here mean to kill us all. They are at war with us. I intend to be at war with them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

POULTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. COONS. Madam President, seeing the press of business here, I will be brief. I wanted to take the opportunity to rise and simply speak to the importance of the poultry industry, something that spreads across the Delmarva Peninsula and is central to the State of Maryland, State of Delaware, and many other States in our country.

With the sequester having kicked in, many of us who are from States that have livestock or poultry processing are aware of the impending and significant negative impact on our home States and our economies, on people's employment, and on their opportunity to continue to support their families. So I wanted to briefly speak in support of what I know are Senator MIKULSKI's tireless efforts to ensure that the 6,200 meat and poultry processing plants in this country do not get needlessly shut down.

In the last quarter of the last calendar year alone, 2.2 billion chickens and turkeys were inspected by the meat inspectors of the Food Safety and Inspection Service. This poultry industry, which is nationwide, provides vital employment to the people of Delaware, Maryland, and many other States.

Secretary Vilsack of the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that furloughs, if implemented, of these safety inspectors could cost $10 billion a year in losses and $400 million a year in lost wages just for those directly employed.

The private sector grows and the private sector has opportunity when Federal inspectors are a part of the total ecosystem of poultry in this country. We raise great turkeys, we raise great chickens in this country. We have the world's leading poultry industry, but the Food Safety and Inspection Service is a vital part of it.

I commend Senator MIKULSKI for her tireless effort to make sure we find some responsible way through the sequester to ensure it does not needlessly harm and put out of work the tens of thousands of Delawareans and Marylanders who rely on this vital industry for their opportunities going forward.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND FULL-YEAR CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2013—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Madam President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 21, H.R. 933.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 21, H.R. 933, a bill making appropriations for the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other departments and agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Madam President, we expect to adopt the motion to proceed to this bill this afternoon and start on the amendment process. I have spoken to the Chair and the ranking member of this committee, and we are anxious to move forward and start doing some legislating.

As I said this morning when I opened the Senate, this is exemplary, the work done with the two managers of this bill, and we need to make sure we move forward on it. It would be good if we would have amendments that would be in some way germane and relevant to what we are doing, but we are going to take all amendments and try to work through them as quickly as we can. I hope people would agree to very short time agreements. I would hope we do not need to table the amendments. I hope we can move forward and set up votes on every one of them.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate shall stand in recess until 2:30 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:33 p.m., recessed until 2:30 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND FULL-YEAR CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2013—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, as we begin our work this afternoon, I wished to come to the floor to make a few comments about the Homeland Security appropriations bill which is now going to be included in the amendment offered by Senator MIKULSKI and Senator SHELBY as part of an appropriations bill coming over from the House. This is such an important step forward, not just for the government but for the private sector jobs which depend on reliable, transparent, and appropriate government spending, for the whole country. We have been in gridlock and stopped on our funding bills for months now. We have not been talking about what makes Americans happy and prosperous—smart investments in their future and their interests.

We have been fighting about appropriations bills. That fight, hopefully, is coming to an end because of the extraordinary leadership of the Senator from Maryland, Senator MIKULSKI, the senior Senator from Maryland, and the newly minted—not new to the committee, a true veteran of the Appropriations Committee—chairwoman of our committee. She is in an able partnership with Senator SHELBY of Alabama, a longstanding appropriator who understands practical politics and compromise is necessary to move anything of importance through this body. I can't thank them and their staffs enough for salvaging several of these important bills.

They weren't able to come to an agreement on everything. I and others are still troubled we will not see much progress in the areas of education and health, as much as we would like, but that is for another day. We are going to move forward on the sections we may move forward together. One of those areas is funding for homeland security, which is a pretty big bill by Federal Government standards. It is not the largest, it is not the smallest, it is $42 billion. That is not chump change. It is a significant amount of money the taxpayers provide to us to make decisions about their security. It funds everything from Border Patrol and protection to Customs and Immigration.

It funds the Coast Guard, which is a very important part of our operations. We feel that directly as a coastal State in Louisiana and are very familiar with the needs of coastal communities. The Coast Guard is always there.

It funds a number of other entities. I do not want to fail to mention cyber security, which is one of the newest, most frightening threats to our country. This threat didn't even exist 20 years ago. You may see the ever-evolving capacity of people who would do us harm: not just governments that don't like the United States, not just groups that don't like the United States, but individuals who have some bone, some beef, some anger, and may actually act out in unbelievable ways through the Internet by attacking sensitive material and data.

This is not just an attack to the government functions of our country, but we have seen any number of attacks on our private infrastructure. This is so critical to our existence, whether it is our water systems, our financial systems, our utility systems, our electricity systems. I could go on and on.

This is a very important responsibility for the Federal Government to step up and figure out, working with the Department of Defense, Department of Commerce, and the Department of Homeland Security, which I chair. This is no insignificant matter.

On the contrary, it is not only important for us to have the right money but

invest it in the right places. We are trying very hard to do that. This is why it would have been very dangerous, in my view, to have this bill stuck. We would be funding last year's priorities, not being able to account for all the new intelligence which has come in over the last 12 months. This is an evolving, ever-growing, ever-changing threat. We would have been spending taxpayer money funding last year's threats, not tomorrow's threats.

This is why BARBARA MIKULSKI, the chair of our committee, fought so hard to say we must move some of these appropriations bills forward to ensure appropriate funding and not wasting the taxpayer money. She was right. She was able to negotiate with Senator SHELBY a yes—not a no, not a maybe but a yes—for the homeland security bill, and I could not be a happier chairman.

I also want to thank Senator COATS, who is my able ranking member from Indiana. He worked hand-in-glove with me to put this bill together. Our staffs worked very closely together. We had a few minor disagreements and views. We were able to work them out and work through it, obviously. This bill is here with his signature and mine on it. We were able to negotiate in very good faith with our House counterparts, and I want to thank them.

Chairman MIKULSKI says the four corners have signed off on our appropriations bill, both in the House and the Senate, the Republicans and the Democrats. It took some give and take, but that is what we need to do.

I want to highlight a few areas in the bill people have been very interested in. First, the bill includes total discretionary spending of $39.6 billion. As I said, $42 billion was what it was a few years ago. Like every committee, we have taken a cut, we have taken a reduction. Contrary to what you might hear, we are tightening our belts and we are cutting into some muscle. We are cutting into some bone. It is not easy, but it is necessary.

However, there is a point where you can't keep cutting or you won't be able to provide the security in the phrase homeland security. It will just be homeland. There won't be a big security piece around us because we have chopped it up. When people who want to harm this country discover this, they will find the weakness.

I am not trying to scare up additional funding, but I am speaking the truth. Do you want to secure a border? You may talk about it or you may actually build one. If you want a strong Customs agency, which moves people through quickly but ensures no bad things come into our country, you need to fund it. This does not happen on a wish and a prayer.

We have a flat budget. We have reorganized to accommodate what Senator COATS and I believe are the priorities for the Members here representing the people. The Coast Guard, cyber security, border security, travel facilitation I will return to in a moment.

For the Coast Guard, the bill includes $9 billion in discretionary spending, which is $400 million above the President's request. We have cut out some other things, but those of us on the committee believe the Coast Guard is important. The Coast Guard is on the front line for drug interdiction, which I don't have to explain to people. It is not classified information that now we have drug kingpins owning submarines which bring drugs into the United States. People read about this. It is true. It is not science fiction. We need to make certain the Coast Guard has access to stop drugs from coming into our country in smart, aggressive ways, working in partnership with other governments.

I don't have to remind everyone about the oilspill, the terrible accident. That trial is still going on in New Orleans as I speak, with hundreds of lawyers still debating the worst oilspill in the history of the country. Who showed up? The Coast Guard. They have to have all sorts of equipment to be able to respond for drug interdiction, which is different than an oilspill cleanup; and, of course, people are rescued literally every day by the brave men and women of the Coast Guard who risk their lives to keep our commerce and our recreational boating moving throughout this Nation.

We have $557 million for production of the sixth national security cutter. Let me say something about this that people don't understand. I see my good friend DICK SHELBY, and he most certainly understands this as a Senator from Alabama, but I want people who are not on our Appropriations Committee to understand something. When most people in America buy a big item, such as a house or even when they send their kids to college, they finance that. They take that big hit, such as a $40,000 loan to send their child to college for 1 year or $120,000 or $160,000 for 4 years, if they are going to a very fancy, expensive school. Happily, for some of us, at LSU we get a great bargain and a great education for $10,000. But for some families even $10,000 for 4 years is a lot of money. They do not pay cash for that. They finance that. The Senator from Alabama knows this.

Under the rules in Washington, we cannot finance most things. People don't understand this. We have to pay cash. So because we need that national security cutter, I had to find $557 million in our budget to pay for it this year, even though it takes a long time to build it.

I think this should be changed. Senator Snowe, who was the chair of this Committee on Defense, Navy, for many years, thought it needed to be changed, but it has not changed as yet. I want people to know the pressures we are under in this bill, because sometimes when we have to fund these big items in one year, basically, we have to pay cash.

Now, yes, ultimately this money is being borrowed through the general fund—and I don't want to get into a technical argument—but as far as we are concerned, we are paying cash for it in our budget—$557 million this year for the national security cutter.

We are also funding $77 million for long lead time, $335 million for six new fast response cutters, $90 million for a new C–130 J aircraft, and I have invested, at my priority, $10 million for military housing for the Coast Guard.

The Army, the Navy, the Air Force have been upgrading their housing. The poor Coast Guard, because they are smaller and they are more isolated, is not in areas where we can take advantage of that public-private partnership that is working so well. I think our Coast Guard families need some support, and I was able to find some funding there for them.

I don't need to take much more time. I don't know if the Senator from Alabama is here to speak, but I will take 5 more minutes, and if he needs me to cease, I will.

But I want to also point out that we put some investments in the bill to address the cyber threat, which the President has described, and I agree with him, as one of the most serious economic and national security challenges we face as a nation. This bill includes $757 million, which is $313 million above last year, and I was happy to do that. I think this is a priority. We have moved other items around in the budget because this is a real threat, it is evolving every day, and we have to have the research and technology to address it and work with the private sector to see what we can do to keep their network safe and our government strong.

The bill includes $7 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund. This was also a battle we fought. The money is in there for Sandy, for Isaac, for Irene, for Ike, for Gustav, for Rita and Katrina and there are a few other storms that are, even after 6 or 7 years, still open. So this is money there for them to finish their recovery.

In science and technology, the bill includes $835 million, a 25-percent increase. I want to say one other thing, and I think Senator SHELBY will agree with me, that people don't understand how important it is that the Federal Government invests in research and development. Yes, private companies do invest in research and development, but some of the investment we do is truly so farfetched that no one in their right mind would invest in it because there is no immediate return. Yet we have seen, time and time again, when the Federal Government steps up and makes those long-term investments in research, what happens—something is discovered. The Internet was a good example of research through the Department of Defense, and I could give other examples. But soon enough, the private sector realizes, oh my gosh, this research is breakthrough—such as that which came from our research in health on our DNA and all the new and exciting technologies in health.

I can tell you our State is benefiting a great deal from the research done 20 years ago on fracking. That wasn't done by Exxon or Mobil, it was done by the Federal labs out West because of research money in one of our bills. I am not sure which bill it was, but potentially in energy, and that is what is leading to the revolution in natural gas. As to this baloney that the Federal Government doesn't have to invest in research and technology, we do it in partnership with the private sector, and it is the best system in the world. We would be shortchanging ourselves and our future economic growth if we didn't continue it.

Finally, just one more word about another priority. I have put some additional funding by moving some things around for Customs and Immigration and for TSA. I am not the only Senator who represents a State that depends, in large part, on the hospitality tourism and trade. I could list many States in our country that do as well, but let me tell you about Louisiana. We believe in hospitality. We believe it is a good business. We enjoy having people come to our State. They come, and we all have a great deal of fun and excitement with our festivals and our fairs. But at the end of the day, we make money and we create jobs and it is an important industry. I am alarmed at the fallout of international travel to the United States since 9/11. It has only increased by about 1 percent.

To put that into perspective—and I believe this number is correct, but I will check it for the record—as the Senator from Alabama knows, international travel in the world has increased by something like 400 percent. So people are going to China, they are going to Korea. There is a growing middle class, and what middle-class people do, besides buy homes and send their kids to school, is travel. It is a middle-class thing. We now have more middle-class people in the world than ever, but they are not coming to the United States because we are not investing in the kinds of infrastructure in our airports and ports that provide a safe but pleasant environment. So I am working very closely with the International Travel Association—and I want to thank them publicly for the work they are doing—because I am one Senator who believes in this. I think the President has also said that international travel means jobs for Americans right here at home. It is something they cannot transport.

For border security, the bill maintains the legislatively mandated staffing floor of 21,370 border patrol agents and provides $76 million above the request for Border Patrol staffing within customs and border protection.

Similarly, the bill provides $240 million above the request for maintaining current staffing levels of frontline CBP officers at our land, air, and sea ports of entry. The fiscal year 2013 budget request for CBP submitted to Congress over 1 year ago resulted in an overall funding shortfall of more than $320 million. This bill fills the vast majority of that shortfall through internal savings and reductions in other, lower priority areas. CBP will continue to face challenges in meeting its staffing requirements and I am committed to helping this important agency fulfill its critical missions.

The bill includes $1.46 billion for first responders grants, an increase of $200 million above fiscal year 2012. These grants ensure our frontline responders are trained and equipped for catastrophic disasters. Recent examples of grant investments that supported disaster response are: communications assets, search and rescue units, generators, and medical equipment used during the 2011 tornadoes in Arkansas, Alabama, and Missouri; joint operations centers, rescue boats, and hazardous materials equipment used during Hurricane Sandy in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut; and cutting-edge mobile vehicle radios and an upgraded 911 call center used during Hurricane Sandy in Maryland.

While the response to more frequent severe disasters has improved, the funding in this bill will help address remaining gaps in preparedness. For instance, the recent National Preparedness Report found that State and local governments are less than halfway to achieving needed recovery capabilities and defending against the growing cybersecurity threat.

Finally, in an effort to maximize resources for frontline missions, the bill approves the request to eliminate $800 million in administrative costs and rescinds $307 million in unobligated balances associated with low-priority programs. The bill also requires 30 expenditure plans to ensure oversight of taxpayer dollars.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing my concern with the impact sequester will have on the Department of Homeland Security. Despite the smart investments that are made in this bill, the problem of sequester remains.

The Secretary of Homeland Security has testified before the Appropriations Committee that these automatic budget reductions will be disruptive and destructive to our Nation's security and economy.

At our busiest airports, peak wait times could grow to over 4 hours or more during the summer travel season. Such delays would affect air travel significantly, potentially causing thousands of passengers to miss flights with economic consequences at the local, national, and international levels. New flights that bring in hundreds of millions of dollars to the U.S. economy would be delayed or potentially denied due to reduced staffing.

Sequestration will also impact our Nation's land borders. For example, daily peak wait times at the El Paso Bridge of the Americas could increase from 1 hour to over 3 hours.

The Coast Guard will have to reduce operations by up to 25 percent impacting drug and migrant interdiction efforts.

The sequester will impact our ability to detect and analyze emerging cyber threats and protect civilian federal computer networks, and

FEMA will delay implementing critical reforms to improve disaster response and recovery.

The Border Patrol workforce could be reduced by 5,000.

I urge Senators to work together on a bipartisan basis to repeal this ill-conceived sequester and approve legislation that includes balanced deficit reduction.

I again want to thank the chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee, Senator MIKULSKI; the vice chair, Senator SHELBY; and the ranking member on the Homeland Security Subcommittee, Senator COATS for their hard work in including the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2013 in this essential legislation to fund the Federal Government.

I am very happy to speak about this bill, but I do see the leaders are on the floor—the chairman and the ranking member—and I want to personally thank them both for bringing our appropriations bills to the floor. I have spoken about homeland security, but there are other bills that need to be talked about this afternoon. I am happy we could work out this agreement with my Republican counterparts, and, again, I thank the chairman and the ranking member for their extraordinary leadership.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, I just want to follow up on some of the comments the Senator from Louisiana has made—very positive comments about research and the role of the Federal Government in all aspects of research. She is a very hard-working member of the Appropriations Committee and she has been involved in a lot of this.

Whether it is research on health issues—the National Institutes of Health on cancer or you name it—information technology, energy, which the Senator from Louisiana referenced—there are so many good things that come out of this, and I believe, overall, the Senate and the House, on both sides of the aisle, realized this. But with all the breakthroughs in information technology we have had, we have only to go back to the research and development the Federal Government did that basically brought us our Internet to realize that didn't just happen. It was built over many years, with many ideas and research. Look at it today. We have all benefited from this overall.

There are threats to this information technology, in everything we use today dealing with energy; for example, our power grid, because a lot of that, as we all know, is computer driven and operated, our banking system's information technology, our military, our traffic

control systems we rely on every day, and I am sure our trains and other vehicles we run. There are threats to this today. A lot of us know it as cyber security threats, and they are real.

So as we do research in this area, as we continue our research, we cannot forget that. That is a job we all have to work together on, and I believe, on the Appropriations Committee, this is a good start today for challenges in our future to the security of our information systems—our grid, our banking system, our Federal Reserve, and I can go on and on because it affects everything in our everyday life, and we shouldn't forget it.

I think we are off to a good start today. Senator MIKULSKI, the chair of the committee, and I believe this is the first time in a few years we have come to the floor trying to work together on appropriations, and we are determined to make this regular order work. I believe the majority of the Senators on my side of the aisle—the Republicans—and those on the Democratic side of the aisle will, in a few days, bring this to a head and we will do something good for the American people and bring forth some certainty and some good legislation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, other Senators on the Appropriations Committee—and all are welcome to come and comment, but those on the Appropriations Committee actually assigned to do the work will be coming throughout the afternoon to actually describe the content of the bill. I would like to talk about the content.

We on Appropriations have 12 subcommittees. Of those 12 subcommittees, each has a chair and a ranking member from the other party. The reason I am telling you this is to describe what it takes to do a bill.

So through all of last week, after we got the guidance of our caucus, the guidance of the authorizing committee, the guidance from the leadership, we began to put a bill together. It is not easy. My own staff and Senator SHELBY's staff worked through that first snowstorm we had, took computers home and worked all day and through the evening. I was back and forth. We wanted to make sure there was no fog in our bill. And then out of that the subcommittees gave recommendations.

The reason I say that is that took us to Thursday. We didn't complete, from our end, the framework and substance of the bill until Saturday. That means me, the Democratic majority—the majority party has the responsibility of putting the bill together, but this is not a one-woman show here. So after we did, we gave it to our counterparts, who have been in consultation on broad principles, negotiations between the subcommittees, consultation with the authorizing committees on policy, where we are heading.

Then when we got it to Senator SHELBY and his staff, they had to exercise their due diligence. We wanted them to do the due diligence. We wanted them to look through every aspect of that bill to make sure with our word of honor, which we have had together for more than 25 years, that there were no hidden agreements, that there were no surprises parachuted in that if we woke up, neither would be happy about.

I must compliment Senator SHELBY and his staff. They worked through the weekend doing every line item to make sure, when they gave Senator MCCONNELL and the Republican caucus their best assessment, they had a chance to look at every single line item, and they sure did it, and they worked hard.

So there are those who would say: We would have liked to have had the bill sooner. We would have liked to have been able to get the bill sooner. But we are talking about the funding for the entire United States of America. That is a lot of lines and that is a lot of items that had to be gone through methodically, diligently, and meticulously, and we moved as expeditiously as we could.

So we then had our bill, and I really wanted to share it with the House. I think we have been working with the House in a very constructive way, communicating, but it took until very late yesterday afternoon for us to complete our process as members of the Appropriations Committee.

I would have really loved getting this bill to the floor and filing this bill sooner, but in order to do it right, and not only the right content but the right way, to make sure the appropriate committees were able to exercise their due diligence, their vigilance, their scrutiny, we now present a bill to the entire Senate.

So I hope we can move forward on our legislation. We want Members to take a look at it. We hope we can work on amendments this afternoon. I hope we have permission to go to our bill. We have two great amendments lined up—different philosophies, but that is what it is.

I talked to Senator AYOTTE on the floor a couple of weeks ago during sequester. Bring up the amendments. We have an amendment by Senator HARKIN on the Labor-HHS content, and we have an amendment to be offered on President Obama's health care bill. There is a Senator who would like to have the full Senate decide whether we should defund it. This is an important national debate. Let it come on out. The only way we can get to that is by letting us go to the bill.

We have an arcane procedure in the Senate called a motion to proceed. In order to be able to vote, we have to get permission to proceed. I want to get to amendments. I want to have a real debate on real issues. Where are we on Labor-HHS? What is the Senate's full view on the funding of ObamaCare? Let's get out there, and instead of fussing over procedure, let's get to real content. Let's talk about the real issues around funding and what we should be doing to pass the continuing resolution to keep America's funding going but where the majority rules and we have our bill.

So let's get to the situation where we can move through the bill, where we can offer amendments. Regardless of how you feel about amendments, we all feel Senators have the right to offer amendments. Let's get to it. Let's get the job done. Let's show we can function as the greatest parliamentary body in the world.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am somewhat amazed and stunned. You would think that someone who is given an answer to the question—yes—should pretty much be satisfied.

We have been trying to keep the government from shutting down. I appreciate the work done by the Speaker. I didn't agree with his bill, but I appreciate what he did, and he did it in a timely fashion.

The chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee, Senator MIKULSKI, has been negotiating with her Republican counterpart, RICHARD SHELBY, for days now. They worked all weekend, late into Sunday night, and they worked out a bipartisan agreement. They offered the amendment here. Now we hear from a couple of Senators: Let's not take up the bill. They need more time.

I thought people wanted to have an open amendment process on this bill. Offer amendments. Now it appears that the day is gone. I guess we won't be able to offer amendments today. I have said all along that we would turn to it as soon as possible. Our Republican colleagues said they want to see the first amendment that was to be offered. They saw that. They were originally given to certain people in the leadership office on Saturday about noon, and there has been every effort to work together on this matter. They wanted to see the first amendment that will be offered. I have indicated that was done; they saw it. There were negotiations to get to where that is. But now Senators want to prevent us from going to the bill. Remember, if I file cloture today, the earliest we can have the vote is Thursday.

We are going to finish this CR, and we are going to finish the budget before there will be an Easter recess. That is a fact. So everyone should understand that delaying on this—because they want to read the bill more deeply, I guess—doesn't really make a lot of sense.

We are going to do the budget resolution. I have made that clear, and I emphasize that now. And the Republicans have been talking about—even though it is basically without foundation—that we haven't had a budget resolution. We haven't needed one. We had one that was not a resolution, it was a law that set the standards for what we would do with our budget. It set ceilings on how much we would spend. As a result of that, we were able to get the funding for our subcommittees and appropriations. But they want a budget resolution, which isn't as good as law, and we are going to do everything we can to get that done.

So if Republicans object to allowing the Senate to be in consideration of a bill negotiated with Republicans, then the only people who will be disadvantaged are other Republicans who want to be able to offer amendments.

So I regret that again we have come to this. Just when you think it can't get worse, it gets worse. There are things we have to do. The CR is one of those. If it means cutting into the April recess—we have 2 weeks to do a lot of things people have planned for some time—then that is what we will need to do. But I am stunned.

I learned about this when we had the President at our caucus. I really am flabbergasted that here we are on the eve of doing something together, regular order, but regular order around here is stopping every bill from going on the floor. That is what the regular order is here. I thought we had some kind of an agreement at the beginning of this Congress that this wasn't going to go on anymore. We had that 2 years ago. We changed the rules here a little bit.

There is going to be tremendous angst within my caucus and I think the country to continue trying to legislate with the burdens that we bear, that just one or two people do everything they can to throw a monkey wrench into everything we do. As a country, we are being looked at as being inoperable. It is too bad. It is not good for this institution, and it is really not good for the country.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, if people are watching us on C–SPAN—and they do, in our own country and around the world—they will say: Well, it is Tuesday afternoon, 3:30. What is happening in the Senate? We see two Senators—able, seasoned, experienced. Where is the debate? Where are the amendments? Where is the clash of ideas in an open and public forum on what is best?

We are not doing that because we have arcane rules that Senators can put what they call a hold on a bill so we cannot proceed. In the old days that was a good idea; you placed a hold. This goes back to stagecoach days. You are an Indiana man, you understand that, I say to the Chair respectfully. But it was so you could get back. You would put a hold on a bill if you believed I offered legislation that could hurt Indiana, and in your stagecoach you could dash back here.

We don't have stagecoaches anymore. In fact, we are all right here. I would like to be able to move this bill. There are those Senators who want more time. They could actually be looking at the bill if they would let us go this afternoon, because we have two amendments that would take us to 5 or 6—well, gosh now—until this evening. But we would get two amendments done on two pretty big topics, one of which should be, are we or are we not going to fund the President's health care initiative?

We need to move this bill. What is it that Senator SHELBY and I are trying to do? We are trying to pass a continuing resolution to fully fund the Federal Government with the scrutiny and oversight of the Congress by October 1. Right now we have the CR, as it is called, the funding. The continued funding expires March 27. Some people might say that is 15 days from now. Not really because we have to pass our bill, we have to go to the House, and then we have to have a bill signed by the President. We would like to do that before the Easter-Passover recess, for which we break next week. We would really like to do it.

I know one of my colleagues is on the Senate floor. I recognize the right for Senators to review and scrutinize a bill. I have done it myself. I respect that.

In the days when we were skeptical and even suspicious of one another, you wanted to look at it to make sure there were no cheap gimmicks, no little fast hand motions, no earmarks parachuted in. But I can say this: After the Democrats finished the bill, we gave it to Senator SHELBY and his staff. This bill has been very much scrutinized so that any of those tricks of the old days are not here.

I really need everybody's attention. There is a lot of conversation going on.

What I want to say is this: If anyone spots something they think is a cute gimmick, I would sure like to know about it. I recognize the Senators' rights, but I ask them if we could at least proceed to the bill where, while we debate these two big amendments, we would do it.

Would I have liked to have made it available 72 hours ago? The answer is, yes. But given the magnitude of what we did and the due diligence necessary by the Republicans, it was physically and intellectually impossible, not with the scrutiny and oversight not done until yesterday. When we get back to regular order it will be better. But I feel like I have multiple decks I have been dealt: a real deck, a pinochle deck, a poker deck, and so on.

I am making a plea that we go to our bill, recognizing the Senators should scrutinize the bills and recognizing Senators' rights to offer amendments. That is simply my plea. Some of my colleagues are on the Senate floor, and I will be happy to engage in a conversation with them, two of whom I have enormous respect for.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, first, I want to tell the chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee that I actually very much appreciate her work. I actually trust her to do the right thing. But we got this bill last night at 9 o'clock. It is a 500-page bill. It has multiple levels of authorizations in it that we found so far—authorization on an appropriations bill. It has what I would consider—and we haven't been completely through it—some things that are totally counterintuitive to where we find ourselves today in terms of spending money.

Before I could grant a unanimous consent—and I will; as soon as we get through with the bill I plan on granting unanimous consent. But I want to know, we just heard the majority leader say he can't understand why somebody wants to read this bill. We are talking about in excess of $1 trillion. That is one of the problems, one of the reasons we are $17 trillion in debt. It is because people don't read the bills.

I also want to say to my friend from Alabama, I have the greatest praise for him. He knows some of the heartburn we have on this, but we knew that was coming from the House. But to not allow us the time to assess what you have produced by being able to read and study the bill is going against the best traditions of the Senate. It is also going against common sense.

How do we know whether we want to offer amendments unless we have been able to read the bill? Are we just to blindly say: Whatever you want to do we are going to approve it because we have a deadline at the end of this month?

I am willing to do whatever is necessary to make sure we get a continuing resolution, but I am not willing to do that blindly. I am going to study this bill. We have three Members' staff working on this full time. They have been working since last night. They are investigating and looking at this bill. I will not go into the details of the things we have seen so far, but we ought to at least have the opportunity before we rush into granting unanimous consent to go forward.

I plan to allow unanimous consent, but I will not do so until I know what the agreement is going to be in terms of amendments. Even if we read the bill and have some good ideas, we don't know whether we are going to be able to offer any. This is an appropriations

bill. We ought to be able to offer amendments with our ideas on ways to save this country money, increase its efficiency, increase its effectiveness, and still meet the deadline that the chairwoman outlined.

I hope the Senator understands why we are not in a mood to grant it until we actually know what we are talking about. To ask anything less of us would be asking us to deny the very oath we took when we came here.

With that, I yield the floor and thank my colleague JOHN MCCAIN for being here.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, along with the Senator from Oklahoma, I intend to object. I think the Senator made the case. I will remind my colleagues that 1 week ago Senator COBURN and I sent a letter to Senator REID and Senator MCCONNELL with copies to Senator MIKULSKI and Senator SHELBY.

We stated in one sentence:

> We write to inform you of our intention to object to entering into a time agreement before consideration of a continuing resolution until we have had at least 72 hours to review its contents.

That is what we wrote. That is what we asked for.

I will remind my colleagues again, it is a 587-page bill of over $1 trillion that we got at 9 p.m. last night. Is there anyone who has had time to read this entire bill that is 587 pages long? We are talking about $1 trillion, and we are holding up the Senate? We have had since 9 p.m. last night until 3:30 p.m. this afternoon to examine a 587-page bill of over $1 trillion.

What we have already found—and we have not finished, but we hope to be finished with examining this legislation within a few hours—is the most egregious pork-barrel spending during a time of sequestration. I find it mind-boggling. We spent 3 weeks in December on the floor of this Senate doing the fiscal year 2013 Defense authorization bill. There are provisions in this CR that were directly prohibited in the Defense authorization bill.

I respect the knowledge of the Senator from Alabama and the Senator from Maryland on defense issues, but we spent 3 weeks and hundreds of hours in hearings including amendments and markup. For example, we said there would be no money for Guam until we have a coherent strategy laid out by the administration as to how we were going to implement the base realignment. The fiscal year 2013 National Defense Authorization Act prohibited expending that money.

What have they crammed into this 587-page bill? There is $120 million for a public regional health laboratory and civilian wastewater improvements in Guam. Why? I ask my friend from Alabama: Why does this directly contradict the authorization bill which was just passed that said no money would be given to Guam for these purposes until such time as we had developed the strategy for the base realignment in Guam? Is it because the Senator from Alabama and the Senator from Maryland know something more than the Defense authorization bill authorizers did? We had debate, discussion, and authorization of this, and we specifically prohibited it.

So here we are. We have not been able to deploy an aircraft carrier because of sequestration. We have had to cut down on flying hours. We have had to reduce maintenance. We have had to make all kinds of tough decisions as to the men and women who are serving, not to mention the equipment, operations, and maintenance.

What have we already found out in this bill? I want to assure my colleagues I am not making this up. There is an additional $5 million for the National Guard Youth Challenge program. I think the National Guard Youth Challenge Program is a pretty worthwhile project, but is it worthwhile when we are having to keep a carrier from deployment? There is $5 million for the National Guard STARBASE Youth Program; another $154 million for the Army, Navy, and Air Force ''alternative energy research initiatives.'' This type of research has developed such shining examples as the Department of Navy's purchase of 450,000 gallons of alternative fuel for $12 million, which is over $26 per gallon.

There is $18 million for unspecified ''industrial preparedness,'' $16 million for Parkinson's disease research. That part is out of Defense, my friends. That is not out of Health and Human Services; it is out of Defense. There is $16 million for neurofibromatosis research, $16 million for HIV-AIDS research, which is a worthy cause, but it is taken out of Defense. There is $9 million for unspecified radar research, $567 million for unrequested medical research, $20 million for university research initiatives, and $7 million for the Civil Air Patrol program increase.

The list goes on and on, and we have not finished. How in the world do we have a provision ''for an incentive program that directs the Department of Defense to overpay on contracts by an additional 5 percent if the contractor is a Native Hawaiian-owned company,'' how in the world is this justified during this time of sequestration?

I note the presence of our leader on the floor, and I want to assure the leader, with all due respect, that this is a 587-page bill of over $1 trillion. We got it at 9 p.m. last night. I hope that in a few hours we will be able to finish examining this bill. What we have found so far is so egregious it is hard to imagine that anybody—in light of the sequestration and the damage it does to the lives of the men and women who are serving the military—could have added these kinds of provisions and, frankly, is beyond anything I think I have ever seen in the years I have served in the Senate.

I yield to the distinguished majority leader, but before I do, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Object to what?

Mr. President, through the Chair to my friend from Arizona, this is a 587-page bill that has been available to the public because the vast majority of this bill is identical to what the House already passed—identical. He, along with his staff and the Senator from Oklahoma, have had days and days to look this over.

I want to make sure everyone understands I can only do so much. I try not to be too sensitive, but the Senator from Oklahoma seems to have a problem—I assume he was referring to me or perhaps he was referring to Senators DURBIN, SCHUMER, and MURRAY. Here is what he said on one of the Sunday shows:

> ''The Senate's not nearly as dysfunctional as it is made out to be . . . '' said Coburn. ''Our problem in the Senate is the leadership in the Senate.''

I don't know if he is referring to Senator MCCONNELL, I don't know whom he is referring to, but one day he should look in the mirror.

I want to try and get along here. The vast majority of the stuff that is in this bill came from the House of Representatives. It has been available for days. I cannot remember what day we received this. I think it was last Wednesday or thereabouts, so it has been many days.

I know Senator MCCAIN very well. He and I came to the House and the Senate together. I understand how he feels about these issues. I don't blame him for being upset about some of the things in this bill, but it is not our fault. We are trying to get a bill to fund the government, and what we need to do is get on the bill.

I am criticized for not allowing amendments to be offered. We cannot have amendments offered until we get on the bill. I think it would be much better if we could get on the bill. If people want to offer amendments, it is kind of jump ball here. We have 100 Senators, and a few of them want to offer amendments. We cannot dictate what amendments will be offered before we even get on the bill.

I hope my friend from Arizona will take some time with the staff and look the bill over—it has been around since last Wednesday or thereabouts—so we can get on the bill. The time is being wasted. We have to finish this and the budget before we leave for Easter vacation.

We can do the bill this week, next week or the week after that. We have to get this done. I am not trying to fight with anybody, but as I said, I do have some sensitivities about my friend from Oklahoma continually berating the leadership in the Senate. I have come to the rationalization that maybe he is talking about his own leadership. I don't know.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask through the Chair if my friend would yield for a question.

Mr. REID. Of course.

Mr. MCCAIN. First of all, I appreciate very much the majority leader's responsibility to make sure we take up and pass legislation. There are many times when I have to say that the majority leader has been frustrated by some events and individuals which arouses my sympathy for the responsibility he has and his inability to carry out his duties.

I point out to my friend from Nevada that we just got this bill last night, so to rely on the fact that a House bill should be our guide when we know there were many provisions added—at least some provisions that were added that we already found in the Senate version of the bill—I would hope he would understand we need a little more time to try to get through the entire bill, which I hope will be sooner rather than later. Once that is done, then we can—as the majority leader said—be open for amendments.

I hope the majority leader understands our point of view, that this is bill over $1 trillion with 587 pages. For us to take sort of an act of faith that this is the bill that came from the House is obviously not the case.

Mr. REID. If my friend would yield—

Mr. MCCAIN. I appreciate the majority leader's responsibilities, and I appreciate his frustration. I hope he will understand ours and we will try to move this as quickly as possible.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. For many years and decades Senator MCCAIN has been a watchdog of what goes on with spending in this country. I expect that from him, so I don't say that in a negative fashion. I don't have a problem with Senator MCCAIN looking over this legislation so he feels comfortable with moving on to it, and then if he has amendments to offer, we can move on amendments. I have no complaint about JOHN MCCAIN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let me thank the Senators from Maryland and Alabama for their leadership on this bill. I might say to my friend, the Senator from Arizona, that I have a new assignment in the Appropriations Committee following the departure and passing of our great friend Senator Danny Inouye. I am trying my best to make sure we are doing our best on national defense, which I know is near and dear to the Senator from Arizona.

There was an extraordinary effort made in the House to accommodate the Department of Defense in the continuing resolution as well as accommodating military construction and veterans. I think it is a good bill. It comes over to us with provisions that will be helpful with some of the problems and challenges they will face.

What these Senators have tried to do is to add several other areas of agreement in the appropriations process. If I am not mistaken, most everything they have added has been subject to debate within the subcommittee and full committee. So there is no attempt here to conceal anything, and we knew full well that the watchful eye of the Senator from Arizona and his friends would be applied to this bill.

I think what we were trying to achieve today is to start the amendment process—not to close it down but start the amendment process. That would give Members who want to come forward with an amendment the time to offer those amendments and others the time to review this legislation closely. I think that was our goal, only to have this shut down now, where no amendments can be taken up or considered. Without foreclosing the Senator from Arizona or the Senator from Oklahoma, wouldn't it be a healthier situation for us to be actively considering amendments of Members who know what they wish to offer at this point?

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to engage in a colloquy with the Senator from Illinois.

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

Mr. MCCAIN. The point of the Senator from Illinois is very well made, but unless we know the entirety of the bill, we don't know what our priorities are as far as amendments are concerned. I am sure the Senator knows that even though amendments are going to be allowed, there is going to be a limited number of amendments. We know how things work around this place come Thursday afternoon.

All we are asking is to give us a little more time. It was 9 o'clock last night when we received the final version of the bill.

I would say to my friend from Illinois, unless we know what is in the bill in its entirety, it is hard for us to know what the priority amendments we intend on proposing are. I think we are nearly through the examination of the bill. I do not wish to impede the progress of the Senate on this legislation. I know how important it is.

I also hope my friend will understand that we asked a week ago to have 72 hours, which is the normal Senate procedure, to examine the bill before we consider it. I understand the exigencies of the moment—all the back and forth between both sides of the Capitol—but I don't believe, for a $1 trillion bill, 587 pages, it is too much to ask for about 12 hours, or 14 hours, 15 hours—we have our staff working full time, and I wish to assure the Senator we will have it done soon.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, if I might engage further in this dialogue, I see the Chair is seeking recognition. But there are Senators on both sides who have amendments ready to go. They have ideas they wish to present to the Senate for consideration. Without foreclosing the Senator from Arizona and his colleagues of the possibilities to offer amendments tomorrow or whenever they are prepared to, I don't know why we want to shut down this deliberation today. We can consider some of these amendments and still not in any way prejudice the rights of Senators to review the bill and offer amendments of their choice.

Mr. MCCAIN. Look, my dear friend, every Senator has their responsibilities in this body. I have a responsibility particularly where defense is concerned. We spent 3 weeks on this legislation, including hundreds of amendments, hours and hours of debate, markup in the committee of hours and hours, hundreds of hours of hearings by the leaders of our military and the administration. I haven't finished examining the defense part of this bill.

Now, why am I so worried about the provisions of this bill? Because there are provisions in this bill that directly contradict the Defense authorization we spent weeks on. We prohibited money for Guam, OK? We prohibited it. Now there is $120 million in the bill for it. So that makes me curious as to what else is in this bill.

So I think for me to go back and tell my constituents in Arizona, who are heavily dependent on our national defense and our bases, to say, Yes, I went ahead without even reading the whole bill, without even my staff going through the entire bill; we were in such a hurry with our over $1 trillion legislation that they didn't want me to hold up the Senate so people could propose amendments—that is not my duty to the citizens of Arizona.

So I say with respect to my friend, I respect the rights of all other Senators. I hope the rights of the Senator from Oklahoma and my rights would be respected and that includes reading a piece of legislation that is 587 pages long.

Mr. DURBIN. If I might respond to the Senator, the Department of Defense Appropriations Act for 2013 provides $604.9 billion, including $87.2 billion for overseas contingency operations. That is a reduction from the 2012 level of $633.2 billion.

There are no changes in the defense section of this bill. There are no changes in the bill that was passed by the House of Representatives last week. The bill fully complies with the spending caps in the Budget Control Act. It contains no Member-requested earmarks, in compliance with the earmark moratorium. There are cuts in the defense budget to define programs with excess funding, scheduled delays, and the like.

The bill includes 671 cuts as it came out of the House to programs in the budget request of funds that are not needed for the remaining 6½ months of the year.

I might say to my friend from Arizona, this is what the House passed. We have not added anything to it that I think would be of Senate authorship that changes it in substance.

So I understand. It is the Senator's right. I respect his right and I will

fight for his right as a Senator. But I would hope that at least for those Senators prepared to offer amendments, without in any way prejudicing the right of the Senator from Arizona to do so, we could proceed with the amendment process.

Mr. MCCAIN. Well, again, I thank my friend from Illinois and I thank him for his point of view. I understand it. I understand the frustration of our two leaders on the Appropriations Committee and their desire to get this done. I understand the time clock is running out. We are talking about a very short period of time. But I have to repeat to the Senator from Illinois one more time: I am not going to go back to my State and say, By the way, I started the amendment process and debating on a bill that I hadn't read. I don't do that, and I hope the Senator from Illinois respects it. I hope in a very short period of time we can agree to proceed and have vigorous debate and amendments.

I also have to say this is remarkable. Here we are, I say to my friend from Illinois, in a period of sequestration, and there is a provision in here for $15 million for an incentive program that directs the Department of Defense to overpay contracts by an additional 5 percent if the contractor is a Native Hawaiian-owned company. That boggles the mind. It is unbelievable. While we are keeping ships tied up at the pier because we can't deploy them, we are now going to tell Native Hawaiian companies they are going to be overpaid by an additional 5 percent if they are based in Hawaii. What is that all about? That is why the Senator from Oklahoma and I have to read the bill. I thank my colleagues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Would the Senator from Arizona yield for a question?

Mr. MCCAIN. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. MIKULSKI. We acknowledge the validity of the concerns of the Senator from Arizona. We also acknowledge that we would have liked very much for people to have seen this 72 hours in advance. There was no intent to stiff-arm. Please understand that. We weren't trying to be cute and come in late and all that. It was just the sheer physicality of moving the bill, not getting it from the House until Thursday. So there was no intent to not honor the request of the Senator from Arizona, in which he was very plain, and he has been consistent in every bill. The Senator's request was not unusual and it was no surprise. So that is essentially where we are.

Mr. MCCAIN. I would say to the Senator, the distinguished chairperson, I respect that and I would never impugn her motives. I said I thought I understood the time constraints the Senator from Maryland is under, given the House and the Senate and all that. I certainly did not intend to believe that there was anything——

Ms. MIKULSKI. I just wanted to assure the Senator from Arizona of that and I have respect for the Senator and his regard for the purse.

Does the Senator from Arizona have a sense of when he will be finished reviewing the bill?

Mr. MCCAIN. I think in a very short time. I have to coordinate with the Senator from Oklahoma, but I think within a couple of hours.

Ms. MIKULSKI. We would appreciate it in any way the Senator feels he can exercise his traditional due diligence. We are not going to engage in arguments, but we would like to go ahead if we could get something going even later on this evening.

Mr. MCCAIN. Could I say to the distinguished chairwoman, I will go back to my office right now, get together with Senator COBURN, and see if we can't come up with a definite time, and I assure the Senator from Maryland it will be a short period of time.

Ms. MIKULSKI. And if perhaps there are amendments the Senator from Arizona could share with Senator SHELBY. I expect there to be amendments from Senators MCCAIN and COBURN. It wouldn't have been a real bill if they did not offer amendments. It somehow or another wouldn't have counted in the process. So we look forward to it. If we can move it in an expeditious way, and courteously understanding the Senator's right to offer amendments, I think we can get going.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I will try to carry out my mission as assigned by the distinguished chairperson. I thank her for her leadership and her excellent work. I thank both leaders.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I will not engage the Senator from Arizona with questions. I don't want to delay his reading time.

I appreciate the work the distinguished chair of the Appropriations Committee has done, and the distinguished ranking member, the senior Senator from Alabama. I worked with both of them for decades on the Appropriations Committee. I know they are diligent. They are hard working. In fact, I recall a discussion with the distinguished senior Senator from Maryland when she agreed to take this assignment. I told her I couldn't think of anybody better on our side of the aisle to be the chair of this committee because I know how hard she works and how well she works with the ranking member.

I spoke also with the distinguished Senator from Alabama at the time—again, somebody who knows how to get things done on appropriations. He and I have negotiated things over the years. We have always kept our word to each other, just as the Senator from Maryland has. Now it is time to debate the bill on the floor and it pains me that having got this far, two senators are preventing anyone else from offering amendments.

It is unfortunate we are discussing a continuing resolution because if left to the three Senators who are currently on the floor—the Senator from Alabama, the Senator from Maryland, and myself—we know we would be fully capable of completing action on individual appropriations bills. In fact, they were painstakingly negotiated by the Senate and the House as part of an omnibus legislative package last December. But then, for reasons we don't have to go into here, a year's work of seven appropriations subcommittees was dumped in the wastebasket, not because of the two leaders but because of others.

Unfortunately, that means we have been funding the government on autopilot. None of us who have spent time on the Appropriations Committee wants this because we know it wastes money and sequestration will make a bad situation even worse.

Having said that, I think what Chairwoman MIKULSKI and Ranking Member SHELBY have done in negotiating this continuing resolution is far better than putting the government on autopilot as we did last December.

I wish to talk about title 7 of this resolution, which concerns the Department of State and Foreign Operations. The House continuing resolution included several changes in the fiscal year 2012 appropriations act. The Senate incorporated those changes with minor modifications. Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM and I included other changes we believe are critical to our national security. Top officials at the State Department and the Pentagon agree with us.

We did our best to avoid spending money on things that may have made sense in fiscal year 2012 but are a waste today. I will give an example. The House continuing resolution includes another $250 million for the Iraq police training program, the same amount as in fiscal year 2012. Yet the State Department plans to spend zero in fiscal year 2013. That is just an example of why we should go, if we could, by the regular order, because nobody wants this money.

There have been a lot of changes in the world since December 2011 when the 2012 bill was signed by the President. There is the catastrophe in Syria, with millions of people fleeing their homes, which threatens to engulf the entire region. Benghazi and Mali are other examples. Conditions are changing in Egypt, Afghanistan, and in our own hemisphere. We face growing challenges in East Asia and the Pacific.

Now, we should not say, as these challenges come up—sometimes overnight—that well, two or three years ago we passed a bill, so there is no need to do one this year. The world does not stand still.

I think the chairwoman is doing a superb job, and Ranking Member SHELBY is showing, as usual, his many years of experience and hard work. I thank Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM and his staff, who have provided very constructive input.

In the past, appropriations bills were always a bipartisan effort. We worked together. I think of Senator Byrd and Senator Stevens on this floor working things out; my predecessor as President pro tempore, Senator Inouye, and Senator COCHRAN working things out.

Title VII of this resolution is a grand total of 11½ pages. Out of over 500 pages, it is 11½ pages. It should not take long to read. We do not expect amendments, but if we get them, I hope we can act on them quickly.

Mr. President, if nobody is seeking the floor, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to continue for 5 minutes as though in morning business.

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

ARREST AND PROSECUTION OF SULAIMAN ABU GHAITH

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last week the Obama administration announced that Osama bin Laden's son-in-law, Sulaiman Abu Ghaith, had been brought to the United States to be prosecuted. Several of us who have oversight in particular committees were notified a week before this became public. We were briefed on what was happening as he was being flown here to this country to be prosecuted.

I commend the work of our Nation's dedicated law enforcement and intelligence officials who are helping bring him to justice. I was briefed on exactly what they did and how they did it, and there was a superb combination of work by the Justice Department and intelligence communities, at the CIA, FBI, and other agencies. And I applaud the Obama administration for their unanimous decision within the National Security Council to prosecute him in a Federal court.

We have reason to be proud of our courts. Our Federal courts are an example of impartiality, competence, and integrity seen the world over. We, as Americans, are not afraid to take somebody who has acted against us and prosecute them in our courts. We should not act as though we are afraid and simply say that we can't have them in our Federal court, and that we should just lock them up in Guantanamo.

As a practical matter, our Federal prosecutors have established a tremendous record of convictions of terrorism defendants. They have convicted over 450 terrorism-related defendants since September 11, 2001.

The military commissions at Guantanamo Bay—where some said they wanted to send Abu Ghaith—are largely untested. There have only been 8 convictions there—not the 450 we have seen in Federal courts but 8—and on average the sentences handed down in military commissions are shorter than those given in the Federal court. In fact, two of these military commission convictions were overturned just last year. Indeed, based on the recent decisions of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, it is unclear whether a conspiracy case against this defendant could even be legally sustained in a military commission at Guantanamo Bay.

Why do we act as though we are afraid to bring this terrorist before our Federal courts where we bring mass murderers and everybody else, and instead argue that we should send him off somewhere where he may never be convicted? In fact, regardless of the outcome of a military commission proceeding against Abu Ghaith, it is possible that he could have been stuck there without the possibility of a Federal prosecution, given the shortsighted limitations on detainee transfers imposed by Congress. When you look at how well the Federal courts have done, I am surprised to hear people criticize the decision to bring him before an Article III Federal court.

I would say that using our justice system is not mutually exclusive from gathering intelligence. In fact, from public accounts—and I refer to what has been in the press—it appears the FBI gathered information and intelligence from him for about a week before he was formally even arraigned in court last week. In fact, according to one of the prosecutors, law enforcement officials were able to obtain detailed, extensive audio recordings and roughly 22 pages of post-arrest statements from Abu Ghaith. And the fact is, also, as we have seen in some of these other cases, once you present the defendant in court, oftentimes they continue to cooperate and talk.

It is clear to me that President Obama's national security team did the right thing. But we also show the rest of the world that we are not afraid, that as Americans we are not cowering and afraid to use our courts, and that we are not afraid to use the law and procedures that have made us free and strong.

We have had several hearings in the Judiciary Committee on how best to handle terrorism suspects. I am convinced that the Attorney General and the administration must have all options available. For example, the case of the Fort Hood shooter went to a military trial, as it should have. That case involved a military officer committing a crime on a military base against other military personnel, even though influenced by somebody from al-Qaida overseas. But in the Abu Ghaith case we have somebody that we can and should prosecute on conspiracy charges in Federal court. As a former prosecutor, I have looked at that, and I have absolute faith in the abilities of our Federal courts and our prosecutors and law enforcement officials to bring terrorists to justice. They have a tremendous record.

Let's not be afraid of these people. Let's not say: Oh, we have to hide them down there in Cuba at Guantanamo Bay. No, we are Americans. We are America. We are not afraid of terrorists. Bring them before our courts, and let them face American justice. Let them face our prosecutors and our courts. Let's do it in a way that we can show the rest of the world how justice truly works. When we tell them, why aren't you running your courts in an open way, or when we criticize other countries, as we often do, let us not give them an opportunity to come back and say, well, you don't do it that way yourselves. No—we can and must say that we do. We have captured the son-in-law of Osama bin Laden, who conspired with him to commit a horrible crime against our Nation. It took us years to find him, but we got him. We brought him back here. And now we are taking him to court, and we are going to let a jury decide his guilt or innocence. That is the way it should be done. That is the American way. And that shows that we do not have to hide. We Americans are willing to stand up and face those who would attack us.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, before the distinguished Senator from Vermont leaves the floor, I really wish to compliment him not only in the way he has moved legislation but really the values, the American values, behind it. I think he has worked steadfastly on a bipartisan basis with Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM on our foreign operations. This is what has been called soft power, but there is nothing soft about it. It is part of our smart power strategy.

And what has it meant? It has meant healing the sick, feeding the hungry, making sure children whose legs have been blown off with land mines have an opportunity for rehabilitation or for the children of Haiti who lost their limbs because of the horrific nature of the earthquake—taking lessons learned from other places in the world, that they have a chance to do it.

Baltimore is the home of the Catholic relief organization. These are people who serve the world without religious creed. They serve whomever is in need. The way they extol the virtues of what they have been able to do has been amazing. What they say to me is that because of the work Senator LEAHY has done, they are able to leverage philanthropic dollars. Rather than being in lieu of government, they can leverage it because we are coming in to help the children, to help the children learn to walk, and they then come in with community development so that they learn a trade, so that we are literally rebuilding the lives of children in Haiti but also giving them a future where they are going to earn a livelihood. It is pretty terrific.

We have President Clinton, who does his global initiative like in Haiti, but we all have to be in it together, whether it is Bill Gates—the women of the Senate on a bipartisan basis last week met with Melinda Gates in terms of the great Gates Foundation, and they talked about their health care initiatives.

We said: Well, what does all this mean in terms of us?

They said: If you do the job only government can do, we can then do what we need to do.

This is unique. I do not know of other countries in the world that quite work with this synergy, letting our private philanthropic community do splendid, inspirational work. But they need a government.

The other thing we are able to do in this bill is provide something very near and dear, which is embassy security. We know we wanted to do more. We know that over the last couple of years the House has denied $400 million in embassy security. So we are heartsick at the way our Ambassador died. And while there is all that back-and-forth over talking points, which we are not getting into, the fact is that we need to protect our American men and women working in embassies because they are at a duty station, and now that duty station has become a battle station. We need to make sure we provide embassy security in the best way possible. We can debate policy, management, and so on, but at the end of the day we need to put money in the Federal checkbook to do that.

We lost an Ambassador in Benghazi. I lost an Ambassador, and America lost many others a few years ago at Khobar Towers. One was our Consul General. His name was Bartley. He was the highest ranking African American in the Foreign Service. His son was interning with him. They blew up the Embassy. He and his son died. We need to look out for these people. There was also a young lady who was there from the community, from CDC, working to make sure we were doing the right health initiatives, teaching, educating the leadership there. She died. Again, they were at their duty station, which has now become a battle station.

So I compliment the Senator for the children, his work on land mines, and his work on feeding the hungry. And do you know what. We make wise use because of the strong oversight. I know the Senator from Vermont listens to the inspector general, scrutinizes those GAO reports. We get a dollar's worth of assistance, and at the end of the day America is stronger because of what we do in this bill.

I wish to salute the Senator for his sense of bipartisanship, his leadership and stewardship not only in this bill but over the years. The Senator should be saluted, and I want to make sure this bill moves forward so we can get on to next year and even do a better, smarter job.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank the senior Senator from Maryland for her kind comments. We do a lot. It is interesting. In the foreign aid part, it is less than 1 percent of our budget. But what we do is show the face of America—the best of the face of America throughout the world. The distinguished Senator has been, throughout her career, both in the other body and here, a strong supporter of those programs and made life better for an awful lot of people who never know who Senator MIKULSKI is or Senator LEAHY or anybody else. All they know is that life is better because of the things we have done.

I was in Haiti just a couple of weeks ago. I have been there several times since the earthquake. I have seen how our programs have helped, including the Leahy War Victims Fund, which helps land mine victims around the world. The Senator from Alabama knows, as he was there with me a year ago.

I saw youngsters with prosthetics learning to walk again. I saw people from other parts of the world who were inspired by what the United States was doing.

I remember a physician from Brussels who had gone to Haiti. When I asked him why he spent so much time volunteering there, We were speaking French with each other, but I remember the emotion in his voice as he grabbed my arm and said, ''pour les enfants,'' for the children. Those children are not rich. They are not powerful. They will never vote for us. But we are human beings, and we have a responsibility.

The Senator from Maryland has spoken about security at our embassies. We tell people to go to some of the most dangerous parts of the world and show the best face of America. We have a responsibility to protect them. We have tried to get that money passed only to have had it held up in the other body. Let's continue our work.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, the bill Chairwoman MIKULSKI and Senator SHELBY have compiled is an excellent example of how hard work, cooperation, and good-faith negotiating can produce results in a body which is too often paralyzed by gridlock. The combined omnibus and CR, while not all I would wish for, is a balanced approach to keeping the government functioning through the remainder of the fiscal year while avoiding the specter of a government shutdown.

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill is one of five bills in this package, and it reflects the agreement reached between the Senate and the House last fall. The Senate bill is identical to the House-passed MILCON–VA bill, and it sends a strong message of support to our Nation's vets and military families, including previously appropriated advances for vets' medical care. The fiscal year 2013 bill provides a total of $144.8 billion for military construction, family housing, the VA, and four related agencies, including Arlington National Cemetery. Of that amount, $71.9 billion is discretionary funding. This includes $10.6 billion for military construction, $61 billion for the VA, and $347 million for related agencies.

This bill deserves the full support of the Senate. The alternative is a continuing resolution which is out of step with current requirements or a crippling government shutdown. A CR would be disastrous for military construction. The CR prohibits new starts, which would block execution of 97 percent of the fiscal year 2013 military construction program. As a result, more than 250 MILCON projects in 42 States, the District of Columbia, and overseas which are funded in the bill before us would be put on indefinite hold in the CR.

For the VA, a CR would not provide advance funding for fiscal year 2014 for vets' health care. Advance funding is an important tool to protect funding for vets' health care from the very predicament we find ourselves in today.

Another small but important program in this bill which would be scuttled by a CR is funding for needed cemetery expansion at Arlington National Cemetery. All of these problems are solved in this omnibus package.

Our Nation's vets, our military troops and their families, have made and are continuing to make great sacrifices in defense of this Nation. The bill before us recognizes and honors that commitment by funding a wide array of programs essential to the health and well-being of both vets and military families.

I urge the Senate to support this bill.

I yield the floor, and I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. I would like to compliment the Senator from South Dakota, who does an excellent job as assistant chairman on the Subcommittee on Military Construction, VA. He has worked steadfastly to bring up this bill. We are in agreement with the House. I wish to share a sense of urgency why this needs to happen.

In this bill, thanks to the leadership provided here, it increases funding to improve and accelerate claims processing to increase staff, business processes, and infotech enhancements. This kind of sounds bloodless and technocratic, but I stand before you today to tell you we have a claims processing crisis for our veterans, particularly in the area of applying for disability benefits.

I hate to tell you, Baltimore has one of the worst records. There are many reasons for this situation. It wasn't my fault. We let the infrastructure deteriorate, there are staffing issues, and there are an incredible number of our men and women coming back from the longest war we have fought with incredible injuries, with some bearing the permanent impact of the war, and

they are eligible. Many have multiple problems. This is not your World War II benefit claim.

So we have a backlog. We need to deal with that backlog; otherwise, shame on us. Those men and women fought hard. They gave it everything they had. Thanks to the skill and dedication of military medicine, we saved more lives in combat than in any other war.

I don't want to sound like an epidemiologist; I am a Senator. The fact is we have reduced what doctors call morbidity and mortality. That is the good news back to the hospital from the battlefields, from training medics, all the way to Germany, all the way now to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda.

What is the issue when they come back home? Because we have saved their lives, they have injuries. It means they have some level of disability. They may not be totally disabled, but they are eligible. If they have a permanent injury, they should have a permanent benefit from their government. While they were on the frontline, they should not need to stand in line to have their claims processed.

We have some claims which take as many as 3 or 4 years to complete. We need to pick it up. We need to up our game.

These are improvements. We have spoken to General Shinseki. I know the gentleman. The chairman of the committee has talked to him and was quite vigorous and insistent in his advocacy. I had General Shinseki come to Baltimore. I was ballistic about the claims situation in Baltimore. What did we need? We needed increased staff.

Did you know we do most of our disability claims by paper? We might as well be doing it by papyrus.

When you look at it—I am rarely brief, but I am short—the average disability claim, which I know you have gone to look at, sir, is sometimes 6, 8, and 12 inches tall. That is just the VA. In order to be certified you need to have the military give you information, you need to have Social Security give you information, and you need to have doctor information. In the meantime, somebody who lost a leg, somebody who has lost an arm, somebody who has lost so much time fighting a war, we ask too much from too few for so long who are there waiting for their benefit.

We need to go digital. If we are going to run government like a business, let's give them the standard business tools. That means more technology.

I really want to thank the Senator from South Dakota and his Republican vice chair for much of what they have done in this bill. What is nearest and dearest for me are two things: increased funding to deal with the claims process to receive what they deserve and also advance funding for VA medical to enable the veterans to receive the health care they were promised, they need, and they deserve. If you ever want to talk about an earned benefit, it is the men and women who need VA medical care and the men and women who need their claims processed to receive what they deserve and what they are entitled to.

This in and of itself is a reason to ensure we don't have a government shutdown and blow this program out of the window. I want to thank the Senator for his advocacy and also for taking good intentions and putting them in the Federal checkbook.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WARREN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I rise today to speak about an amendment to the pending matter, an amendment I intend to file when it becomes procedurally appropriate to do so.

The amendment I intend to file is about foreign aid to the nation of Egypt. But let me start by talking about foreign aid in general because there is a lot of debate about that and a lot of concern around the country about foreign aid. In fact, a lot of places I go people ask me: With things so tough here in the United States, why do we give money to other countries? Why are we giving money to other countries?

That is a very good question to ask. First, I would say, and I would caution people, that foreign aid is not 20 percent of our budget. It is not 30 percent of our budget. It is actually, on some days, less than 1 to 3 percent of our total budget.

Secondly, I would say that foreign aid has a very useful role. Just to set the table, I think people need to understand that our foreign aid has accomplished a tremendous amount of good around the world. For example, the USAID programs to fight HIV/AIDS in Africa has helped save millions of people. Millions of people are alive today because of the generosity of the American taxpayer.

It has helped to alleviate poverty. I think you should look at some of the great examples of foreign aid like the Marshall Plan or the work we undertook to rebuild Japan and the alliances we have today as a result.

One of the great stories of foreign aid is South Korea, a nation that was long a beneficiary of foreign aid—and not just from the United States but from the world—and today it is a donor in many of these forums.

So that is the good news about foreign aid—and foreign aid is important because it increases our influence. It is part of how we can influence what is increasingly a global economy. I think it is important to understand when people talk about the American economy, we don't just live in a national economy anymore. We live in a world where, increasingly, things that happen to you on a daily basis—the price of things that you are buying—some of these things are set halfway around the world not just halfway down the street or halfway across the city. So foreign aid is important because it deals with America's influence around the world and, in particular, our ability to influence things toward our national interests.

Foreign aid is not charity. Although it may be charitable, and although it may be motivated by us and our efforts to advance our principles and the things we think are right, foreign aid is not charity. Foreign aid is designed to further our national interests. That means every single dime we give in foreign aid should be conditioned toward our national interests, should be about furthering our national interests. And I think that is true all over the world, everywhere we give it, whether it is military aid or economic aid.

I think today we have one example of a place where we should start to examine how we give our foreign aid and examine it in a way that allows us to maximize our national interests. That country I want to talk about today is Egypt, and there is a lot of concerning things happening in Egypt.

We have all been witness to the amazing Arab spring and all the changes that it brought about to the region, potentially democracy, et cetera. And Egypt, obviously, has been a prime example of that, a country where all this has been occurring. It has brought to power a government that largely is governed today by the Muslim Brotherhood.

Here is the good news. The good news is these changes have occurred, and, theoretically, there is a more open society. The bad news is some of the people who have been brought to power bring with them an ideology that at times is troubling and, in fact, in practice has been deeply troubling.

For example, we have seen efforts in Egypt to undermine democratic institutions. We have seen efforts in Egypt to undermine the judiciary. We have seen open examples in Egypt of the freedom of religion being undermined. We have seen women and women's rights regress. We have seen irresponsible economic behavior in Egypt. And we can talk about the causes of all this, but this is the reality of what is going on in Egypt.

In addition to that, we should be deeply concerned about Egypt's ability or willingness to live up to their security arrangements with their neighbors, particularly our strong allies in Israel. They have a commitment they made years ago to securing the Sinai, to preventing weapons and terrorists and others from crossing through the Sinai and into the Gaza Strip and into Israel. This is a commitment and an obligation they have, and we should be

concerned about their unwillingness or inability, or both, to live up to these commitments.

So what I am asking for in this amendment is for us to reexamine the way we give foreign aid to Egypt, not to get rid of it because there is a real danger that we can start to lose some of these foreign aid programs. The American people are fed up with story after story of countries that are benefiting from our generosity, and then they open the newspaper and they read inflammatory comments that are made about us. They open the newspaper or turn on cable television, and they see reports from these countries where democracy is being undermined, where the rights of women are being trampled, where religious minorities are being persecuted, and they have a right to ask: Why are we giving so much money to these countries?

We actually have a record in Egypt of working very closely with their military organizations, and we hope that can continue. But we also want to ensure that Egypt continues to move toward a direction of true democracy.

Democracy is not just having elections. Having elections is one part of democracy. You have to govern like a democrat. You have to govern in an open process where you allow people to speak out, opposition parties to organize, have a court system that doesn't skew things in your favor and against the opposition. You don't just have to have elections to have a democracy; you need a lot more than that.

We saw last week where former Senator Kerry, now Secretary of State, awarded a sum—by the way, we have given over $70 billion of aid to Egypt since the 1940s. That is not an insignificant sum. But we look now at the $250 million in aid they received last week, and I believe that was unfortunate.

We have significant interests in ensuring that Egypt remains at peace with Israel, that the Morsi government does not undermine the democratic process, and that human and political rights of all Egyptians—including that of religious minorities and women—are respected, and our foreign aid should reflect that.

So what this amendment which I intend to propose does is a few things. Let me begin by saying this is not about canceling foreign aid to Egypt per se. This is about restructuring it in a way that lines up with the national interests of the taxpayers of the United States of America. I will have more to say about this amendment when the appropriate time to file it comes up, but let me just briefly describe it, and I hope to gain support from my colleagues and the public at large.

First, it would block the disbursement of additional economic support funds and new—not the existing but new—foreign military financing contracts until Egypt begins to enact economic reforms and the administration certifies that Egypt has done a few of the following:

It has adopted and implemented legal reforms which protect the political, the economic, and religious freedoms; it is not acting to restrict the political, economic, and religious freedoms and human rights of the citizens and residents of Egypt; it is continuing to demonstrate a commitment to free and fair elections and is not taking any steps to interfere with or undermine the credibility of such elections.

Another condition is that it has lifted restrictions in law and practice on the work and the funding of Egyptian and international NGOs—nongovernmental organizations—comprising those in human rights and democracy fields. Those include the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, and Freedom House; that it is fully implementing the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty; that it is taking all the necessary actions to eliminate smuggling networks and to detect and destroy tunnels between Egypt and the Gaza Strip—tunnels that are used to smuggle weapons and terrorists into the Gaza Strip—and is taking all other necessary actions to combat terrorism in an increasingly ungovernable space of the Sinai.

The second thing it does is it begins to recalibrate the U.S.-Egyptian security relationship toward Egypt's actual security needs.

Now, let me say this: It does not appear—and I don't know of anyone who would disagree with this—that Egypt has any imminent threat of being invaded by any one of their neighbors. It is not going to happen. Egypt's real security needs are its ability, No. 1, to live up to its obligations to stamp out terrorism within its borders and, in particular, to secure the Sinai, to close those tunnels that lead to Gaza. But the second security need it has is internal—in particular, street crime.

One of the ways Egypt is going to be able to rebuild its economy is through tourism, and I am not a tourism expert, but I think muggings, murder, and kidnappings are not good for tourism. People don't usually visit countries where these things are happening. This is the actual aid that Egypt needs in terms of its security.

It doesn't need tanks, it doesn't need jet fighters. It is not going to be invaded by a foreign country. That is not its real threat. I understand their desire to have those things—and, by the way, there are existing contracts to give them those things. But their real security needs are largely internal, and we want to recalibrate our military aid in the future to Egypt to meet their actual needs.

To that end, the amendment would require an analysis of Egypt's security requirements, produced by the Department of Defense in consultation with the Egyptian Government, and to be shared with the relevant congressional committees both in the House and the Senate. We also want the administration to certify that the Department of Defense has allocated a portion of Egypt's foreign military financing—no less than $100 million—toward counterterrorism tools, including the equipment and training related to border security, and to address the instability in the Sinai.

We also want a report on all FMF contracts the Department of Defense has carried out over the last 10 years, as well as the Department's plans for contracting over the next decade. I think it is wise to look at what we have done in the past, to fully understand the contributions the American taxpayer has made to Egypt's security in the past. But we also need to see the contracts that are pending move forward. All of these need to be aligned so we can ensure the aid we are giving them isn't just what they want, but it, in fact, is what they need, within the confines of what is in our national security and in our national interests because, once again, this is our money.

We should begin to shift U.S. assistance away from military programs and increasingly toward civilian assistance. So what this amendment would do is require the administration to begin a dialogue with the Egyptian Government and with the Egyptian civil society about the need to rebalance our system away from its current, almost obsessive focus on military aid by reallocating economic funds not provided to Egypt during periods when certification is not in effect toward democracy and governance programs, including direct support for secular, democratic, nongovernmental organizations, as well as programming and support for rule of law and human rights, good governance, political competition, consensus building, and civil society.

We should look at transferring the interest earned in Egypt's account. They have an account where this money sits when we give them this aid. Those accounts have a lot of money and generate a lot of interest. We should be able to take that interest that is generated from these funds and make it available and allocate these funds for democracy and for governance efforts.

Last but not least, we should require the President to submit a report to the Congress describing the specific results of an Egyptian policy review that includes a dialogue with the Government of Egypt and also civil society on how to rebalance the U.S. military and economic assistance.

Now, as most of these bills will have in them, this is going to have a national security waiver. In essence, if the Secretary of State comes to us and says: It is in our national security not to implement or fully implement this amendment at this time, as they do with almost all aid programs, they would have the right to do that. But they are going to have to do it every 180 days, at least twice a year, so we can be sure we are keeping up with the transition that is going on in Egypt.

Let me briefly address a few of the arguments that are going to come

against this potentially. One is that we have this incredibly strong relationship with the Egyptian military, and we don't want to undermine that. This is not intended to do that. We value that relationship. We hope it will continue to grow stronger. But the reality of it is, No. 1, these are hard-earned taxpayer dollars. At a time when the United States of America really doesn't have a lot of money to throw away—in fact, it has no money to throw away—we have to ensure the aid we give is aid that is effective, that is actually doing what it needs to be doing, not simply going to a wish list of some general or military official somewhere. This is not about cutting off the Egyptian military; this is about recalibrating our relationship with them to ensure that what we are making available to them is not just what they want, but it is what they need. That is the first thing I would say in that argument.

The second argument I would have—and we hope this day will never come—but as Egypt continues to transition, we don't know what the Egyptian military is going to look like 2 years from now, 5 years from now, 10 years from now. In fact, many of the top people we have been dealing with in the past aren't in those positions anymore. They have been replaced by the new government. And I would tell you, history is a lesson.

If the Morsi government and the Muslim Brotherhood take Egypt in a direction that is not in our national interests, that is not in the best interests of the region or our allies in the world, they are not going to be able to do that unless they replace the military leadership with people who agree with them on these things. So while we hope that never happens, we hope to do everything we can to prevent that from happening, we hope the Egyptian military will continue to be governed and run by professional men and women. But we can't guaranteed that, and we don't know what the Egyptian military will look like 5 years from now or 3 years from now.

That is why it is so important this waiver provision require the Secretary of State to do so twice a year, so we can keep up on the recent events. Who would have predicted 3 years ago that the events that happened in Egypt would have happened in our time? Yet they did. So we can't predict what Egypt is going to look like 3 years from now. We hope it will be better, but we don't know.

The other argument I have heard is, well, this is going to offend their sovereignty. They don't like us to tell them what to do with the aid we give them. The Egyptians are not going to take kindly to the idea of the United States dictating to them.

I, quite frankly, don't understand that argument because this is our money. They don't have to take our foreign aid. They don't have to accept it. But our foreign aid has never been—or should never have been—a blank check. This idea that somehow the money we are going to make available to people should be unconditional, quite frankly, doesn't make sense to me. This is our money. If they don't want the aid, they don't have to take it. But if they are going to accept our aid, we should have some say in it.

If it is the U.S. dollars of the U.S. taxpayer that are going toward this program, shouldn't the American people, through their elected representatives and their government, have some say—if not a predominant amount of say—over how these dollars are spent and on what these dollars are spent? And shouldn't we ensure those countries are headed in a positive direction, not in a direction that acts against our national interests?

I believe in foreign aid. I think foreign aid is important for the United States. But it needs to be done the right way. I think it needs to be done the right way across the board, in all of our aid programs. But this is one that is pressing, that is right in front of us.

I recently took a trip to the Middle East. I went to Jordan. I went to Israel. In many places where I went, I heard over and over again a lot of concern about the direction Egypt is headed. They are going through a balancing act right now, is what it appears. On the one hand, you have a deeply seated ideology that I think many people would find offensive. We have heard some of the past comments of the President of Egypt. We have heard some of the past comments of some of the leadership in the Muslim Brotherhood. It is downright offensive, and that is their ideology. We have seen some of that seep through in their public policymaking.

We also understand there is a pragmatic argument going on. They know they cannot survive in government and in power if they don't have an economy. They know—at least, I hope they know—they have to take steps to reform their economy. They have to take steps to increase their security so tourism will return. They know they need to do these things, and right now they are calibrating those two things: the pragmatism of needing to secure their country and needing to provide for economic growth versus their ideology.

In the ideological base of the Muslim Brotherhood that is calling for a rapid expansion of Islamist-type rule, you can see those pressures building within Egyptian society in and of itself. I think U.S. aid has an opportunity to tilt that conversation toward pragmatism. If we are smart about how we use our foreign aid, we can actually help tilt that conversation away from the ideology and toward pragmatism, toward security that is not designed to crack down on internal dissent, that is not designed to one day wage war against their neighbors in Israel or anywhere else, but in fact is designed to provide security against common street crimes, security against terrorism, to seal those tunnels in Gaza, to live up to their international obligations.

I think if we condition this the right way, we can help encourage them to take on the kind of economic reforms that Egypt needs to have the kind of economy they need. After all, that was the heart of the Arab spring, the heart of the Arab spring where hundreds of thousands of unemployed people—starting in Egypt particularly—were desperate for a better future and didn't think they could find it. Then they looked at a government that they saw as repressive and corrupt, and they wanted to replace it. But not with this.

The reason I feel so strongly about this is that as the Egyptian leaders are undertaking this cost-benefit analysis—should they lean more toward ideology or should they lean more toward pragmatism—through our foreign aid we actually have an opportunity to push them, to nudge them, to encourage them toward pragmatism.

I hope I can achieve bipartisan support for this amendment. I hope people will find it to be thoughtful and insightful. In the days to come, I look forward to addressing more questions that my colleagues may have on it. We are going to put some releases out about this, and I hope my colleagues will become interested in helping us achieve its passage.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, you have heard me speak to the Democratic caucus and to the press that moving the continuing resolution, or I should call it the continued funding resolution—remember, continuing the funding for fiscal year 2013 to our fiscal New Year's Eve, October 1, is our goal. We don't want a government shutdown, we don't want a government slamdown, lockdown. So we have been working very diligently on a bipartisan basis to fashion the bill that would get 60 votes so we would be filibuster-proof.

In the old days, majority ruled. Now it is supermajority. That is not a fight I am going to do here on this bill. My job is to keep the government funded, to work in an open, transparent, bipartisan and hopefully bicameral way.

I said this was like the last helicopter leaving a disaster area. I was trying to get the cargo on it to make sure we protected national security. We honored compelling human need, particularly for women and children in the area of education and health care, and we also looked at how we could generate jobs—not in government but government-generated jobs in the private sector, such as transportation, and make important investments in

science and technology that come up with the new ideas for the new products that will create jobs in our country and hopefully even for export around the world. That is what I have been trying to do.

I also had to give up a lot. I had to give up the funding for ObamaCare. This was not my choice. I know there will be an amendment offered to even defund it further. I happen to believe in what we did with President Obama's health care framework. I liked ending discrimination against women. I liked ending the discrimination against people who have children with preexisting conditions. I liked funding the amendment that provided access for women for mammograms, and for children for early detection and screening. But we could not do it.

One of the other things we could not do was we could not add a very modest pay raise for Federal employees. This bill will continue the existing pay rates. It is necessary to avoid a government shutdown for the entire government. Shutting down the government would make a tough situation worse for Federal employees. It would jeopardize our economic recovery. Shutting down the government would threaten the viability of small and medium-size businesses. It would even threaten the safety of our families, our economy, maybe even our country.

This is not a happy day for me and it is not a happy day for the millions of people who work diligently for the Federal Government. I have the great honor to represent 130,000 Federal employees—I wish you could tour Maryland with me, the way I have been up to your home State—each one doing important work for the Nation. And who are they, these employees? They are people who work at the National Institutes of Health, finding cures or ways to contain diseases—the next vaccine to help the flu endemic or protect us against a pandemic.

They are the civilian employees at the National Security Agency. We employ the largest number of mathematicians in the world. What do they do? They invent the kind of technology that breaks the codes and protects us—now in this whole new cyber domain. They are the people who run the weather satellites. The European model might have done a better job last week than they did, but do you know why? Because we have not had the resources to fund them the way the Europeans have.

I have employees at FDA right this very minute at their jobs, looking at medical devices to see if they are safe. Right at this very minute they are working with the private sector, which is bringing them new pharmaceuticals, new biotech and biologics that they could look at to see if they are safe and effective so they could go into clinical practice to help save lives here and be certified by the FDA, which would give us the ability to sell them around the world. We say to them: We know what you are doing, but tough luck; we can't give you a pay raise because we say we have out-of-control spending. I don't think we have out-of-control spending. Do we have to be more frugal? Do we have to be smarter? Do we have to get more value for the dollar? Absolutely. We are onto that. But don't attack Federal employees for the mismanagement of the Federal Government. That is right here. That is what we do. Don't blame them and don't make them pay the price. It is like making the middle class pay the price for more domestic cuts while we protect subsidies to corporate jets.

These 130,000 Federal employees help run the Hubbell Space Telescope, more discoveries—the most important telescope since Galileo invented the first one. I can't tell you how bad I feel that we are not at least giving them a .05-percent pay raise. And they are facing sequester, which could mean for many of them a 20-percent pay cut, if they are furloughed.

I visited NIH to see what was the impact of sequester. There was Carol Greider from Hopkins. She won the Nobel Prize 2 years ago. We are proud of her. NIH, within a week of my arrival there to meet with them, as I have done so often—they cut cancer rates 15 percent. Instead of pinning medals on them, we say: You don't get a pay raise. We have more important things to do with the money. You are the problem.

I don't think they are a problem at all. I think they are part of the solution—coming up with ways to help compelling human needs and creating jobs in our country in life sciences and giving us something to sell overseas. I think it is wrong to keep asking them for more when oil and gas companies make record profits and we don't ask them to give up tax breaks. It is wrong when we can't close one tax loophole that sends jobs overseas. When Senator MURRAY brings up her bill, I will talk more about these lavish tax earmarks. This is not the time and place. But it is time to say we have to protect our civil service.

Senator RUBIO just spoke about Egypt and he said they have to be able to govern. It is not enough to just bring down a dictator. That is an excellent point. We have to govern, too. And the hallmark of a democracy is a civil service that has integrity, that is promoted on the basis of meritocracy, that is independent of politics, doing missions that serve the Nation in research, technology, administering programs that help get transportation funding to Governors to build roads, bridges, and fund our pent-up demand for physical infrastructure, and then in human infrastructure—education, health care. That is what a democracy does and you need a civil service that is independent, has integrity and is promoted and hired and so on on the basis of meritocracy. What is the hallmark of a despotic, autocratic government, be they Communist or just plain despots? They are corrupt. You get ahead by taking a bribe, by doing a party favor, by looking the other way, on so many other things where you cannot even open a business or get a permit or so on unless there is a series of tipping fees. You can't get through an airport unless you bribe your way through it. That is what a corrupt, despotic, autocratic government does.

But when you visit democracies, the first thing you see is they have a civil service. What is the civil service? Integrity, competency, incorruptible. But we say: Yeah, yeah, you know, we know you have a Ph.D, or we know you are the blue-collar worker who manages the facilities at NIH to keep the lights on so the researchers can do their work. It is those people who help us have a great country, and a country we can be proud of.

I hope we resolve this sequester thing, with layoffs and furloughs and potential cuts of 20 percent. I wish we could have at least said one thing to the Federal employees, that we are at least going to give you a .05—a half of 1 percent—pay raise. I didn't like it because I thought it was so skimpy and Spartan.

But I will say this. The helicopter could not take off if it was on it. I think this is a terrible mistake. I hope in next year's regular order we can make this up. But I want to say to my Federal employees this was a Draconian choice. Do we try to give you a pay raise that would be important to you? Every penny and every dollar counts.

You led the Consumer Protection Agency. You certainly have the reputation, Madam President, of being a real fighter for the consumer, and you were the first in America to do a study that showed people were going bankrupt not because they bought too many Volvos, ate out too much, or lived a life of brie and wine and so on. It was because of medical catastrophes that faced them. You were the first to tell us about that, so you know about family incomes and what makes them and what breaks them. But I say this to you: Thank you for your work.

And I want to say to the Federal employees, thank you for your work. I wanted to do it with a modest pay raise, but right now my duty in the situation I find myself in reluctantly is that the way I serve you is to make sure there is no government shutdown. Because you know what. In my heart and in my mind—and as I see how different places function—there is no such thing as a nonessential Federal employee. Everybody at the workplace and who serves the Nation is doing their job with honesty, integrity, meritocracy, and is incorruptible. Let's make sure we honor them. We have to get this bill done. Let's get on the Murray budget and right our economy. Whatever problems we have, don't blame the Federal employees for the decisions made by the Congress to get us in the deficit and debt we are in.

They didn't do it, we did it. We should take the pay cut, not them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, I have been listening to the remarks of my colleague from Maryland, and as we say down South, she is spot on. Before she became chairperson of the Appropriations Committee, she was a member of that committee for many years. We worked together when I was chairman of the subcommittee and she was the ranking member and when she was the chairperson and I was the ranking member. We both came from the House. We were on the same committee in the House. We worked together. We struggled with each other from time to time, but in the end, we knew we had to come up with a product, and that is what we are trying to do here today.

I was hoping we could bring this bill to the floor. As the Senator from Maryland has been saying, there are a lot of Members who want to offer amendments. We could offer some amendments and debate them tonight and perhaps even vote on them tonight. We know we have this deadline. At the end of March the CR expires, along with the funding of the Government of the United States. I don't think any party—Democrat or Republican—is interested in any way of going to the brink again. It serves no purpose. It creates uncertainty in the marketplace; it creates uncertainty with the role we play in the Senate and the House.

As the Senator from Maryland has said, we have worked together. We have a continuing resolution which came from the House, with the Department of Defense and the MILCON-VA—military construction and VA—in it to fund until September 30, which is the fiscal year. It is about 6 months from now. We have added to the legislation which we hope to bring before the Senate the Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee, of which she is the subcommittee chair and I am the ranking member. We have worked together on that. Agriculture, which affects everybody in this country one way or the other, and homeland security, which is the essence of the security of this country at home, have been added by the Senate.

We scrubbed these bills all weekend. Both sides scrubbed them. I have given up things I would personally like, and she has given up things, probably including some things from the Democratic leadership. We have done the same over here. We are doing this to show the American people that America comes first. We need to show we can work together. We need to pass these bills. The sooner they get up here, the sooner amendments can be offered by Republicans and Democrats, the sooner we get the process working and we get into the debates. That is what this legislative body is all about.

The CR we are bringing up—or the hybrid CR—is funded at the fiscal year 2012 levels, and it is consistent with the Budget Control Act. It would leave the sequester in effect. It gives some leeway—some but not unbridled—to enable the situation with sequester to maybe work a little better. I think it is good policy and bad procedure.

We are going to have to cut because we cannot sustain deficits of $1 trillion. We cannot continue to go down the road we are on. We have to change the trajectory of this country. We cannot sustain ourselves if we have a $20 trillion or $25 trillion debt. Whether you are a Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, Independent, or whatever you are, you should want a strong monetary policy and a strong economic policy.

We have a few more years left, and this is a good start here in the Senate. If we can get this bill up and pass it, then the House will do something. We will fund the government until September 30, which is what we are supposed to do. If we do that, then we can start on the 2014 budget. From there we can perhaps go to regular order. That is what we wish to do in the appropriations process so we are not going from crisis to crisis.

What we have done in the House and the Senate—and the White House is involved in this too—in recent years is we have been lurching from crisis to crisis, and then we come up to the deadline and people say: Oh, we have to have certainty. So we kick the can down the road a few more yards. That is not the way to do business. This country is too important. The business community needs certainty, people in government need certainty, and I think this is a good first start. I hope we can get this process moving.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, as I rise to talk about the budget that was released in the House of Representatives, I want to first commend our chair Senator MIKULSKI and ranking member Senator SHELBY for working together. I could not agree more with what Senator SHELBY said about getting back to regular order and getting back together. This is an example of what we need to do. I want to commend both Senators.

We obviously have very different points of view. People can come together and listen to each other and be willing to compromise, which is not a bad thing. I don't know any part of life where we don't compromise. I have been trying to figure that one out. When you have children, wouldn't it be nice not to have to compromise? Somehow we always have to. I want to commend both of our leaders on the Appropriations Committee.

I am very hopeful we can return to regular order and hash out our very different perspectives and very different views of the country. I think we have seen that today with Chairman RYAN with the Republican budget. We will see a different view tomorrow with Chairman MURRAY coming through with a budget as we work through the budget in committee this week and then on the floor. This way reasonable people can sit down and listen to each other and find a path forward.

Most importantly, I think if we listen to the American people we represent—their values and their priorities—we can move forward. I do feel strongly that what has been released today in the House is the wrong set of values; it is the wrong approach. Actually, I am surprised we are seeing the same kind of budget we have seen for the last couple of years come out of the House—particularly one where the public spoke so strongly against the foundations of what is in that budget. It has been called a balanced budget. It is anything but balanced.

Overall, it is my understanding that there is an identification of some $5 trillion that will be cut in spending, but nobody says where. Then they say: Oh, the budget is balanced. Well, as our leaders on appropriations know, we actually have to get in and say where it is going to be cut so we can balance the budget, which this does not do. It does not balance the budget, and it is certainly unbalanced when it comes to the values represented in the budget.

I have to start with the one issue that is so concerning to me, and that is the whole question of Medicare. Once again we are seeing in the Republican budget of the House the effort to eliminate Medicare. It basically eliminates Medicare as an insurance plan. It basically says: You go out and find private insurance. They changed the names to different things. They tried to make it sound better, but it all comes down to the fact that people will be given a voucher. Good luck trying to find private insurance.

It was the private insurance sector and the lack of affordable insurance for seniors which created Medicare in 1965. As we get older, we lose more health care because we are more expensive to cover. Before Medicare, it was very difficult to find affordable insurance. In fact, it was impossible for many people. As Americans we came together and said: If you are 65 or older or if you are disabled in this country, you have the right to have insurance and health care available and affordable to you. We created a health insurance system called Medicare. By the way, Medicare costs dramatically less to administer than any private sector plan. We are talking 3 percent or 4 percent to administer Medicare as opposed to 15 percent, 20 percent, 25 percent going to administrative costs and profits and so on. So it is very efficient.

There are issues we need to address, and we have been doing that. In fact, we have put in place cost savings over the next 10 years by eliminating overpayment to insurance companies that do what is called Medicare Advantage. It is interesting that while Chairman RYAN and the House Republicans say

they are going to do away with Medicare, they put the $700 billion we saved by stopping overpayments to insurance companies—as well as doing other things for prevention and cost savings—in their budget. After criticizing it, they want the savings, but they turn around and want to eliminate Medicare. It is a very interesting combination of things here that is a hocus-pocus kind of approach with smoke-and-mirrors as far as how they are coming up with their budget.

The bottom line is very clear: It guts Medicare. It guts Medicare, but not in order to fund or strengthen Medicare services or health care services in some way. The astounding thing is they continue to put forward a budget that guts Medicare in order to continue tax giveaways for the very wealthy and well-connected people in this country. It makes no sense. It makes no sense, and our budget will be very different than this one.

Medicare has been a great American success story. Medicare and Social Security have lifted a generation of Americans out of poverty. It has given them the ability to live longer and healthier lives. It has allowed my mom, who is on her way to 87, to play with her now great-grandchildren. By the way, my three grandchildren are the most beautiful children in the world. My mom is able to play with them and be healthy and active because of something called Medicare which was put in place to give her the opportunity to pay into a system so she could have health care and be able to live a longer life. That is a great American success story.

We know we are living longer. The greatness of Medicare is that people are healthier and living longer, and so we know we have to do some refiguring here and have some savings. We are already doing that. Over the next 10 years we are putting in place $700 billion in savings by focusing more on prevention. We are focused more on wellness visits and helping people on the front end before they get very sick, as well as cutting overpayments.

We are now hearing that Medicare is going to have a $500 billion savings as well, and that insurance rates and growth have actually slowed. We are seeing the actuaries reconfigure the savings. CBO, the budget office, reconfigured the cost of Medicare and Medicaid to create more savings because of things we have begun to do. Thanks to health care reform we are able to focus more on prevention and people being able to see a doctor. We are able to do all those things that save money without cutting health care for people.

We are very committed to making sure we have savings in Medicare and that we strengthen Medicare for the future. Whatever decisions we need to make, we need to do that for Social Security and other areas as well. The difference we have is, we think it should exist. We think it should exist as a health insurance plan. I cannot imagine any way in which our Senate majority would ever vote for what is in the budget that was released by the Republican caucus today. So we are looking at very different priorities.

In the area of Medicaid, we are also looking at very different priorities. The majority of Medicaid, in terms of the number of people, are children; the majority of money under Medicaid is actually spent on seniors—on nursing homes, people who are in extended care facilities, and so on. Again, when we think about the budget being released in the House of Representatives by Chairman RYAN and the Republicans, they go right to Medicare, eliminate Medicare as an insurance plan, and then they block grant and cut Medicaid, which goes to the poorest seniors in nursing homes, so they get a double whammy in the budget that has been released by Chairman RYAN and the House of Representatives.

We also know they are slashing investments for middle-class families as well as the vulnerable, as well as public safety, police, and fire. I just left my mayors from Michigan coming in and talking about what has happened to them on the frontlines. We have trickle-down cuts, and they end up with it all in their laps, having to figure out how to provide local services. When we talk about the fact that there would be dramatic disinvestments or cuts in public safety, police, fire, and so on, they are appalled and desperately worried about how they are going to make sure they can respond to the people who live in their communities.

In education, cuts, of course, to Head Start, financial help for people to be able to go to college, all of which are good things.

Roads and bridges.

Another piece that is very concerning to me is our nutrition programs which have been put in place for families who have challenges. People have lost their jobs and they need some help with putting food on the table for their families. We are seeing that program, the SNAP program—Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—gutted with $160 billion—$160 billion in cuts that would leave millions of children, millions of families without help. Interestingly, the spending on the nutrition programs, on SNAP, is actually going down. Why? Because it is there when people need it, when they have a crisis, and then the spending is not used when families go back to work. So we are seeing over $11 billion in decreases in spending because the economy is improving and people are going back to work. That is the way we want to bring spending down.

Interestingly, within my purview as chair of the Agriculture Committee, I am also deeply concerned about the cuts in the Republican budget in the House to crop insurance. Within our farm bill, we have two disaster assistance programs. One is for families, which is nutrition assistance. It goes up and down with the economy. The other is crop insurance for farmers and ranchers, which goes up and down with the economy.

We have had huge droughts and late freezes on our orchards and others where folks have been decimated, but because of crop insurance this year, rather than doing ad hoc disaster assistance all over the country, we have crop insurance. People buy crop insurance are covered if they need it, and we have been able to see farmers sustain themselves because crop insurance has worked. So crop insurance costs again go up and down based on whether there are disasters. Supplemental nutrition goes up or down whether or not there is a family disaster. Both of those are hit in this budget and make absolutely no sense.

I can assure my colleagues that in the farm bill we will present again to colleagues as we did last year—and we are so grateful for the bipartisan support we had—we will strongly support efforts around crop insurance as well as nutrition.

Finally, let me just say that very different values are presented in the budget presented by Chairman RYAN and the Republicans in the House by going after the middle class, actually raising middle-class taxes in order to fund more tax breaks for the wealthy and the special interests in the country; gutting Medicare and using that money for additional tax cuts for the very wealthy; gutting our investments in science, innovation, and education to grow the economy in order to pay for more tax cuts for the wealthy.

This story seems to go on and on and on. It always comes back to the same place: The wealthy, the well connected, the special interests do very well. Middle-class families get hit, seniors get hit, the vulnerable get hit, children are hit and are asked to pay the tab for trying to bring down a deficit that, frankly, they didn't create. So that is the story in the House.

Our chairwoman of the Budget Committee, Senator MURRAY, will present a very different story tomorrow, one that is focused on growth in the economy, supporting the middle class, protecting Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security for the future, and making investments that grow the economy.

One of the things I know after working on the issue of jobs for a long time is that we will never get out of debt with 12 million people out of work in this country, so we better be focused on jobs and supporting the private sector to create jobs—large businesses, manufacturers, small businesses, partnering on innovation, education, and so on. That has to be part of our long-term strategy to get out of debt as well as making smart cuts and other kinds of smart investments.

Again, I come to the floor to commend colleagues who are on the floor showing the right way to do things—to work together, to listen to each other, to work across the aisle on a bipartisan

basis to get things done. We have a very different picture going on in the budget committees. We have a long way to go when we start with eliminating Medicare as we know it, but the House Republicans are saying, no, we want to strengthen Medicare for the future and keep it intact for seniors. All the other issues we are in a very different place. But I think it is very important that we make a commitment to listen to each other and do our best to find a path forward. We need to find a path. People are counting on us to get things done. They are counting on us to both grow the economy and create jobs and have a strong middle class and they are counting on us to reduce the deficit, all of which we can do if we are willing to work together and listen to each other and find a path forward.

I thank my colleagues for giving me the time. I wish to congratulate them again on the work they are doing. I ask that we work together as we go forward in completing the task on growing the economy and reducing the deficit.

Thank you very much.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. COATS. Madam President, when I go back to Indiana and meet with Hoosiers, they often ask why Washington seems to experience a crisis every few weeks. It is a debt limit battle. It is a threat of a government shutdown. It is the fiscal cliff on New Year's Eve. It is the sequester. And the list goes on and on, including the funding battle we are in now. Of course, the next round of the debt limit debate is scheduled for May, and on and on it goes. Hoosiers and I think most Americans—and I think most Members of this body—are getting awfully tired of this soap opera drama that occurs every few weeks here.

I think we need to move to the point where we can address the major issues. One of the steps in doing that is to fund this government for the next 6 months. I do not know of anyone here who wants a government shutdown. We do have some urgent things we need to do. We do need to address our funding imbalance that is significantly creating a major problem for us, but in order to get there, we have to do some interim things here to keep the country functioning. We need to commit to go forward and do the big things. In the meantime a 6-month funding resolution has been brought forward here. There are things in this that none of us are going to like. Everybody is going to have problems with parts of this. Everybody is going to think it should have been fashioned just a little bit differently.

The leaders of the Appropriations Committee have put a great effort into constructing a resolution that I think will adequately fund this government going forward, but they do so with the understanding that the commitment to address our spending issues and the commitment to do everything we can to put together a large plan in order to deal with outgoing issues is absolutely necessary. Hopefully, that will be accomplished in the next few months. To start that, you have to have a budget.

I am pleased now that we are going to be taking up a budget debate in terms of the next fiscal year's funding, and we will be taking that up next week. So these two measures together, with the sequester that is already in place and actions that have already been taken, hopefully will be putting us on a path to fiscal health and solvency.

Every family, every business, even local and state governments have to operate on a budget or they cannot maintain and establish the kind of fiscal discipline necessary to get to the point where they are not spending more money than they are taking in. We have seen a cataclysmic plunge into debt that has enormous impact on the future of this country, and we have to address that.

Vice President BIDEN once said: Show me your budget, and I will tell you what you value. Well, for 4 years we have been waiting to see a Senate budget, so we do not know what is valued. Finally, we are getting to the point where we will address that.

I think the responsibility to provide a budget on which to operate is not only lawful, as it is currently enshrined in our statutes, but it is a moral obligation we must fulfill as a body. Without casting blame on one side or the other, it is time that we go through the budget process and establish the direction in which this government will go in terms of spending for the next fiscal year.

Given our soaring national debt and out-of-control spending, eventually we are going to have to make very tough choices that we have been avoiding for years. The more we prolong these challenges we face and the longer we wait to act, the harder it is going to be. We have the responsibility to wisely spend the taxpayers' dollars and not to ask more of them than is absolutely necessary to perform our essential functions.

I am urging my colleagues to go forward in doing what is necessary to keep this government operating but do so with the commitment that we will address these tough questions, that we will address the necessary procedures and make the tough, necessary decisions to put our country on a fiscal path to health. Without that, we are jeopardizing our future, and we are condemning millions of Americans to unemployment or underemployment. We are growing at half the historic rate and have been for the last 4 years. If this stands the way it is, we will continue to see a country in decline, and, more importantly, we will continue to see people hurting. We will continue to see people without meaningful work. We will continue to see an inability to provide the kinds of opportunities, innovation, and creativity that have made this country so successful in the past.

So with that, Madam President, there does not appear to be anyone ready to speak. I am happy to stop now, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, in the midst of this momentous debate, truly one which will determine the future of the country, I rise on a matter of equal importance, in my view.

Today we welcomed to the Capitol 26 bicyclists, riders who left Saturday morning on this journey. This journey led them to travel the roads from Newtown, CT, to dramatize the importance of actions against gun violence in the United States.

I have said about Newtown that we saw on December 14 of last year enormous evil and depravity in the deaths of 20 beautiful, innocent children and 6 dedicated, courageous educators who literally perished trying to save the lives of those children. We saw evil that day in Connecticut, but we also saw enormous goodness and heroism in the educators who sought to save those children and the first responders who charged into the school. They did so not knowing what would befall them, what they would see, and thereby stopped the massacre.

The community came together in support of the families and all who were affected so deeply by that tragedy. This community has demonstrated enormous strength and courage over these months. It is an example of the quintessential values which make us proud to be an American.

The riders who came to the Capitol, who rode from Newtown on a rough and difficult journey, also showed something profoundly significant and important about Newtown as a community, as well as about themselves. They included as an honorary rider a parent of one of the victims, Chris McDonnell, who was at the departure, and his wife, Lynn, who was also there at the beginning, although she didn't ride.

They carried with them, those 26 riders, the memory of Grace McDonnell. As one of them said—, Monte Frank, who organized and led the effort—Grace was on their wheels. They carried with them the memory of Grace, but they also carried the hopes and

hearts of America. Everywhere they went on that journey, people stopped them, thanked them and honored them, as I seek to do today here on the floor of the Senate.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD two letters, both written to the chairman of the Judiciary Committee and the ranking member, along with Senators MURPHY and myself, letters written by Lynn and Chris McDonnell and a separate letter written by the families of some of those victims.

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

MARCH 11, 2013.

Hon. PATRICK LEAHY,
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee, Russell Senate Building, Washington, DC.
Hon. RICHARD BLUMENTHAL,
Senate Judiciary Committee, Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.
Hon. CHUCK GRASSLEY,
Ranking Republican, Senate Judiciary Committee, Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.
Hon. CHRIS MURPHY,
Senate Judiciary Committee, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEAHY AND SENATORS GRASSLEY, BLUMENTHAL, AND MURPHY: We are 32 family members of victims who were killed in the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012—innocent children and their educators responsibly going about their day.

No one can describe our pain and the brutal day-to-day emotions we suffer. No one can bring our loved ones back and no one from our community of Newtown, Connecticut will ever go back to ''normal.''

In the midst of our anguish we have learned about the dangerous loopholes in our nation's gun laws and we are compelled to speak out to save others from suffering what we have endured. We are writing today to express our deep conviction and support for the President's plan to reduce gun violence in America.

Specifically we are asking members of Congress to:

1. Require a criminal background check for every gun sold in America that includes a review of all disqualifying records and meaningful record keeping for all sales—in the same manner that Federally licensed dealers are currently required;

2. Ban military-style assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines; and

3. Make gun trafficking a federal crime, with real penalties for straw purchasers;

The epidemic of injury and death from gun violence is a plague on America, especially since the toll it takes on our families is preventable. Our nation's families deserve to be safe and free in their schools, movie theaters, workplaces and their homes. We ask Congress, in honor and memory of our loved ones, to support the measures that the President has put forward to help stem the epidemic of gun violence.

Our precious children and family members who were so brutally murdered on December 14th deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,

Jackie Barden, Mother of Daniel Barden; Mark Barden, Father of Daniel Barden; Neil Heslin, Father of Jesse Lewis; Veronique Pozner, Mother of Noah Pozner; Len Pozner, Father of Noah Pozner; Gilles Rousseau, Father of Lauren Rousseau; Teresa Rousseau, Mother of Lauren Rousseau; Andrew Rousseau, Brother of Lauren Rousseau; Matthew Rousseau, Brother of Lauren Rousseau; Suzanne Connors, Sister of Mary Sherlach; Jane Dougherty, Sister of Mary Sherlach; Joseph Greene, Brother of Mary Sherlach; Carlos Soto, Father of Victoria Soto; Donna Soto, Mother of Victoria Soto; Carlee Soto, Sister of Victoria Soto; Carlos M. Soto, Brother of Victoria Soto.

Jillian Soto, Sister of Victoria Soto; Donald Fagan, Grandfather of Victoria Soto; Debra Cronk, Aunt and Godmother of Victoria Soto; Robert Cronk, Uncle of Victoria Soto; Dean Fagan, Uncle and Godfather of Victoria Soto; Denise Fagan, Aunt of Victoria Soto; Don Fagan, Uncle of Victoria Soto; Linda Fagan, Aunt of Victoria Soto; Alex Fagan, cousin of Victoria Soto; Brianne Cronk, cousin of Victoria Soto; Christopher Fagan, cousin of Victoria Soto; Donald Fagan, cousin of Victoria Soto; Douglas Fagan, cousin of Victoria Soto; Heather Cronk, cousin of Victoria Soto; Wesley Cronk, cousin of Victoria Soto; Zachary Fagan, cousin of Victoria Soto.

MARCH 11, 2013.

Hon. PATRICK LEAHY,
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee, Russell Senate Building, Washington, DC.
Hon. RICHARD BLUMENTHAL,
Senate Judiciary Committee, Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.
Hon. CHUCK GRASSLEY,
Ranking Republican, Senate Judiciary Committee, Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.
Hon. CHRIS MURPHY,
Senate Judiciary Committee, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATORS LEAHY, GRASSLEY, BLUMENTHAL AND MURPHY, On December 14th our family was forever torn apart by gun violence. On that day we lost the love and light of our family, our daughter Grace. Grace and nineteen of her 1st grade classmates and six teachers were senselessly murdered at the Sandy Hook Elementary School. One can not describe the pain and anguish that our family has experienced, a pain that goes beyond just our immediate family, but permeates our entire community.

In the wake of our darkest day, we have become acutely aware that the state of our gun laws in America is at best ineffective. While no one thing led to the devastation that occurred in Sandy Hook on December 14th, it will be a compressive approach that leads us to preventing such loss of life in the future.

We are writing today to express our conviction and support for the President's plan to reduce gun violence in America. Specifically we are appealing to members of Congress to:

Require a comprehensive criminal background check for every gun sold in America that includes a review of all disqualifying records and meaningful record keeping for all sales—in the same manner that Federally licensed gun dealers are required;

Ban all military-style assault weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines;

Establish gun trafficking as a federal crime, with substantial penalties for straw purchasers.

We hope that all of our nation's elected representatives will step forward with the moral courage and commitment needed to tackle the grave issue of gun violence that confronts us. We ask that action is chosen over inaction when it comes to protecting the most vulnerable among us, our children.

We appeal to you as parents to honor the memories of those lives lost at Sandy Hook and support the measures that the President has put forward to reduce the epidemic of gun violence.

That much is owed to our children.

Sincerely,

CHRIS & LYNN MCDONNELL.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. These letters summarize the reason for their journey in very specific terms, stating:

In the midst of our anguish we have learned about the dangerous loopholes in the Nation's gun laws, and we are compelled to speak out to save others from suffering what we have endured. We are writing today to express our deep conviction and support for the President's plan to reduce gun violence in America.

Specifically, we are asking Members of Congress to:

1. Require a criminal background check for every gun sold in America that includes a review of all disqualifying records and meaningful recordkeeping for all sales—in the same manner that federally licensed dealers are currently required;

2. Ban military-style assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines; and

3. Make gun trafficking a Federal crime, with real penalties for straw purchasers.

The epidemic of injury and death from gun violence is a plague on America, especially since the toll it takes on our families is preventable.

The letters go on.

As I told them when they arrived, an event which was electric, literally in the shadow of the Capitol, their journey sent a message. Very simply, all of us who believe we must stop a scourge and epidemic of gun violence, all of us must keep on pedaling. We must do as they did. Even though our road, like theirs, may be rough and uphill at times, we need to keep on pedaling and working. Never give up. We need to keep faith with those victims and their families, the 26 victims of that massacre at Sandy Hook. When they rode to Congress, their message to us is we need to keep faith with those victims and assure Newtown never happens again. If it happened in Newtown, it can happen anywhere in America. It is not just a mass shooting which is involved, it is the 2,500 people who have been victims of gun violence since December 14, all around Connecticut, all around the Nation, not only in communities such as Newtown, the quintessential New England town, but on the streets of Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford, in neighborhoods, in big cities, rural areas, and suburban towns.

Team 26 is really Team Connecticut and Team America. It brings those values, courage, and strength Newtown had shown to Congress. Congress needs to heed and hear the country, just as people on their route honored Team 26. The American people believe we must do something about gun violence in America. They believe overwhelmingly, the polls show 80, 90 percent on all of these issues. They want action from this Congress.

As the President of the United States said to all of us in his State of the Union, the American people want a vote. The victims' families from Tucson, Virginia Tech, and Aurora deserve a vote. This is why Team 26 made this journey, and why they embody the conscience of America. The letters they

have written to Senators here call for action on measures which are common sense and common ground. We can reach a bipartisan compromise if we recognize the carnage, death, and destruction that is the result of gun violence in America.

These measures are law enforcement tools. Background checks enable enforcement of existing laws, the prohibition against criminals, drug addicts, domestic abusers, and the seriously mentally ill from purchasing guns, not just from federally licensed dealers. Background checks are necessary to enforce that law, just as is the prohibition on purchase of ammunition by those same categories of people. Likewise, the Federal ban on illegal trafficking and straw purchases is necessary to enforce existing prohibition. We have work to do.

I want to conclude by thanking those who are all family, who have stood strong and spoken out. Every time they do, it is with grief and pain. Anyone who spent time with them—and I have been privileged to spend hours and hours, days, over these past months with those families, as well as first responders, who still bear the scars, emotional scars, which are deeply felt.

I have great admiration for their courage and strength. I hope this body will take heart from it and will take their leadership as a message we must act, we must vote, we must do something about gun violence in America.

I am proud to welcome Team 26.

I ask unanimous consent the full list of all riders and their support group be printed in the RECORD.

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

Rider #1. Monte Frank, who is here today with his wife Leah, and his daughters Becky and Sarah; Bill Muzzio Rider; Chris Peck, Newtown, Connecticut Rider; John Funk, South Kent, Connecticut Rider; Stephen Badger, Roxbury, Connecticut Rider; Andrea Myers, Danbury, Connecticut Rider; Mike Andrews, Danbury, Connecticut Rider; Tom Officer, Litchfield, Connecticut Rider; Jeremy Brazeal, Manchester, Connecticut Rider; Officer Jeff Silver, Newtown, Connecticut Rider; Matt Baldwin, Redding, Connecticut Rider; Jonathan Lowenstein, North Kingstown, Rhode Island Rider; Lieutenant Gary Lyke, Brookfield, Connecticut Rider; Michael Magur, Newburgh, New York Rider; Andy Officer, Goshen, Connecticut Rider; Fred Thomas, Cape Elizabeth, Maine Rider; Carl Reglar, Mt. Vernon, New York Rider; Wayne Prescott, Litchfield, Connecticut Rider; Kevin Fitzmaurice, Middlebury, Connecticut Rider; Megan Cea, West Harrison, New York Rider; Brian Suto, Oxford, Connecticut Rider; Matt Emeott, Woodbury, Connecticut Rider; John Ford, West Harrison, New York Rider; Aidan Charles, Middletown, Connecticut Rider; Heather Peck, Newtown, Connecticut Honorary Team; and Rider: Chris McDonnell, Sandy Hook, Connecticut.

And their Support Crew: Sean Cavanaugh, Danbury, Connecticut Support Crew; Becky Frank, Sandy Hook, Connecticut Support Crew; Adam Silbert, New York, NY Support Crew; Peter Olson, Bethel, Connecticut Support Crew; Greg Meghani, Bethlehem, Connecticut Support Crew; and Mike Conlan, Ridgefield, Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I wish to comment on the remarks by our colleague from Connecticut, Senator BLUMENTHAL.

I say to the Senator, we in Maryland want to once again express our condolences to the people of Newtown. We have lost people in gun violence, nothing like you have, but we have it there. Most recently when a high school opened, a young man who needed mental help came in and one of our young men was shot. Fortunately, he survived. He is an intellectually challenged young man, full of spunk. He has been made an honorary Raven, honorary Oriole. Lady Gaga, who is his favorite, even sent him CDs.

We need to deal with this issue. We need to deal with guns and—I agree with the NRA—we need to deal with mental health. We need to put mental health in the Federal checkbook to train the professionals, do the research and know we are doing the right thing.

One of the fathers from the Newtown tragedy has cycled through Maryland to raise the issue through all of the awful rain in the only way he can to speak up for his daughter.

I want to congratulate the Senator and his colleague from Connecticut, Senator MURPHY, for continuing to be steadfast. I wish to say we support you not only with words but deeds. It is wonderful to express our condolences, to send toys to the children, to do all of that. We need to put money in the Federal checkbook. We must first of all confirm our BATF Administrator. The very person in charge of guns should be confirmed. We need to then look at our own legislation about illegal guns, all of what the Senator is talking about.

On the mental health side, the Senator was a member of the HELP Committee. I know now Senator MURPHY of Connecticut is on the HELP Committee, the Presiding Officer also. We need to look, even now as we look at the CR, how we may do the right research.

I wish to close with one melancholy thing, which is a consequence of the sequester. Senator HARKIN with the HELP Committee held a hearing on mental health. The Director of the Institute on Mental Health was on that committee, and I believe the Presiding Officer was there. I asked him what would be the consequences of sequester on the National Institute of Mental Health, since everyone wants mental health, and that is the research.

This is what he replied: We are not going to fund certain research projects.

Let me tell you one that holds such promise it is going to be a sad day for us not to do it. Here is the test—and, please, I am not a scientist and certainly not a neurological scientist. But there are certain kinds of mental health problems that come on onset, particularly on young males, who are postpuberty, often after high school or as they go into college. As in Aurora, the young man who shot the people was already a graduate student. These things come on.

The Director of the NIH mental health said they wanted to do research for early detection, biochemical as well as environmental. This is not to earmark, paint them in a corner, or push them in a corner and stigmatize them, but they could receive that help early.

We need to know more. Whether that study is a good idea—I am sure it is, it is peer reviewed—I wish to say to the Senator, the reason we need to get this bill done, the budget done, and go on to regular order is to actually put money in the Federal checkbook to do what the American people want. We can do great gun control legislation on the this floor, but I want to support that mental health component.

I call upon the NRA and all of its members to support us to move the Federal budget, look at the mental health aspects. I believe we would have bipartisan support. I believe we would have grassroots support. At the end of the day not only would we prevent gun violence, but along the way, the President's brain initiative. We could learn a lot more and we could help our people. This is what I mean when I say we need to fund compelling human need and do the research. But I salute the Senator for his advocacy. And my condolences to the people of Newtown, but not with words, let's get to the deeds and let's get the deeds done.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I wish to briefly thank my great colleague and friend for those remarks stated so eloquently. I could not agree more. Mental health has to be part of a comprehensive strategy, as does school safety. No single measure for gun violence control can do it alone.

That is why I began by referring to the momentous debate we are having today about the future of initiatives such as mental health. And I join in challenging the NRA—for all its opposition, staunch and steadfast, against any measure trying to stem or stop gun violence in America—to join in seeking common ground on mental health initiatives and other measures that are common sense. I urge gun owners—responsible people who enjoy recreation and hunting—as well as others who are intent on stopping violence in America to support these mental health services for diagnosis and treatment. That is why I have joined in those measures as well for the Judiciary Committee and the HELP Committee.

But I really wish to thank the Senator from Maryland for her incomparable and invaluable leadership on this issue.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, I think today has been an interesting day here in the Senate. We have been trying—the Senator from Maryland and I—to get the bill we have been talking about to the floor so people will have an opportunity to offer their amendments, to debate their amendments, and we in the Senate will be able to vote them up or down. That is what this process is about.

Although I know it is getting late in the evening, I am hoping we can lock in some time agreement with the leadership. I am sure Senator REID and Senator MCCONNELL are working on that, as well as Senator MCCAIN and Senator COBURN. But if we could get started on this tomorrow and have a healthy debate, there are some issues that ought to be brought up.

I wish to take a few minutes to review a few of the outlines of what we hope to accomplish this week—what is in this bill and what is not.

What this bill would do is allow agencies the additional ability to address priorities in light of sequester cuts. We all know they were Draconian—good policy, as I said, but bad process. The proposed legislation the Senator from Maryland and I are bringing to the floor, hopefully, is in full compliance with the spending caps required by the Budget Control Act, and it brings, with the sequester, the total to under $1 trillion. So we are doing some serious cutting, but we ought to do it wisely by what we do.

Both sides have given in to get to where we are. There is no new funding for ObamaCare, no new funding for Dodd-Frank, no State-specific earmarks.

The bill enables the Department of Defense—and we all care about security—to better implement sequester, and it increases the DOD transfer authority for reprogramming, thus mitigating a portion of the national security impact of the sequester and other across-the-board cuts.

The bill also ensures that veterans programs receive adequate funding—$2.5 billion above the fiscal year 2012 levels—for VA discretionary spending. So that is a good increase.

The bill requires greater accountability of government employees attending conferences, including associated expenses, so that we don't read these horror stories of people going to conventions and living high off the hog while people are struggling to make ends meet.

The bill also prohibits the transfer of Guantanamo prisoners to the United States, among other things.

The legislation would provide additional funding for worldwide diplomatic and facility security in the post-Benghazi environment. When we send somebody overseas, we want to make sure, whether it is an Ambassador, an employee, or somebody going temporarily, that they are as safe as we can keep them. We know we live in a dangerous world, and some parts of the world are more dangerous than others.

This bill provides over a $3.1 billion increase over fiscal year 2012 in assistance to Israel. Israel is the only democracy—I believe a real one—in that area and is a great friend of ours.

The legislation keeps in place the pay freeze for Federal employees for the remainder of this year, the fiscal year ending September 2013.

The bill prohibits distribution of any funds to ACORN, its subsidiaries, or successors.

It rescinds $50 million from the EPA to restrict its ability to implement certain environmental regulations.

It rescinds $10 million from the ObamaCare, as we call it, Independent Payment Advisory Board, which is the rationing board, some people call it.

The bill continues a provision to clarify the prohibition of Federal funds being used to lobby State and local legislative and executive authorities.

These are just some of the provisions in here, but I think tomorrow we will talk about more. Overall, I think we have put together a worthy and credible package, and I hope the Senate will soon get a chance to start debating it seriously.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I would like to compliment the Senator from Alabama, my vice chairman. He outlined how we tried to look at this bill and scrub it for nonsense or no sense, OK?

I know we are waiting for the Senator from Oklahoma, Mr. COBURN, to lift his hold. I know he is looking closely at the bill. A few years ago, when I was moving the Commerce-Justice bill, he found that one of the agencies was hosting a conference and they were paying $4 a meatball, so we called it the lavish meatball amendment. Often, the Senator from Oklahoma has great ideas. You know, Madam President, that people from Oklahoma have great ideas, and so we would like him, as quickly as he can, to lift the hold so we can move our bill and he can offer amendments. And I hope he is scrubbing it. I am sure somewhere he will find a rogue meatball. I don't want to minimize what he is doing. He really does scrub for foolishness and folly, and if he has a foolishness-and-folly amendment, I probably will support it. I can't tolerate it either. My constituents really work hard for their money, and they want the money they pay in taxes to work hard for them.

So, Madam President, I see the distinguished majority leader here on the floor. I am hoping that we are going to have a solution to some of that deadlock here.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, it used to be, before the last Congress, the Senate had two speeds: one for deliberation and one for getting things done. Senators saved the deliberation speed for truly great issues of the day, and when we needed to get the country's business done, we came together to work things out. It used to be that all appropriations legislation was business the Senate came together to work on and to finish. Sometimes it was 1 day, sometimes it took 4 or 5 days, but we got it done.

These days—for the last 3 years—the Senate has one speed: slow—real slow. And we haven't had appropriations bills for a number of years because we haven't been able to do them because of the speed—slow. Even when we are talking about preventing a government shutdown, even when there is broad agreement across party lines that we want to prevent a government shutdown, even then we are stuck in slow.

Madam President, when we got the bill from the House, I didn't like it especially, but, as I said earlier—and I still feel this way—the Speaker at least got it to us at a decent hour, not at the last minute. These two good Senators, Shelby and Mikulski, worked very hard for days to get this done. Now, frankly, I didn't like some of the things Senator MIKULSKI agreed to, but I was with her, and we agreed to do the things together because we wanted to get a bill done. We swallowed a lot of pride. She gave up things in her bill she has worked on for decades and gave in to others so that they would feel better about this bill.

So then we come here today and are blindsided. This bill has been in the public for days. It passed the House last week, and 85 to 90 percent of the bill that is the so-called amendment was in the House bill.

We are going to finish this bill or not finish it before the recess. If we can't get 60 votes, then it will fail and the government will shut down but not for anything we have done—not for anything we have done. We have a few Senators who are doing everything they can—and have been doing it for years—to throw a monkey wrench into everything we do here. We should have been legislating today.

I came to the floor last week and said we are going to have a CR, we are going to have amendments. I said that when we opened the Senate yesterday. I have tried my best to move to this bill.

The Senate cannot continue like this. I took everyone at good faith at the beginning of this Congress when we made a few changes. I thought those changes would be helpful. To this point, they have done zero because we have had no cooperation from the Republicans.

The Senate has changed, Madam President. I am sorry the Presiding Officer, who has a wonderful background, has not seen the Senate and how it really should work. A small group of Senators has kept the Senate in slow, slow gear. They have prevented us from even starting debate on this important bill. We can't even start the debate on it. People want to offer amendments.

We had Senator HARKIN waiting to offer an amendment, and we had Senator CRUZ here waiting to offer amendments. They can't. We are through for the night, so we have wasted basically 2 days when we could have been considering amendments to this bill, and that is a shame.

We have a limited number of Senate days. In our lives, we have a limited number of days. The time of the Senate is too precious to spend it this way, so I am filing cloture on this bill. We will have a vote on proceeding to it on Thursday. How about that? Isn't that great? We are going to vote to proceed to it. So we will be on the bill Thursday, and we can start offering amendments on Thursday.

CLOTURE MOTION

I have a cloture motion at the desk, Madam President.

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

The bill 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. 21, H.R. 933, a bill making appropriations for the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other departments and agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Barbara A. Mikulski, Benjamin L. Cardin, Sherrod Brown, Richard J. Durbin, Tom Harkin, Patrick J. Leahy, Angus S. King, Jr., Tim Johnson, Elizabeth Warren, Debbie Stabenow, Patty Murray, Mary L. Landrieu, Jack Reed, Jeanne Shaheen, Richard Blumenthal

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I hope the record is very clear that I do not criticize Senator SHELBY. He has done his best. He was a tremendous advocate for what he thought should be in this bill. But we are going to have Senators stand up and talk about what is wrong with this place when, after all the work that goes into a bipartisan bill, we are stymied from going to that bill and offering amendments.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, a question for the majority leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. This is tough, but the leader has to govern the Senate and move the bill. But a question for the people who watch us and don't know what all these parliamentary maneuvers mean. If there is an agreement to move forward with amendments, is it possible that tomorrow we could vitiate it?

Mr. REID. With the tremendous work Senator COBURN has to put into this so he can finish it in the next 12 hours, maybe we can move to the bill tomorrow. But I know he has a lot of work to do on the bill, so we will have to see how he feels about it tomorrow.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I really want to thank my vice chairman, Senator SHELBY, for being on the floor all day today in anticipation that we would have already voted on two amendments. I think he and I both regret the present situation.

I would hope the Senator who has grave concerns and waited to read the bill could really finish it overnight. We worked every night, I must say, not only my staff, but in talking to the Senator, and we were available to each other by phone. I was talking to Congressman ROGERS, our House counterpart, and we were working. I know that Saturday night we didn't close out until 9 o'clock at night; Sunday, not until 11 o'clock at night. That is why we wanted to get this over, so they could look at it.

So I say to those holding up the bill, I would like you to work through the evening the way we worked through the evening. If you want to see if there are other issues—and we acknowledge the Senator's right to do that, but, really, we do not want to face a shutdown, and there is this other issue of the Budget Committee that we would like to get on the floor. What a great message to the American people that with good will and sensibility and give-and-take—and there was a lot of give-and-take—we can govern.

My hope is that by the time we get to the end of next week—actually, the end of this week—we will have passed the continuing funding resolution and we will have passed a budget, with ample debate.

The Senator and I, House Members, Senate Members—we welcome amendments. We welcome debate. But what is frustrating to me is that we have had a very interesting day, but we had two amendments pending, two different viewpoints on health care and human services. We could have debated and been able to dispose of them in a way that would have brought honor to the institution and moved our legislation forward.

So let's show we can govern. Let's really show we can govern. And I hope we can get to our bill tomorrow and not necessarily go through the whole usual filibuster rules.

Again, I thank the vice chairman, Senator SHELBY. I thank Senator MCCONNELL for the way he helped and conferred on many issues.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I want everyone to hear what I am saying now. If somebody comes to me and says: You can get on the bill if you give me these amendments, I won't agree. We will have cloture on it on Thursday.

We are through the dealmaking stage. We have been dealmaking on this bill—an important piece of legislation—for more than a week, and if a Senator comes to me and says: You can go to the bill tomorrow, but I want to make sure I have all these amendments, the answer is no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, had we been able to move to this bill, we could have probably debated already and voted on a number of amendments because this is very essential legislation. There is a lot in this bill, a lot of good in this proposed legislation.

I hope that reason will prevail and that people, even if they have some amendments, will come to the floor, as I said earlier, and offer them. Let's debate them, and let's get to regular order, up or down. That is what it is about. But I think the essentials of this bill are solid and good. We have gone into this, and we will go into it more and more. We want the process to work, but the process is not going to work if we don't get the bill up so we can go to the regular order.

So I hope tonight that things will work out and we will get going. This is important legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I came to the floor to speak on an entirely different issue, but before I do that, I would like to commend Appropriations Chair MIKULSKI—and I do like saying that, Appropriations Chair MIKULSKI—and Ranking Member SHELBY for all of the work they and their staffs and the other Senators on the Appropriations Committee have done to try to put together a continuing resolution that is going to keep this government open.

I share the frustration and the concern we have heard expressed on the floor tonight about the hold-up when we thought there was agreement to get this done.

So I appreciate all the work that has been done, and hopefully we can get past this and get this bill done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. The Senator from New Hampshire is a member of the Appropriations Committee; is that correct?

Mrs. SHAHEEN. That is correct.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Is this her first year on the committee?

Mrs. SHAHEEN. It is.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Does the Senator from New Hampshire know what regular order is? This is not a quiz.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I was hoping to learn that this session because unfortunately we have not had a lot of regular order in terms of moving appropriations bills and the budget through the Senate. As I talk to my constituents,