electricity generated in our country. That compares to just 3.5 percent for sources such as wind and solar. So even if the administration were to achieve its dream of eliminating every last coal job, it is not as though they could just fire up a few windmills to cover the gaps—take a very long time—decades—for alternative sources to even come close to providing the same level of jobs and energy as coal. In other words, the administration’s ideological crusade doesn’t even seem to have a long-term game. It is basically just ideology.

Here is the thing. Republicans agree that alternative and renewable energy sources are necessary for fuel diversity, but we believe wind and geothermal and solar should be part of an “all of the above” energy strategy which also includes coal and natural gas and the oil we can get right here in North America, with Americans providing the workforce.

Another key difference is this: Republicans look at Kentucky coal miners and see hard-working men and women, not obstacles to some leftwing fantasy. That is why I, along with 40 Republican cosponsors—including my friend, Kentuckian RAND PAUL—intend to file a resolution of disapproval under the Congressional Review Act to ensure a vote to stop this devastating rule. We believe the EPA regulation in question turns the corner.

The vote in the House, which I hope to take up in the Senate, shows what working together based on civility, listening to each other, being willing to compromise but not capitulating on principle, negotiating on what are the appropriate fiscal levels—this shows we can get the job done. In today’s era of shutdown, slowdown, slamdown politics, where negotiating occurs on cable TV rather than in committee rooms, we worked together. Setting aside partisan differences, working across the aisle and down the line so we could get to our bottom line.

Look. Kentucky is facing a real crisis. The Obama administration appears to be sending signals that its latest energy, water, financial services—and yes, the COLAs are necessary for fuel diversity, but we believe wind and geothermal and solar should be part of an “all of the above” energy strategy which also includes coal and natural gas and the oil we can get right here in North America, with Americans providing the workforce.

The majority leader and his Democratic caucus now have a choice: Are they going to stand with the coal families under attack in places such as Kentucky and West Virginia and Colorado or are they going to continue to stand with the powerful leftwing special interests, who want to see their jobs completely eliminated? That is the choice.

It is pretty clear where I stand and where most of my colleagues on this side of the aisle stand.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

SPACE LAUNCH LIABILITY INDEMNIFICATION EXTENSION ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message H.R. 3547, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows: House message to accompany H.R. 3547, an act to extend Government liability, subject to appropriation, for certain third-party claims arising from commercial space launches.

Pending:

Reid motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill, with Reid amendment No. 2655, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 2656 (to amendment No. 2655), of a perfecting nature.

Reid motion to refer the message of the House on the bill to the Committee on Appropriations, with instructions, Reid amendment No. 2657, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 2658 (to the instructions) amendment No. 2657), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 2659 (to amendment No. 2658), of a perfecting nature.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I come to the floor today as the chair—chair of the Appropriations Committee—a committee I am honored to chair—to support the Consolidated Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2014. This bill passed the House on Wednesday with a stunning and amazing vote of 359 to 67. The purpose of this agreement is to fund the operation of the Federal Government for the remainder of fiscal year 2014.

The vote in the House, which I hope will be taken in the Senate, shows what working together based on civility, listening to each other, being willing to compromise but not capitulating on principle, negotiating on what are the appropriate fiscal levels—this shows we can get the job done.

This is what the American people deserve: We do the business of the country, legislate with due diligence and regular order. They want a government that works as hard as they do, and working under a very stringent deadline, we were able to do this. After 3 years of damaging cuts that have hurt our people, this agreement turns the corner.

We recognized that we needed to focus on growth in jobs and lower the unemployment rate but not increase our debt or our deficit. We worked very hard to do that, to increase the kinds of public investments the American people would approve of—keep America strong, keep our economy strong—and to the deficit reductions we needed to do.

This bill is something called an omnibus bill which includes all 12 appropriations bills. That means we have 12 subcommittees—defense, health and human services, labor and education, energy, water, financial services—and a lot more.

Ordinarily, we would bring one bill up at a time, but that was not to be. So where we are is this is a consolidated bill of all 12.

We have been working on this since the President sent his budget to us this spring. We held over 50 hearings, listened, did due diligence, and marked up our bills. We were ready to come to the floor in the fall, but it was not to be. We had to wait for the Budget Committee to do its work to get to a top line so we could get to our bottom line. On December 18, just before Christmas, Congress gave us that cap on discretionary spending. We knew what we wanted to spend, but, again, we knew we had to be a government. We know we have to be smart not only about spending but about saving, getting rid of dated, duplicative, and dysfunctional programs, and we were able to do just that. On December 18 we were given a cap on discretionary spending of $1.02 trillion. We met that cap. We worked nonstop over the holidays, resolving differences in both money and in certain policy areas.

What we do today is we come here with an agreement that is bipartisan. I emphasize that. The agreement is bipartisan. It is bicameral; that means both sides of the Capitol. It has also been one of compromise but not, on either side, capitulating on principle. And I am proud to say this agreement meets our national security needs and ensures the readiness of our troops and keeps us safe at home. It also meets the compelling human needs of our middle class and our most vulnerable. At the same time, it also invests in America’s future by strengthening our physical infrastructure and also supporting research and development to save lives, spur growth and innovation and everything from lifesaving biosciences to aeronautics. And we want to make sure we are not only at jobs today but jobs tomorrow.

Before I give more detail about this agreement, I will highlight one of the reasons I am very proud of something we have done in this bill. Our legislation preserves before the Defense Secretary the full cost-of-living adjustment for our working-age disabled military retirees and survivors of our departed servicemembers. Their COLAs were mistakenly reduced by 1 percent in the recent budget agreement. This agreement fixes that error.

I wish to make this note: It is limited in scope. It fixes the error for disabled
military retirees and departed service-members. It is not the comprehensive pension reform necessary. We will await the Presidential commission which will come before the Senate, and we will be able to implement and work on their recommendations in due time. I remain on the belief that the key for this bill is to support the fix that helps our most vulnerable patriots. It is limited in scope but an important downpayment to restoring full COLAs for military retirees of working age who are disabled or are part of the departed service-members.

This agreement provides for our national security. It has $11 billion more than current levels for operation and maintenance, $1 billion for the National Guard and Reserve so that our units are ready for missions overseas and/or at home. The resources also support the Defense Department’s 3 million Active-Duty, Reserve, and civilian employees. This bill, if it passes, eliminates the Defense funding fumbles in 2014, and it also prioritizes readiness.

The agreement funds important areas in other protections of national security—an area I am very keenly interested in. An increasing threat to our people and our economy is cyber security. One need only look at the headlines. From Target to Neiman Marcus, 40 million Americans or more were hit by hackers whom we expect came from a non-NATO member country. There is a growing gap between organized crime and those who have other predatory intents to the United States. We have $11 billion in here for cyber security for the Department of Defense, the FBI, Homeland Security, and important research agencies.

This agreement also keeps its promises to veterans in terms of health care, and we pay particular attention to the VA disability backlog. We believe that if you were on the frontlines over there, you didn’t face that line here when you have applied for your disability benefits. Working with the relevant authorizing committee, we believe we have been able to come up with it.

This bill also makes important investments in America’s human infrastructure and meets compelling human needs in health care, education, and childcare. We have increased our investment in Head Start by $1 billion, making sure $90,000 more kids will get the start they need for success in early childhood education programs that improve their school and reading and math readiness. We have also increased the childcare development grants by $154 million, meaning 22,000 more lower income families will be able to afford childcare for about 24,000 children in Maryland alone.

In our committee, we believe welfare should not be a way of life but should be a way to a better life. Childcare development grants enable women to move from welfare to work. Also, for those who are working at a minimum wage where often full-time work means full-time poverty, if you are going to work, childcare should not eat up half of your already modest income. The child care development grant is a tool, along with the child care tax credit, to enable people to be able to work and make sure work is worth it.

We are also very conscious, on both sides of the aisle, of the need of Federal support for special education. We do not want a continued unfunded Federal mandate. We have left equivalent programs for special needs children but do not meet the Federal responsibility for paying for it. We have money in the bill for this.

Energy assistance and help with food and housing we have been able to do here. But we believe the best social program is a job. There is no doubt about it. To be able to work at a full-time job that supports a person’s family and lets them get on the opportunity ladder for the American dream is what we believe, many of us, that with jobs helping build America’s infrastructure we meet two needs. We have an aging, decrepit, sometimes even dangerous infrastructure. The money in this bill will go to improve our harbor maintenance trust fund and also TIGER grants to help with transportation, so we can rebuild America’s infrastructure and at the same time put people back to work.

Also, at the same time we believe we need to look at the jobs of tomorrow, where we fund the kind of basic research that only government can do, that leads to new ideas, that will lead to the new thinking in the private sector that will create the new jobs of tomorrow. That means, for example, for the National Institutes of Health, we increase it $1 billion. It means they will be able to do 400 additional studies. It will also deal, not only with our cures for cancer but also the brain initiative will help speed along finding a cure or cognitive stretchout for Alzheimer’s. This is good public investment.

When we look at Medicaid funding, a cure for Alzheimer’s or cognitive stretchout will not only save families the awful consequences of Alzheimer’s—my father died of that—but it will also help our budget. When we look at Medicaid, 80 percent of the beneficiaries on Medicaid are children, but 80 percent of the money goes to long-term care for people who have either Alzheimer’s or other neurological impairment diseases such as Lou Gehrig’s disease, Parkinson’s, and so on. When we can find a breakthrough on Alzheimer’s, it will also help lower the cost of Medicaid, and we will be able to put it in other programs.

There is much more to be said about this bill and I will say it later. I see my Vice chairman is on the floor and he will want to speak and there are others who are also present. I will speak during the day, but I want you to know I am proud of this bill. We did the job that was given us. We played the hand that was dealt us, and what we have come up with is a good deal for the American people. We tried to be smart about where we spent the money and we tried to be very smart in how we spent it.

I yield the floor and look forward to continued debate and passage of this bill.

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

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I will join my friend and long-time colleague, the senior Senator from Maryland and chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI, who has just spoken, in strongly supporting passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2014. This bill is a product of a bipartisan and very collegial negotiation between both parties in both Houses of Congress. It is in very large part a compromise of what the Senate produced in their respective committee processes last summer.

We, of course, have our differences and each of us would like to have many features in this bill different, but that is why we have a compromise and ultimately of a compromise, and that is where we are today.

There is much we would like and much we do not like in this bill, but on balance I believe it represents a middle ground which we can comfortably stand. It is certainly far better than the alternative, which would be another confrontation, another government shutdown, and another giant step further away from establishing some sense of regular order.

It is a matter of record that I did not support the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013. It is and remains my strong preference that we continue to reduce our discretionary spending levels and, more importantly, our long-term mandatory spending levels. As I have said many times, once the Congress has decided what our spending levels are to be, I believe it is the responsibility of the respective appropriations committees to decide how those funds will be spent. The bill before us does exactly that.

This legislation adheres to the statutory budget caps for defense and non-defense spending set by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013. It can and will ultimately do a better job of ensuring the necessary programs are funded while accommodating a spending level for defense programs that avoids a $20 billion sequester for 2014. The bill funds total discretionary spending below the 2004 level when adjusted for inflation.

Enacting this funding measure will allow Congress finally to advance its current priorities instead of relying on the spending priorities of the past, which of course is the unavoidable consequence of a continuing resolution. Seven out of twelve bills in this omnibus have been relying on appropriations priorities dictated by the fiscal year appropriations for 2012. Instead of giving the executive branch virtually...
Senator from Arizona.

The Appropriations Committee is supposed to appropriate. The Appropriations Committee has no business making this decision. How many of my colleagues knew that this provision was in this mammoth appropriations bill? I bet a handful. The job of the Armed Services Committee and the job of the Intelligence Committee is to authorize. The authorizing committees in a legislative compromise and is what we have achieved with this bill.

Again thank the chair of this committee Senator Mikulski and commend her for the foresight that made this agreement possible. I join with her in strongly urging our colleagues to support this measure, just as the Members of the House did yesterday by a vote of 359 to 67.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAiN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to engage in a colloquy with my colleagues, Senator Graham, Senator Ayotte, and Senator Roberts.

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

Mr. MCCAiN. Mr. President, I bring to the attention of my colleagues the front page of the Washington Post this morning: "Hill balks at shifting CIA role in drone war."

Congress has moved to block President Obama's plan to shift control of the U.S. drone campaign from the CIA to the Defense Department, inserting a secret provision in the massive government spending bill introduced this week that would preserve the spy agency's role in lethal counterterrorism operations, U.S. officials said.

The measure, included in a classified annex to the $1.1 trillion federal budget plan, would restrict the use of any funding to transfer unmanned aerial vehicles to the Defense Department. The authority to carry out drone strikes from the CIA to the Pentagon.

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I believe Senator LEVIN, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, will be as outraged as I am. I believe the chairperson of the Intelligence Committee will be as angry as I am. This is a fundamental function of government that has to do with national security and it is hidden in a provision, in a secret provision of the mammoth appropriations bill. I say to the distinguished chairperson and ranking member, that is not their business.

Some of us have been speaking out for more than a year about the terror attack of September 11, 2012, which took the lives of four American public servants in Benghazi, Libya, including U.S. Chris Stevens. We have spoken out because of the many questions that still remain unanswered to this day.

We have spoken out and will continue to speak out despite efforts of partisans and proxies of the administration to sweep all of this under the rug. The latest snow job came in December, from the New York Times, that ever-reliable surrogate of the Obama administration, which published a long report challenging some key facts about the Benghazi attack. But as Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan used to say, everyone is entitled to their own opinions but not to their own facts. The facts are stubborn. In reality, the death of the US Ambassador is part of a larger pattern of propagate myths. Let's review some of the facts.

The Times claims the following:

- Months of investigation . . . centered on interviewees in Benghazi who had direct knowledge of the attack there and its context, turned up no evidence that Al Qaeda or other international terrorist groups had any role in the assault.
- The Times goes on to claim: Benghazi was not infiltrated by Al-Qaeda.
- Here are the facts. Al Qaeda-affiliated groups were present in Benghazi, and they were involved in the attack of September 11, 2012. New York Times itself reported on October 12:

  American officials said [the attack] included participants from Ansar al-Sharia, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and the Muhammar Jamal network, a militant group in Egypt.

  All of these groups are affiliated with Al Qaeda. The New York Times claims:

  Republican arguments appear to conflate purely local extremist organizations, like Ansar al-Shariah with Al Qaeda's international terrorist network.

  Again, here are the facts. In an interview yesterday with CNN, the Senator from California acknowledged correctly that Ansar al-Shariah, which played a major role in the attack, is linked to Al Qaeda. We are drawing on the work of our Intelligence Committee which yesterday released its report on the Benghazi attack and its aftermath.

  In that report you will find numerous references by the intelligence community before the attack that make clear the nature of the Al Qaeda threat in Benghazi. The claim that Al Qaeda had not infiltrated Benghazi is based on the same rhetorical sleight-of-hand that holds that while groups may align themselves with Al Qaeda, may seek and receive direction from Al Qaeda, may share similar terrorist goals of Al Qaeda, and may even call themselves part of Al Qaeda, but if they are not sitting along the Pakistan-Afghan border or are not part of so-called core Al Qaeda or Al Qaeda senior leadership, then somehow they are not Al Qaeda.

  Montana's junior Senator and logic that may have led then-Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice to claim just days after the attack that "we have decimated Al Qaeda," this despite the fact that Al Qaeda-affiliated networks had been making inroads across Libya to other groups proliferating and gaining in regions like the North African Maghreb.

  The fact is that the attack against our diplomatic facility in Benghazi on September 11 was carried out in part by Al Qaeda-affiliated networks who had a safe haven in parts of eastern Libya. As the Senate Intelligence Committee report finds, the Intelligence Committee provided ample strategic warning about the negative security trends in Benghazi and the likelihood they would further deteriorate. This was the opposite of an intelligence failure; this was clear as day.

  Despite these clear warning signs, the State Department was unprepared. Our diplomatic facility in Benghazi was insecure and had already been attacked multiple times. Our military was not postured and ready to respond to contingencies in a part of Libya where attacks against westerners and western interests had already occurred and where the threat of more attacks was growing.

  The false narrative the New York Times is furthering just so happens to align with the Obama administration's account of events. It is more convenient and has already been attacked multiple times. Our military was not postured and ready to respond to contingencies in a part of Libya where attacks against westerners and western interests had already occurred and where the threat of more attacks was growing.

  The false narrative the New York Times is furthering just so happens to align with the Obama administration's account of events. It is more convenient and has already been attacked multiple times. Our military was not postured and ready to respond to contingencies in a part of Libya where attacks against westerners and western interests had already occurred and where the threat of more attacks was growing.

  The administration and its allies will continue to try to sweep Benghazi under the rug—including the fact that we have still not received testimony and the presence of the individuals who were present and moved to Germany the day following the attack on the
Embassy and the deaths of four Americans.

Contrary to the President’s repeated claim that the tide of war is receding and contrary to his administration’s talking point that Al Qaeda has been decisively defeated, Al Qaeda-affiliated groups are emboldened now from central Asia to the Middle East and north Africa, all the way to west African countries such as Nigeria and Mali. Indeed, nothing brings this home more graphically than the contrast between the black flags of Al Qaeda hoisted over the Iraq city of Fallujah. Ninety-five brave soldiers and Americans died in Fallujah, 600 were wounded, and today we see the black flags of Al Qaeda hoisted over the city of Fallujah. The problem is getting worse, and that is in large part due to this administration’s disengagement from these regions.

Look at Libya today. It is a country that we and our NATO allies intervened to save from the wrath of an anti-American tyrant, and it is now characterized by chaos, lawlessness, and ungoverned spaces that are exploited by those who seek to do harm to our Nation and our interests. According to the Senate Intelligence Committee’s report, 15 Libyans who cooperated with our investigation into the Benghazi attack have been murdered.

The administration can blame the Libyans for these problems, just as they blame the Iraqis for Iraq’s problems, but they can’t escape their share of the blame for failing to support these people who want and need our help to secure their countries. That is why Chris Stevens was in Benghazi. That is why he risked and ultimately gave his life. He believed it was in our interest to lead events in the world and support our friends and those who wish to be our friends in their effort to build stable societies with effective democratic governments. The greatest way we can honor his sacrifice, and those of his colleagues, is by recommitting ourselves to their mission.

Unless America actively supports those in the broader Middle East who wish to replace despair and extremism with hope and freedom, I fear the tide of war will eventually get us again.

I note that my colleague the Senator from Arizona, Senator CORKER, has the floor. I have only been able to interview one witness after all of these years and months.

If I could, I wish to thank the Intelligence Committee for doing a lot of hard work, but let’s not lose sight that this is not just about the State Department. My focus is going to be comprehensive, and Senator MCCAIN has called for a joint select committee, along with myself and Senator AYOTTE, for over a year now. Why? You don’t want to stovepipe this. The Intelligence Committee tells us in pretty good detail about the failures of the State Department, but here is my question: In the September 14 White House meeting where the Intelligence Committee prepared talking points for the White House that clearly established that this was a terrorist attack with Al Qaeda people involved—who changed those talking points in that White House meeting?

I have an email—which I hope will be here in a moment—from General Petraeus. Basically, somebody in that meeting or before the meeting is saying to General Petraeus that the White House is going to change references to Al Qaeda out and basically sanitize the talking points. He is upset, but he says: Well, go ahead and do what they want. Nobody admires General Petraeus more than I do, but, quite frankly, somebody needs to revisit that.

Where was the intelligence community for 2 weeks when the President of the United States—not Susan Rice—was telling the entire world: We think this was a protest caused by a video, whereas the community knew differently? To my friends in the intelligence community, you need to answer that question. What input did you give? Did anybody pick up a phone and call somebody at the White House? They need to tell the President to quit doing that because it is not accurate.

Another question: On September 15, 16, and 17 of September, all the survivors were interviewed by the FBI in Germany. I have talked to one survivor on the phone very quickly. In a quick summary, the man was brave and the people on the ground in the State Department deserve medals for going through what they did. But let me tell you this: He said there was no protest. There was not one report from Benghazi about a protest around the compound. The Turkish Ambassador left not too long before the attack. Do you think he would have walked out in the middle of a protest? Do you think the Ambassador would have gone to bed if there was a protest? The people in charge of security never reported a protest because there was not one, and he said there wasn’t one. He said: I saw on my screen—and he was in charge of security at the time—16 to 20 heavily armed people running through the gate and carrying a banner in Arabic. At the time, I didn’t know what it said. I now know it was the banner of Ansar al-Sharia, the Al Qaeda affiliate.

Who was Khattala? Who was this man? The New York Times, journalism has died at that paper. Do you really believe this wasn’t a preplanned terrorist attack with Al Qaeda affiliates in charge? The gentleman said there were four gun trucks and that there was a coordinated military attack, and they were lucky to have survived.

Who started this? Who planned this? The man’s name was Qumu, the former Gitmo detainee. I can’t say his last name, but I think it is Qumu. The man who started Ansar al-Sharia came from Gitmo. He was a former Gitmo detainee, a Libyan who went back to Libya and started this group. The “60 Minutes” report identified him and a Maryland activist as the ones who started this attack. All I can say is that there is no mystery about who planned this. It was an Al Qaeda affiliate in Libya.

On August 16 a cable was sent back from Chris Stevens to Washington at the State Department. We can’t defend the consulate because 10 training camps of Al Qaeda exist in Benghazi; the Al Qaeda flag is flying.

By the way, the Red Cross had left Benghazi and the British had left Benghazi because of attacks by terrorist groups. This was long before September 11.

Don’t tell me we don’t know. We do know. It was terrorists. It was a former Gitmo detainee who was bin Laden’s bodyguard. What did he have to do—to have a card? The guy who was in Gitmo whom we let go was core Al Qaeda. He was bin Laden’s bodyguard. They caught him in Pakistan. He fought in Afghanistan.

The question we don’t know from this report is who in the White House changed the talking points.

You want to know what Chris Christie did? Pine. Absolutely fair game. We know what he did when he found out what his people did about the traffic jam. He fired them. He got up in front of the whole world and said: I am embarrassed. It is my fault. I am going to fire the people who did this bad thing.

The one person who has been held accountable for this bad thing called Benghazi. Name one person at the State Department who has been fired for ignoring repeated requests for additional security on the consulate coming from people in Libya.

By the way, the Accountability Review Board—what did I learn in my interview with the survivor? I found out for the first time that villas B and C—the places that were attacked in Benghazi, the State Department said they lease those villas in July for an entire year for hundreds of thousands of dollars. I didn’t know that. It was leased for well over half a million
dolars. So you are going to tell me they were going to close the consulate in December? That was the conclusion of the Accountability Review Board. That is not accurate.

I will tell you what I think they were doing. Hillary Clinton was going to go down in December and announce that the permanent facility would be open in Benghazi.

To Hillary Clinton’s and Susan Rice’s credit, these two women pushed the President to keep Benghazi from being overrun during the war with Qadhafi. They got involved, and to their credit they pushed the President to get involved militarily to prevent the slaughter of everybody in Benghazi.

I have been told that the plan for Benghazi was to have a permanent footprint and for Secretary Clinton to go down there as one of her last acts to say: We are here, and we are here to stay. The problem with that scenario is that the security had deteriorated because there was absolutely no plan to fall on after the fall of Qadhafi.

Mr. MCCAIN. I think a lot of people who are observers really have to view this and the actions on the part of the administration, as shown by the Intelligence Statement by National Security Adviser Susan Rice on every Sunday talk show was that this was the result of a hateful video, a spontaneous demonstration, and that Al Qaeda has been decimated. We can only view that and some of those actions in the context of the fact that it was a political campaign. There was a Presidential campaign going on, and the rhetoric time after time and rally after rally from the President of the United States and his surrogates was this: Bin Laden is dead. Al Qaeda is on the run. The tide of war is receding.

All of these events that took place at the consulate in Benghazi and the death of Christopher Stevens contra- dicted that storyline. Still, I cannot understand why 2 weeks later the President of the United States was before the United Nations and still talking about how this was due to a spontaneous demonstration and hateful video. You can only understand that, in my view, it was in the context of a storyline that was propagated throughout the 2012 Presidential campaign.

Mr. GRAHAM. I think the White House, in my view—this is a reasonable conclusion but not a fair conclusion because it is exactly what happened yet. But I can tell you this: Somebody at the White House on September 14 pressured the intelligence community to change the story of Benghazi. And on September 15, why did they pick Susan Rice? She said that Secretary Clinton was tired and had gone through a lot of trauma. I am sure that is true, but I know Secretary Clinton pretty well. I think she is tough.

Let me put it this way: She could not be on TV to talk about what happened at the State Department because she was distraught? I don’t buy that. Does anybody believe that about Secretary Clinton? And if it is true, it is something the American people need to consider. I don’t believe it is true. I don’t believe she was incapable of going on television, as Susan Rice says. I believe they picked a person very loyal to the President and whatever the President needed to be said. What she said was so far away from the truth that it needs to be investigated. What she said was so beneficial to the President’s relection that it needs to be investigated.

I talked to the Deputy Director of the FBI who is now retired. He said not one person interviewed by the FBI in Germany ever said there was a protest; all of them said it was a terrorist attack. So how could the FBI have interviews from every person on the ground in Benghazi who worked for the State Department saying that there was no protest and it was a terrorist attack, and that not get into the system? Did the FBI just sit on these interviews? Who did they give those interviews to? There is no one to the American people and the world we know what happened in Benghazi before the interviews were taken, go before the American people time and time again for weeks and tell a story about a protest that never occurred? This may not be a big deal to my colleagues, but it is a hell of a big deal to me.

When Abu Ghraib blew up, Senator MCCAIN and myself said: This is not a protest. This is a political demonstration. Gitmo was a mess, we didn’t sweep it clean, but it is a hell of a big deal to me.

Mr. MCCAIN. Regarding Iraq, we called for the resignation of the Secretary of Defense because of the failure of the United States, as late as September 18, and then again on September 20—we were on the Fox News Network, responding to the possible involvement of Al Qaeda: Is Al Qaeda involved? Here is what we do know: That the natural protest that arose because of the outrage from the video were used by the extremists to see if they could harm U.S. interests.

Where did the video come from? Even what the intelligence community came to believe was going to go down in December and announce that the permanent facility would be open in Benghazi. The consulate in Benghazi and the American people and the world we know what happened in Benghazi while the FBI is still interviewing people who were in the attack? And where did the FBI’s interviews go?

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Mr. MCCAIN. Regarding Iraq, we called for the resignation of the Secretary of Defense because of the failure of the United States, as late as September 18, and then again on September 20—we were on the Fox News Network, responding to the possible involvement of Al Qaeda: Is Al Qaeda involved? Here is what we do know: That the natural protest that arose because of the outrage from the video were used by the extremists to see if they could harm U.S. interests.

Where did the video come from? Even what the intelligence community came to believe was going to go down in December and announce that the permanent facility would be open in Benghazi. The consulate in Benghazi and the American people and the world we know what happened in Benghazi while the FBI is still interviewing people who were in the attack? And where did the FBI’s interviews go?

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up with, which was deficient and which was clearly subject to political influence because it removed the reference to Al Qaeda, has no reference to a video. So I think there are a lot of questions that need to be answered.

Here is the most important question: Why has no one been brought to justice? The President, I believe it was on September 12, said: We will find out who did this, and we will bring them to justice. For those families, those victims, no one has been brought to justice. In fact, we have people such as Abu Khattala, who was a former commander of Ansar al-Shariah, who is believed to have been there that night sitting in cafes in Libya giving press interviews, and yet there is much evidence to suggest that he is likely to be involved in this, and many other terrorists, but no one has been brought to justice. So why is that? Why doesn’t anyone have the curiosity not only to answer the questions of what happened that night but also to ensure that justice is done?

Mr. GRAHAM. If the Senator will yielld, I am trying to find the press statement of the White House official that says the President has consulted with his national security team—I am paraphrasing—about the threats we face throughout the world and that we are ready. This is on September 10. What does this report tell us about September 11? We were so far away from being ready that it is unremarkable. So there is a lot to be asked. Why would somebody in the White House issue a statement on 10 September talking about being ready for any contingency anywhere and basically assuring the American people the President is on top of this when, clearly, he was not?

Mr. McCAIN. Another question for my colleagues: The attack went on for a period of some nine hours, as I recall. Over that period of some nine hours, as I recall, there were hundreds of airplanes, aircraft that we have and the ships and other military capabilities we have in the area, in the Mediterranean, we were not able to get any real significant help. There are a number of accounts of where a team supposedly landed, we held at the airport, were not allowed to move in, and all of that. All of these are questions that have not been answered.

General Ham told the Senator from South Carolina over the telephone that he didn’t have any assets that were capable of reaching Benghazi. Does he mean we don’t have the capability over an 8- or 9-hour period to get some relief to an ongoing attack? Again, what was the hangup that kept people at the airport who finally did get there?

Mr. GRAHAM. If I could follow along with that thought, because it is a very good question, No. 1, if the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff publicly testified they knew it was a terrorist attack from the moment it started and told the White House, how did that get lost? How can they start talking about a protest and video when our own Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in real time tell the White House, but they only spoke to the President once with a prescheduled meeting just when the attack started? The Secretary of Defense?

Ms. MCASSEY. We still don’t know what the President did that evening.

Mr. GRAHAM. We know he has answered one question. He said he wanted to be transparent and open and let everybody read the story of Benghazi. We have deployed a small force asking questions, and the answer to one question, finally: Did you call anybody in Libya, Mr. President, that night? No. We have a rescue team held up at the Benghazi Airport for 2½ hours.

Ms. AYOTTE. May I also add to that the President—we heard testimony that obviously the Secretary of Defense and others knew right away this was a terrorist attack. Let’s not forget the Secretary of Defense was asked about that on September 12, and he said it is too early to tell exactly how this came about. When he is asked directly if this is a terrorist attack, he would not identify it as a terrorist attack.

I will also add this. What is so sad about this is no one has been held accountable. The warnings were there. Not only were the warnings there from the August 16 cable that came from the ambassador, Stevens, saying that the consulate could not withstand a coordinated attack, but what has been lost in all of this? When we talk about the New York Times trying to erase Al Qaeda from this, the day before, Ayman al-Zawahiri, the head of Al Qaeda, released a video just before September 11, 2012, just before this terrorist attack—which, by the way, occurred on September 11, of course, which should have given us a pretty direct clue that this was a terrorist attack. But al-Zawahiri issued this video acknowledging and eulogizing the death of Abu Yahya al-Libi in a drone strike and calling for terrorist attacks. Al-Libi was a Libyan who served as the second in command to al-Qaeda. He was killed.

Mr. GRAHAM. How can the Secretary of Defense know about the security environment in the Benghazi Consulate and the Secretary of State not know? All I can say is it does matter. The Secretary of State claimed she knew nothing about this August 16 cable? She didn’t know about these cables leading up to what had happened in Benghazi, about the warning the Red Cross left and the French left, the hole blown through the consulate, and the August 16 cable. Yet Secretary Panetta was aware of it. Chairman Dempsey was aware of it when he came before the Armed Services Committee, but the Secretary of State wasn’t aware of it.

Mr. GRAHAM. How can the Secretary of Defense know about the security environment in the Benghazi Consulate and the Secretary of State not know? All I can say is it does matter. The whole bureaucracy is responsible. Individuals are the ones that run bureaucracies.

I am disappointed that the Intelligence Committee did not have the courage to name the names of the people responsible. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, let me first thank Senator SHELBY and Senator MIKULSKI for their work on our appropriations bill. That is what I am down here to speak on. The American people sent us to make choices, sometimes very tough choices. They do not expect perfection, but they do expect us to be fair and to get the job done.

Americans are tired of shutdowns and sequestration and stopgap funding. Today we are making decisions we were sent here to make. The annual appropriations process is the right way to do the people’s business. Instead of kicking the can down the road, bickering in the capitol, piling up the debt, we are making some significant progress.

This goes on and on. So there is a lot to be asked. Why was somebody held up at the airport? Why did it take 2½ hours? Can you find the press statement? This goes on and on.

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CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

January 16, 2014
This was my first year on the Appropriations Committee. I especially wanted to thank Chairman Mikulski for her leadership, her unfailing support, and for doing such an amazing job. She once said, “It is not how long I serve but how well I serve.” Senator Mikulski never ceases to amaze on both counts she is truly exceptional.

This bill returns some sanity to the budget process in Washington. I am pleased that for the most part it does well by New Mexico. New Mexico plays a unique role in our nation’s security. This bill provides strong funding levels for the safety and security of our Nation’s nuclear deterrent, including the important B61 project at Sandia National Labs. The President’s request of $537 million is fully funded. The highly qualified employees at Sandia will continue their vital mission making sure these weapons are managed safely and securely. This is not something we should shortchange.

This bill also provides equally important funding for Los Alamos National Laboratory in northern New Mexico. The workforce there has been reduced in recent years. This bill will stabilize things for 2014. Both of these labs are critical to our national security. But they are much more than that. They are also engines for the innovation in aerospace, biotech, cyber security, and new energy technology.

New Mexico is proud to host both of these national labs. The Department of Energy also has an obligation to our State and other States on legacy cleanup. The funding levels do not fully meet our request, but they do provide strong increases over 2013 for cleanup at Los Alamos and at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad, NM. These cleanup activities are a serious obligation of the Federal Government and are a source of skilled, well-paid jobs for man New Mexico families.

New Mexico is home to two Air Force bases and the Army’s White Sands Missile Range. This bill contains nearly $150 million in construction and infrastructure projects, including $60 million for a TRICARE facility at Holloman Air Force Base. These projects will benefit national security, they will create jobs, and will meet our obligations to the men and women who are serving their country.

The Federal Government also plays a very large role in New Mexico water infrastructure. We are an arid, Western State. Prudent water management is crucial for our economy. We cannot afford the waste that comes from neglected infrastructure. This bill contains over $120 million in funding for Federal water assets in our State and includes the Navajo-Gallup pipeline, and the Middle Rio Grande Project.

We have been struggling with intense drought. Rural areas and small towns in particular have been deeply affected. Some small communities are seeing their wells run dry. They need help and they need it now. The $1.7 billion in USDA rural development water funding is absolutely essential. This historic drought requires that we rethink how we use water throughout the West. We need to be smart about our strategy. We need strategies that work for individual communities. That is why I advocated for the funding for the WaterSMART grants, helping local governments and water districts improve water efficiency.

The conference report promotes an innovative drought water-sharing agreement along the Rio Grande, where we are facing difficult tradeoffs between agriculture, the environment, and urban uses.

This bill also helps meet our obligations to our Nation’s veterans. The backlog at the VA is unacceptable. Frankly, it is an outrage. No veteran should wait 1 year or more on their claim. This bill funds a 10-year plan to resolve this problem: improving IT infrastructure, better training, and hiring additional personnel. We dedicated $250 million specifically to carry out the VA’s rural health initiative to ensure that veterans in rural and remote areas are not left behind, utilizing telehealth solutions and mobile clinics, bringing veterans the care they deserve without long drives.

I will keep fighting for veterans in New Mexico, including those in rural areas, making sure they have access to the health care they have earned. Mandating, mandating, mandating truly upset with the recent change in the COLA for working-age military retirees. I am outraged too. This cut was included in the recent 2-year budget agreement passed in December. I did not support this provision and I am working hard to repeal it. Thankfully, this bill ensures disabled veterans and spousal benefits will not be subject to the cuts. Congress has the rest of 2014 to do the right thing. We need to fix this mistake for good for all veterans.

This year, I had the privilege to chair the Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government. I am proud of the work we have done to safeguard our financial system, protect consumers and support job creation and to strengthen our Federal courts.

The bill provides $112 million for the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, fighting terrorist financing, money laundering, narcotics, trafficking, and other illicit financial activity.

To protect the public and consumers, the bill fully funds three key agencies. For the CFSC, $118 million to help protect the public against risk from injury of consumer products; for the FTC, $238 million to combat consumer fraud, identity theft, and promote consumer privacy; for the FCC, $340 million to maintain robust networks for emergency communications, political discourse, and interaction, and business transactions.

To support job creation, the bill provides $292 million for the Small Business Administration. It also supports the Small Business Development Centers to provide critical guidance to small businesses and emerging entrepreneurs. The bill supports community development in underserved areas, including tribal nations, providing $226 million for the CDF.

For the Federal courts, the bill provides a much needed increase, $6.5 billion in discretionary funding, 5 percent above the fiscal year level of 2013. Budget cuts have forced the courts to downsize and furlough staff. This bill provides the judiciary the staffing and resources it needs for court offices, probation, pretrial services, and in particular Federal defender offices will be adequately staffed.

The bill also calls for significant investments in the government’s capital projects. For the first time in 3 years, it provides the General Services Administration a total of $1.633 billion for construction and repair of Federal buildings and courthouses. I would like to thank my ranking member Senator Johanns for his effort this year. He was friendly, honest, and straightforward. It has been a real privilege to work with him.

I must thank our subcommittee staff, Marianne Upton, Diana Hamilton, Emily Sharp. Like all the committee staff, they have spent time over the holidays, on weekends, and uncounted long hours to help craft this final bill.

In closing, I am very happy to be here talking about the good work of the Appropriations Committee and that good work that has been produced in this bill that is before us for New Mexico and for the Nation.

But I must mention one problem that remains. It is a great concern for many of us from the West. Funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program, known as PILT, has expired. These funds compensate counties in New Mexico and throughout the country where the Federal Government owns a good deal of land, land that cannot be taxed, cannot be developed, cannot be used to help pay for services such as roads and schools and public health and public safety.

PILT is a lifeline to my constituents in many rural communities in New Mexico. I joined with my friend Senator Enzi of Wyoming urging that this funding be included in this bill. Unfortunately, it was not. I realize PILT has not been in the appropriations bill for several years. In fact, it is preferable for it to receive mandatory, long-term funding. But we must find a solution and we must find that solution soon. I am calling for PILT to be included in the upcoming farm bill conference report.

It is a commonsense solution to this very real problem. PILT is a long-term funding program. Our rural communities across the country depend on PILT to function and need that certainty. They need to be able to plan for long-term projects. Mandatory long-term funding is the only real solution.
I hope my colleagues will work with me.

With that, I would urge all of my colleagues to vote yes on the Omnibus appropriations bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, if I might respond to the very generous comments of the Senator from New Mexico about the work of the committee, I also like to respond to his comments about PILT. The Senator from New Mexico has spoken very eloquently, as have other Senators from the West, about the need for this Payment in Lieu of Taxes.

The Presiding Officer is a newcomer. I am sure he finds that we speak a different language and our constituents say: We use PILT and PILOT. They wonder if we are tilting in the right direction. But to use plain English and plain needs of States that have a large amount of land that is held by the Federal Government, PILT stands for Payment in Lieu of Taxes.

So there is tremendous land owned by the Federal Government in New Mexico: am I correct?

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. The Senator is absolutely correct. In some of our counties, 70 percent of the land in the county is Federal Government land. So what happens, as the chair pointed out, is the Federal Government says because that cannot be developed and it cannot be taxed, we are going to pay you in lieu of taxes.

Ms. MIKULSKI. But they have not been paying?

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. No. The program which has been in place a very long time has expired. We have run out of money. These counties need to be able to plan for their projects. So that is where we are.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I think this is an issue of fairness and justice. I know the Presiding Officer comes to the Senate as a member of the City Council of starting on the city council. We are local government people. We know how we had to struggle with unfunded mandates. Many of us have large Federal institutions in our State that we love, such as the U.S. Naval Academy in my district.

That does not pay taxes, but, my gosh, we are happy to have them. I think we have to resolve this PILT issue. I would say to the Senator from New Mexico: spoken to me frequently about this issue, and to all of the Senators from the West on both sides of the aisle: Let’s work on this.

I pledge to you that as we move on fiscal year 2015, if it is appropriate to be in negotiations, we will be doing it. But I will also work with other relevant authorizing committees. We have to crack this problem. It has been languishing far too long. I think it is a justice issue, that if the Federal Government owns land on which it doesn’t pay taxes, we then must be placed in other developmental use that could be taxed, we have to in some way pay our fair share.

Isn’t that the Senator’s perspective?

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. That is exactly my perspective. In these counties, the programs run out. The counties have planned on this money because they have been getting it year after year, and we have to find a way to do this.

I wish to applaud Chairwoman MIKULSKI. They are our people, as the Senator knows—there are Western Senators, Democrats, Republicans, and they have all talked with the chairwoman. We have been talking to the authorizing committees. We have talked to Senator STABENOW in Agriculture in terms of the farm bill. We think there is a way this can be worked out.

I am very encouraged to hear that the chairwoman also believes it can be worked out, is willing to look at this next year in the appropriations process, and work with the authorizers to see this get done.

Ms. MIKULSKI. As the Senator’s colleague and also someone who comes out of local government who knows the challenges local governments face, we have worked on this, again, on a bipartisan basis.

I have spoken to Senator STABENOW and believe she is willing to proceed on how we could do this as well.

I thank the Senator for his comments. I think we have a path forward to talk with Senator STABENOW, with others who are involved in the farm bill, and to move forward, and yet move forward on this bill and lay the groundwork for 2015 so we don’t have this recurring problem.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. I wish to tell the Senator how much all of the Senators on this issue appreciate the chairwoman’s hard work. I think we need to stay focused. What happens with these counties is they wish to know early on whether the money is coming and how much. If they don’t know, they aren’t able to spend it wisely.

Ms. MIKULSKI. If I could respond to the Senator.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Please.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Municipal government is usually in a different fiscal year. Baltimore City Council began January 1, the Federal Government, of course, is October 1, and we are finally getting settled on January 16. We are a little schedule, but we are not behind the eight ball. We are going to work on this.

I thank the Senator for his work, along with Senator JOHANNES, a former Agriculture Secretary and Governor, I might add, and the way the Senator worked on the Subcommittee on Financial Services.

The Presiding Officer, a Senator from New Jersey, took the seat of the late and beloved Senator Frank Lautenberg, and Senator UDALL took Senator Lautenberg’s seat as the chair of the Financial Services Subcommittee. Senator Lautenberg would be very pleased to see this today. Although he would want to be here, the fact that the two Senators are in the Senate is very good.

Senator UDALL essentially had a battlefield promotion. The Senator proceeded with such diligence and had constantly in his mind the mission of the Senate, and has been in some very complicated issues. The Senator’s faithfulness to duty, the way he went about it with such diligence and verve, is indeed to be commended. I know Senator Lautenberg would be very pleased that his gavel passed into very competent hands. We thank the Senator. We also wish to thank Senator JOHANNES because he helped to carry the momentum.

This is the way the Senate ought to be. Even in a time of great sadness we were able to do our job.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Mrs. MURRAY. As the chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee leaves, I thank the Senator for her tremendous leadership. I thank the Senator for her leadership in getting this bill to the floor.

I come to the floor today to talk about another topic, and that is the 1.4 million Americans who have lost their unemployment benefits and the over 70,000 people who continue to lose them each week. The Senate has found itself in an all-too-familiar place. Once again, some Republicans are refusing to be able to say yes even to the most reasonable of offers, and it is a problem we have seen in this body too many times.

Over the course of the 16-day shutdown last October, we tried time and time again to find compromises to end that manufactured crisis, return Federal workers to their jobs, and reopen our Federal parks and buildings. But for too long Republicans refused to listen to the American people and embrace compromise. Instead, they were standing firmly in a partisan corner—and it is a pattern of what we saw last year in our efforts to pass a budget.

In March of the past year—as every Senator, I am sure, will remember—we spent a week on the Senate floor in a very open process debating and voting only to find that we had no budget until the very wee hours of the morning. On March 23 we finally passed our budget after the House had passed theirs the
day earlier. I thought at that time the next step would be to start a conference as quickly as possible. I thought it was a no-brainer.

This is what the American people were expecting, the two sides to get in a room, make the differences, and avoid another crisis. Every time we tried to start that budget conference—21 times in the Senate—a Senate Republican stood up and said no. They no longer wanted to follow regular order, they only wanted to obstruct. That took us to a government shutdown, a debt limit crisis, and a lot of pain for families and communities across the country before we could get them in a room with us in a budget conference and agree to a deal that the American people expected.

That has been sort of the Republican playbook in the Senate. They say no for a host of reasons, from a purely political for as long as they can, they hold out and obstruct as long as they can, until the pressure from angry Americans finally reaches a fever pitch, and then, when it is far too late, hopefully come to the table.

It is getting to be far too late for every single American who lost their unemployment benefits. In fact, as last week's unemployment report showed, nearly a million Americans recently gave up entirely. Those who haven't given up spent every single day desperately working to get on a job. Unemployment benefits make all the difference for them and their families while they scour the want ads, pound the pavement, and send out resume after resume.

In fact, I have heard from many people in my home State of Washington, story after story from men and women. One was Gary who lives in Spokane. Gary wrote to me about his wife Linda and how at "56 years young"—with a degree in accounting and an MBA in finance Linda is still unable to find work. After exhausting every other unemployment benefit, Gary and Linda are now forced to live off of his Social Security disability insurance. They are now facing monthly medical expenses and rent of over $1,000 just to stay healthy and keep a roof over their heads. Gary’s benefits cover about $900 of those expenses.

With each passing day this Congress fails to act Gary and Linda find themselves further and further behind. Gary concurs. I feel like I’m in a simple plea, written in all capital letters, that said: "PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE HELP!"

I also recently heard from a woman who was laid off from her job at a plant in Kennewick, WA.

She said:

This year, I have applied for over 200 jobs and, in spite of a stellar resume, have only gotten one interview.

I have lowered my standards throughout the year and applied for jobs far below my pay grade to no avail . . . my husband and I have maxed out our debt cards . . . I truly worry about losing my home and displacing my children.

These are real people, as the President knows. I have heard from Traci, a former executive assistant with 20 years of experience, in Everett, WA. After taking time off from work because she had to care for her mother and a daughter who was suffering from bipolar disorder and drug addiction, Traci found herself without a job.

After her mother passed away, Traci fell ill, and it made it very hard for her to look for work. While Traci was receiving unemployment benefits that were barely enough to cover the care her daughter required, she was just barely making it. She told me that now she cannot afford food and has lost over 60 pounds. She spends every day searching high and low for one break. She said: "I just need time for someone to give me a chance."

A chance. That is all she is asking us for. Both sides have a shared stake in these people. They don’t want a handout, they don’t want to be a burden. They need support while they get back on their feet and on the job.

We in the Senate need Republican support to be ready and willing to move forward. We have worked to find compromise. When Republicans wanted this extension to be paid for, even though it has been extended time and time again without pay-fors under Republican Congresses and Republican Presidents, we said OK, we will try and find that.

That wasn’t enough. When Republicans signaled that they didn’t want to pay for it by closing loopholes for the wealthiest Americans, we again looked to find a compromise.

When we put forward savings from policies that have either been agreed to by both sides or have been taken from proposals championed by Republicans, they once again said it wasn’t good enough.

When they asked for amendments, we offered amendments. They again said no.

Unfortunately, Republicans have now reverted once again to pure politics aimed at not the vast majority of American people who want to see this extended, but instead squarely at their most conservative audience possible.

Nowhere is that more evident than in the pay-fors they have offered—whether it is the minority leader’s amendment that predictably seeks to underpay workers like the Ayotte amendment, which is a very disturbing signal in that after joining us in passing comprehensive immigration legislation, Republicans are now doing a complete 180 on immigration in an election year. While it is a pay-for to that amendment, Senate Republicans are indicating that they are actually going to begin targeting U.S. citizens, children who are U.S. citizens, simply because they were born to undocumented workers. I think that is shameful, and I am shocked that we have reached this point.

These policies aren’t going anywhere. Republicans know that. In the end, all they amount to is nothing more than delaying tactics while American families’ lives are hanging in the balance.

Make no mistake, families across the country are teetering on the brink today. In fact, nowhere is that more clear than in the last story I came to the floor to share with you. I received this yesterday from a woman named Shiela, who for the last 13 years has worked a middle-management job at a national corporation in my State. She started her letter by saying: "I’ve written to you many times, but I’m compelled to do so today."

Then she told me how she, her husband, and two children had lived a fairly comfortable life, but all of that changed last year when her employer decided to downsize, and she was one of the many Americans who was laid off. Her husband, who works in real estate, was struggling in a very weak market, as we all know. Suddenly, Shiela’s family of four found themselves relying on just over $500 a week in unemployment assistance.

Having graduated from college and business school, Sheila—like so many others—found herself in need of these benefits, and she said never in a million years did she think she would be in that spot.

These are her words:

I've worked for so many years, paid my taxes, did the right thing for others . . . and now I need help.

In October, Sheila’s family lost their house. They are now renting. They do not know if their daughter will still qualify for the student loans she is currently receiving. Sheila’s checking account is now overdrawn. Her car payments are past due. She started getting notices from her utility companies. And as my staff talked with her yesterday, she said she was headed out the door to apply for food stamps.

Because of the Republicans’ refusal to work with us, we are seeing once again the回到了 home to constituents such as Sheila. To explain why this extension hasn’t gotten done, I know I will be pointing out the fact that we have compromised time and time again to try to get something done here; that we have all but begged Republicans from the start to work with us on this effort, but I can’t help but wonder how Republicans are going to explain their actions.

While I normally don’t come to the floor to give advice to my friends on the other side of the aisle, I would certainly like to suggest they do not stare into the eyes of someone who just had to apply for food stamps for the very first time in their life and explain that they can’t act until ObamaCare is destroyed. And I hope they do not tell those who are about to lose their home they can’t help them until they find a way to cut childcare credits for U.S. children. And I hope they do not tell Americans who are working hard and applying for jobs that pay a fraction of what they have been making they will only be willing to help
them if all of their political demands are met. And I especially hope they do not think making arguments about procedure or amendments or arcane rules of the Senate that only people here in DC pay attention to is an excuse for walking away from 1.4 million American families when all they want to see is results.

What I do hope is that the experiences they have coming face-to-face with these families will change their tone when they come back here in a week. I hope the stories I have shared today will once again be the pressure that Republicans have required over and over to finally act. And I hope that soon they will join us in passing our nonpartisan, commonsense bill and finally delivering some certainty and some security for struggling Americans who deserve it.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. PRYOR. I yield, Ms. Pryor, I will.

Ms. MIKULSKI. First, I thank the Senator for the work she did in the Budget Committee, because that budget work she did so diligently on a bipartisan basis with Paul Ryan has enabled us to have the allocation for discretion that has enabled us to have the hearings that are coming here today to make sure the government function, that it will work as hard as the taxpayers who pay for it, and that we will have no government shutdown and no crisis environment I so badly want to thank the Senator for that.

The question I have for the Senator is in regard to her role as the chair of the Subcommittee on Transportation and Housing, Urban Development, and Related Agencies. Has the Senator had a chance to look at what she thinks will be the positive job impact of what she has been able to do? Because the Senator funds transportation for the United States. There are TIGER grants that are so important to Maryland and the Port of Baltimore, and also the issues related to housing. In my own hometown the renovation of housing for the elderly—most of it built in the 1970s and 1980s under Carter and Reagan—needs to be rehabilitated. They need to be reformed so they meet new ADA standards, all of which would put men and women to work where, in my State, the job rate among construction workers is enormously high. So building bridges and building homes would be the way. Has the Senator had a chance to look at any of that?

Mrs. MURRAY. Let me respond to the chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee, Mr. President. I came to the floor today to talk about the millions of Americans who are in need of extended unemployment benefits, but I would tell my colleagues that everyone I have ever talked to on unemployment would much rather have jobs at the to the question the Senator has asked me in relation to my role as chair of the subcommittee on transportation and housing and the bill we are about to pass here in the Senate, it will have an impact on creating jobs and building that infrastructure so people will have that job certainty. It is extremely important.

On the transportation side of my appropriation bill, TIGER Grant program the Senator has described will bring not only jobs to communities but real projects that will help build a foundation for future economic growth. There is no one who questions that transportation infrastructure brings jobs today, provides economic development for the future, and is absolutely the way people get to work and home in a timely manner, bringing certainty for so many families we know. That is a critical part of my subcommittee.

The other part of my subcommittee, as the Senator mentioned, is housing. Those issues are so important. I think most people forget if you don’t have a place to live it is pretty hard to go to work. Providing some of these programs, we did TIGER 8, and some of the reforms we have put in here, is absolutely critical for so many Americans to be able to have the stability and to get out and get a job, so that we don’t have to be arguing over unemployment benefits. But actually how we can make the investments so this country can work and survive.

I hope we can provide those extensions today, as we struggle to get back on our feet, but reasonably pass this critical bill the Senator has authored so we can provide jobs and economic support, which is what people want.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I thank the Senator for her tireless effort.

I want to comment on the work the Senator from Washington State did in her role chairing the subcommittee on transportation and housing. What a bipartisan effort that subcommittee put forth. Senator MURRAY and the Senator from Washington State worked on a bipartisan basis on transportation and housing, which is what the committee funds, and on housing.

When I speak of housing, this housing that is primarily related to meeting compelling human need. It also has the money for Community Development Block Grants.

Going back to the days when I referred to the Senator as “Mr. Mayor,” now “Mr. President”—the Presiding Officer, and councilwoman Barb and the former Mayor Booker—what Community Development Block Grant money means in our local communities. In my State, Community Development Block Grant money is key to local governments solving local problems without the “one size fits All” from Washington.

What I like about the Community Development Block Grant money is that its criteria for funding is it has to deal with blight, it has to deal with unemployment, and it has to meet compelling human need. And whatever they do, it also usually results in good-paying jobs in construction. But it is not decided by Washington. Thou shalt build such-and-such under such-and-such Washington rules. It is decided in Newark, in Baltimore, in Phoenix.

What is so important about the CDBG money in transportation and housing is money out here. There is no longer a federal rule that is FRA the Secretary of Housing, Urban Development, and Housing, Urban Development, and the Subcommittee on Transportation and Housing, Urban Development, and Related Agencies. Has the Senator had a chance to look at any of that?

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDENT. Without objection, it is so ordered.
Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the business on the floor, which is the Omnibus appropriations bill. Let me start by thanking Chairwoman MIKULSKI for her leadership. She has put long hours in on this over the Christmas and New Year’s break. When we come back, we work with families and doing things in their home State, on vacation, she never stopped working. Her team, her staff on the Appropriations Committee, never stopped working. The staff, as always, is kind of the ground people there who did so many great things to put this together, both Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate—everybody had to work together to get this done and I am proud they did.

I am also proud to be one of the Appropriations subcommittee chairs who was able to work on this legislation. As you know, I am chairman of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee. I have worked with my counterpart Senator BLUET, the ranking member of the subcommittee, to craft part of this bipartisan bill. Again, Senator BLUET has been wonderful to work with. We appreciate him and his staff as well.

When people hear agriculture Appropriations, they think about farming. That is understandable. We all understand why. That is certainly a key part of the bill, but that is not all it does. Our bill helps farmers with operating loans, conservation practices, marketing. It funds programs that benefit rural communities such as clean drinking water and rural housing, and it supports nutrition programs that help kids across the country.

It also funds international food assistance such as Food for Peace that allows crops grown here at home to be distributed around the world.

This bill, in addition, touches on the Food and Drug Administration. That is an agency that is vitally important to the United States. Here again, just like agriculture is one of the core strengths of the U.S. economy, pharmaceuticals is another area where America leads the world. It is critically important that we have a highly functioning FDA in order for us to keep that competitive advantage.

This bill overall has a huge impact over the U.S. economy, but my subcommittee’s part in this bill also has a very significant bearing over the U.S. economy that will continue this gener- ery. Getting people back to work, getting people focused on domestic jobs and the fact that we make things here and grow things here is critically important for our future.

For example, look at what it is doing to my home State. If I could, I could go around to each one of these desks in the Senate and talk about specific things it is doing in everyone’s State, but just in my home State, it is providing funding for many of our universities, including the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, to conduct cutting edge agricultural research. It is supporting economic development grants for the Delta Regional Authority, which is in our region of the country, to boost the quality of life in the Delta region. It is providing our kids with a safe and stable food supply by supporting, again in our State, the Arkansas Children’s Nutrition Research Center in Little Rock, and it is investing in the technology of tomorrow by funding the National Center for Toxicological Research in Jefferson County, AR.

The bill, which is part of the FDA, is also very important and people take it for granted because they don’t know what it does, but it is very important. Now they have a new focus on nano-technology, which they have been doing in the last few years, and that will be a game changer as well. Those are just a few of the challenges.

I could stand here for an hour or so talking about the benefits of the bill and talking about all the provisions in this bill. What Senator MURRAY and Congressman RYAN did. I appreciate what they did. They laid the groundwork for us to be here today. It was a bipartisan effort, went through both Houses, bipartisan, big votes, and we saw a huge vote in the House of Representatives yesterday. I hope we will see a large vote in the Senate today or tomorrow or Saturday, whenever we get this done. Certainly I hope it is going to be today. Nonetheless, this is a victory for bipartisanship and the agriculture appropriations part of that is important.

But overall, the fact is that Congress is back in business. We are getting things done. We are getting back to what Senator MURRAY and Congressman RYAN did. I appreciate what they did. They laid the groundwork for us to be here today. It was a bipartisan effort, went through both Houses, bipartisan, big votes, and we saw a huge vote in the House of Representatives yesterday. I hope we will see a large vote in the Senate today or tomorrow or Saturday, whenever we get this done. Certainly I hope it is going to be today. Nonetheless, this is a victory for bipartisanship and the agriculture appropriations part of that is important.

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Ms. MIKULSKI. The Senator from Arkansas, as well as his ranking member, the Senator from Missouri Mr. BLUNT, has done a great job. Sometimes Congress gets the rap when we grow the deficit, but here in agriculture, the subcommittee grows good jobs and they grow them by making sure they have a sound approach to agriculture itself, where farmers and producers and distributors are able to do their job. And the work of the FDA, through food safety, has not only kept America safe, but it enables those who produce food in our country to have the right inspections so we have the right confidence to go out to the supermarket.

We are very proud of what they do.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I would say in conclusion, as I look on the floor and I see Senators from Alabama, from Maryland, from Maine, from Connecticut, agriculture touches each of these States. It touches them differently, but it is truly a matter of national pride. Every State contributes, basically every person benefits from it.

Again, I was honored to be part of this. The chairwoman deserves a lot of credit, a lot of praise in a bipartisan way and getting it through both Houses. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am pleased to follow my colleague from Arkansas and join him in applauding the chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee Senator MIKULSKI for her extraordinary and historic work on this measure which serves so well our way of life and our traditions in the Senate of bipartisan service, putting America first over partisan- ship. I join my very distinguished colleague from Arkansas who has highlighted so well the values served by agriculture in America and served well by this appropriations bill and by the measure Chairwoman STABENOW is seeking to forge, again through bipartisan work involving both Houses of this body.

Agriculture serves so many of our basic values in this Nation—environmental and consumer values, patriotism and pride in a way of life. In Connecticut, we know deeply and urgently how threatened are these values and traditions, this way of life and the environment, consumer issues at stake.

I am pleased that we are near a compromise, on the verge and the cusp of an agreement on the farm bill that will serve the interests of farmers in Connecticut and around the country.

The dozens of dairy farmers with relatively small farms around Connecticut have said to me again and again that they need help and certainty. That was the message they gave me as I visited their farms around the State of Connecticut time and again, and now apparently help and certainty are on the way.

I am pleased that the farm bill conference has been making progress on the dairy provisions in the farm bill. We are going to be studying them very closely. They have only just been announced. Apparently, the new deal announced by the farm bill conference would keep the margin insurance program, but reviving the Dairy Market Stabilization Program. In place of that Dairy Market Stabilization Program, the deal revives the recently expired Milk Income Loss Contract Program known as the MILC Program. The Milk Income Loss Contract Program is a transitional program while the new margin insurance plan is being set up by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Without going into all of the details, I think this agreement represents progress and I urge us to carefully scrutinize it and seek to improve it from the standpoint of Connecticut's dairy farmers. But there can be no doubt—none whatsoever to anyone in this body, which I think we would all agree is not just an industry of the milk industry, beginning with the dairy farmers. Indeed, reflecting the importance of milk to America is the fact that it is the only beverage, other than water, that is permitted on the floor of the Senate, as far as I know.

I am pleased to have a glass of milk on the floor today. This is a first for me in my young experience as a Senator. I am not sure if it is a correct parliamentary inquiry, but I say to the Presiding Officer: Got milk? I'm willing to share.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. This issue is a very serious one because the lives and livelihoods of our dairy farmers are at stake. There is the open space that may be sacrificed if dairy farms surrender and are forced to abandon this way of life due to the increasingly high costs of feed, fuel, and labor that are pressing them as they also encounter potential price reductions. So they are squeezed. Dairy farmers are squeezed.

In Connecticut we mostly have small-family-owned farms like the Fairview Farms in Woodstock, Hyclone Farm in Monticello, and Sandalwood in Chevy Chase. They are the backbone of dairy farms. Today there are 150 dairy farms. Their milk is so good, in fact, they are known as the very best milk in America.

In Connecticut, in 1975 there were 817 dairy farms. Today there are 150 dairy farms. In fact, in Connecticut we have more than water, that is permitted on the floor of the Senate, as far as I know. It is vital to our health and well-being as a society. Their milk is so good, in fact, they are known as the very best milk in America.

Their milk is so good, in fact, they opened a milk bar called Mansfield called the Farmer's Cow Cafe & Creamery where you can choose from five or six different types and flavors of milk to help wash down their delicious and fresh sandwiches, salads, cheeses, and ice creams.

Visit Connecticut and visit the Farmer's Cow Cafe. These are the farms we need to support and keep growing. These are the farms for the men and women who need to support and keep growing.

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I am pleased and proud to have a hand in it.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Will the Senator from Connecticut yield for a question?
Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I am pleased to yield for a question.

Ms. MIKULSKI. First, let me thank my colleague for his generous words about the work of this committee. What is on the Senator’s desk? I am drinking milk.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I have milk. I offered to share my milk with the Presiding Officer. I know that Maine has its share of farmers. I understand the Presiding Officer is not allowed, under our Senate rules, to respond in substance, but I would be glad to share with the chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I say to the Senator from Connecticut: I have been in the Senate for 25 years, and I have seen a lot of Senators try to put a lot of different drinks in those glasses, but I have never seen milk on the Senate floor. Is that permissible?

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I am told it is a permissible beverage to the Senate floor that is allowed under the rules. If it is not allowed, I am sure I will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

Ms. MIKULSKI. For all of us who just yearn for a calcium-rich diet, it is refreshing to see that. We salute Connecticut and its strong agricultural presence, and I thank the Senator for bringing a nutritious beverage to the Senate floor that is allowed under the rules. If it is not allowed, I am sure we can have the appropriate committee of jurisdiction allow it.

I think what the Senator is saying is we have a lot of people in our country who work in agriculture, and agriculture is not one field. Agriculture in the United States of America is diverse, and we can’t let these small farmers fade away.

I am seeing new, emerging farmers in my State—whether it is for dairy or beef, and so on. With the so-called farm-to-fork movement, this could be the dawn of a new age in agriculture while we preserve that which has been traditional and fed America during good times and bad. So I thank the Senator for his work and his advocacy, and I look forward to working with him.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I thank the chairwoman for her remarks. I wish to express to her, as I do to all of my colleagues, that agriculture and farming really are a way of life. We need to make sure that all farms are sustained. We sometimes tend to neglect or take them for granted.

Again, I thank the distinguished Senator from Maryland for the time and attention she has devoted over the many years she has been here to the farms of Maryland and the farms of America. I think it is a cause we share. Whether it is Alabama or Georgia or Maine or any other State represented on this floor, today, we need to make sure we provide the safety net where it is necessary and the support when it is due but also keep in mind that consumers ultimately are the beneficiaries, the men and women and children, having four children myself. Also, having for a time actually worked on a farm, I know this product is central to the American existence and the American way of life.

I thank the chairwoman, and 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.

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

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I see the Senator from Arizona is on the floor, and I would inquire of the Senator if at 12:30 he is planning to speak on the War Powers Act.

Mr. McCAIN. I thank the chairwoman for her remarks. I was awaiting the arrival of my colleague from Virginia, who was going to speak first.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I say to the Senator from Arizona, I think this is an important discussion. We will do it any way the Senator from Arizona wishes. If my colleague from Arizona wishes to proceed, I would be fine with this side of the aisle. Whatever way the Senator from Arizona wishes to proceed on this important topic is fine.

Mr. McCAIN. I thank the Senator from Maryland. I hope the Presiding Officer will chastise the Senator from Virginia for being tardy. I know he is very capable of that. So I will go ahead and begin, although I had planned on the Senator from Virginia being first. He is the sponsor of the bill which I am cosponsoring. I thank the chairwoman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. McCAIN. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. McCain and Mr. Kaine relating to the introduction of S. 393 are printed in today’s RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TEENY. Mr. President, I wish to talk about the omnibus for a brief time before Senator Leahy has some remarks to be made.

First of all, I thank the chair and ranking member of the Appropriations Committee and their hard work to draft a sensible funding bill that I think meets the needs of the American people, a bill that helps us move past the stalemate and disagreements of the past few years and does what the American people sent us to do; that is, roll up our sleeves, work together, work hard, and govern.

Recently, folks have put politics and partisanship ahead of our constituents and our responsibilities, and the results have not been pretty. But thanks to Governors from Montana and Ranking Member Shelby and their counterparts in the House of Representatives, we now have a responsible bipartisan bill we can work with, one that invests in our future to strengthen our economy but that makes tough choices so we can continue to get our fiscal house in order.

Approving this bill helps avoid another round of devastating sequester cuts, avoid a government shutdown, and avoid some of the bitterness that is dragging down economic growth.

In Montana, our seniors, children, women, and civilians who are members of the military—to name a few—felt the sequester cuts head on. Kids could not go to Head Start. The elderly could not get meals. Women faced cuts to reproductive health programs. Defense Department employees were forced to stay home, and our military was dangerously close to being hollowed out.

This bill makes smart choices to continue to reduce our deficit, while investing in core national priorities—those to address the military pension issue to make sure it works for the men and women of the military who have made great sacrifices on our behalf.

I also thank Chairman Reed and Senator Murkowski for putting forward a smart Interior bill. By ending sequestration, we are able to make some real progress in Indian Country and in protecting some of America’s most unique landscapes.

The Interior bill increases funding for the Indian Health Service, which is necessary, it increases funding for Indian education and for promoting good stewardship of our public lands.

This Interior bill is particularly important to States such as Montana. It will improve the quality of life for folks on our seven reservations. It will create more tourism and recreational opportunities throughout Montana. I am concerned, however, of the absence of one measure. It is a measure approved by the Senate Appropriations and Rules Committees. It is bipartisan. It saves money. It brings more transparency and accountability to a town that needs more than one-third of the Senate is a cosponsor.

This act is called the Senate Campaign Disclosure Parity Act. Right
now, candidates for the Senate do not have to electronically file their campaign finance reports with the Federal Election Commission. Now they can voluntarily e-file. Maybe the Presiding Officer did. But many of our colleagues do not.

Instead, all a Senate candidate has to do is take a big stack of documents, drop them at the office door of the Secretary of the Senate, and head back to the campaign trail. Then what happens? The Secretary of the Senate then sends those documents to the FEC which spends time and money hiring contractors to put those reports on line where they can be viewed by the public. This costs taxpayers nearly $500,000 and God knows how many staff hours each year to make this information available.

But the biggest cost is to the American people, particularly to our voters, who have the right to know who is funding the campaigns of their elected officials. It is not as if I am proposing a new idea. The House of Representatives must electronically file their financial reports. Presidential candidates e-file. Yet the Senate is stuck in the dark ages. In an era of smart phones and cars that drive themselves, it combines that harvest fields using GPS, today the Senate is dropping stacks of paper at officials’ doorsteps.

I proudly voluntarily e-file my campaign finance reports. I know many of our colleagues do as well. But it is not enough. Ironically, we do not know why my bill to improve transparency and save money did not make it into the funding bill. I am told it was blocked by the House of Representatives. A few folks over at the House are pointing fingers back over here. That is finger-pointing instead of accountability, politics instead of governance. We can do better.

Here in the Congress, we consistently demand transparency from Federal agencies. That is the right thing to do. But we need to also look in the mirror. We are not doing what we demand of others. But Americans are demanding this funding bill as well. It is a step forward to responsible government. It makes tough choices to getting our fiscal house in order while investing in the future.

This Omnibus is a good bill. It puts our country on more solid footing. It delivers more certainty to small businesses so we can focus on them to grow and create jobs. Our constituents sent us here to find common ground. This kind of responsible bill is why we are here. So, once again, I thank the chairwoman and the ranking member for their hard work. I am encouraging that bill to pass. I look forward to seeing its final passage.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I want to address my remarks, first, to the chairman and the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee. I think you have done a lot of hard work. You have done something that even though I am not in the consensus, you have done what the Senate was designed to do, build a consensus around a bill. There is no question this bill will pass today. So my congratulations to you and my thank you for some of the things you put in the bill that we have been working on that are good governance projects. So I want to say that from the start.

I am not going to talk specifically about the bill. I am going to talk in bigger, broader terms of the problems that are facing us as a country. I have in my hands a book that contains $9 trillion worth of cuts. Hardly anybody in the Senate has read it. They may not agree with 50 or 60 or 70 percent. But there is certainly somewhere in here consensus for us to actually save a whole lot more money than we are doing.

In 2009, a young lady by the name of Madonna showed up outside the Senate. This is what she had draped around her neck. “I am already $38,375 in debt and I only own a dollhouse.”

Since that period of time, we have managed to markedly change that situation and I say today, if she were outside, she would have this sign on her neck. It would say $54,602 and she would only own a dollhouse.

The point I am trying to make is this hole is getting deeper and deeper and deeper. Although I did not vote for the budget agreement, I think it could have been done better, it was an agreement and had a consensus as well. My criticism is not that the Members of this body worked a consensus, which is exactly what the Senate is supposed to do, but I think as we have done this we might have lost sight of the big picture. So I want to share with you for a minute what the big picture looks like, because it is not pretty.

According to generally accepted accounting principles, that is not the way we run the government, by the way. We do not use real accounting principles. We use all the tricks and smoke and mirrors we can. This number is indisputable.

The unfunded liabilities for the Federal Government are $127 trillion. Think about that. We cannot even imagine what the real national debt is $17.33 trillion as of last night. I checked it. There are 14 million households in America. If you take the Federal liability per household, it comes out to $1.11 million. So $1.11 million is what the debt plus the liability is for every family in this country. It is growing. I know we cannot solve this problem over 1 year or 2 years. I am so grateful to the Senator who is leading the Appropriations Committee in her position. I have the most wonderful respect for her, she is a listener. She wants to do right.

But what we have to do is change the direction of this. It needs to go the other way. That requires everybody. If you think about it, if the average family per capita income—this is what it was last year in this country, $53,000—can you imagine how we are going to leverage and afford just the interest cost on $1.11 million?

Now think for a minute. If we have no recessions over the next 20 years and we have great economic growth, 4 percent, we still do not solve this problem. Because the interest costs are greater than the GDP growth associated with our country.

I wanted to give the background of why I come out here all the time and make the issues of why we are stealing the future from our children. Nobody can deny the fact that we have not done the work. The reasons we have
not done the work are multiple. But most of it is we just will not do the work. We do not have the leadership that requires us to do the work.

Think about Madeline. Let's say she gets a great college education and is in the upper quintile in our country in terms of her earnings when she is 25. With normalized interest rates, she is going to fall behind. So I know we are talking out in the future, but one of the things Thomas Jefferson wanted out of the Senate was for us to be long-range thinkers, not to think about the problem right now, think about what the problem is going to be.

In my 9 years here, I have failed in my attempts to convince my colleagues that we ought to be worrying about this problem. Because the promise of America was opportunity. The promise of the poor house is no opportunity. What we have set up for the average American family in the future is the poor house.

It does not have to be that way. We can fight among the priorities, but the one thing we should not by fighting about is that we should know that we can fix is why would there be 679 different renewable energy programs? Can anybody give any possible justification for that? It is just $15 billion a year, but if you consolidated them down to 20, you could save $5 billion a year. That is $50 billion over 10 years.

Why are there 253 different Department of Justice crime prevention grants? Each of them has an overhead. What we found when we met are studied this is people get a grant from one, then use the same grant application to go to another grant overhead in DOJ, get the grant from another section, another program, for exactly the same claim. The right hand does not know the left hand. If you consolidated them, one, you would get more money to each individual grant, and, No. 2, you would not have the duplication and fraud and lack of compliance we know these grant programs are loaded with. We have done the work. We have done the oversight.

We have actually studied them—or why are there 209? Think about this—science, technology, engineering, and math incentive programs, education programs, 13 different agencies, $3.5 billion a year. Why do we allow that to happen? This is the real face of who it is going to affect. Yet we won't do the work. We have not done the work are multiple. But most of it is we just will not do the work. We do not have the leadership that requires us to do the work.

So everybody will know, we are projecting 1 year about $380 billion of money for programs that aren't authorized at all. One of the strengths of the Appropriations Committee could be that we could put some demands on the authorizing committee to clean this up.

I want to state a couple more.

Health care has been in the news. How many of us realize we have 91 different health care training programs spending $14 billion a year? Some of my colleagues probably know that, but in the committee of jurisdiction they have done nothing about it.

I don't object to spending $14 billion on health training programs or any of these other things as long as we are doing it wisely, but what I would suggest is for the 91 different programs—which should be probably 4 or 5—the overhead associated with the others is saved for the American public. We could save a significant amount of money. If we don't use the real story is our excesses, our lack of work, our lack of consolidation, our lack of streamlining, our lack of elimination and duplication, our lack of demanding the metrics so that we know the programs are we are funding out there are working.

We are not going to pay the price for it, nobody in this room. The people who are going to be paying the price for it are Madeline's generation. How are they going to pay for that? What is going to happen? What is the real cost associated with that? It is not a pretty picture. This is what it is: It is a markedly declining standard of living.

Most people don't know that median family income in real dollars in America today is at the exact same level it was in 1989, and it is going backward. Even with a growing economy, it is going backward. The assets available to a family are declining while the obligations are increasing, and we are responsible for that. It is not something we can't fix, it is something we choose not to fix.

I also would say that I have one large concern in this bill. We increased NIH back to $1 billion. We are still not where we were 2 years ago, but we started with $800 million more at the Defense Department, duplicating programs that are already running at the NIH. We are making my list bigger, not smaller. We are going in the wrong direction.

We have great people at the NIH. We have a great leader in Francis Collins. They have markedly improved the management of their grants, their oversight of their grants. Yet we are going to take $800 million and move it over to another set of overhead—where people not nearly as experienced, not nearly as knowledgeable. We are going to be spending money in the Defense Department to study things we are already spending money on the same type of thing at NIH. So we are not going to get great value for this money. What we are going to do is waste it. That $800 million should have gone to NIH and every other non-military-related medical program over there. That money should have gone to the NIH.

When we talk to the Senators who sat on this bill, both Tom Harkin and my former colleague, now deceased, Ted Stevens, they would admit to us in private that it was a mistake to ever start it this way, because we are wasting a ton of precious dollars that could be used to save somebody's life, but somehow as a reason for that, don't know what it is, but I will say in this bill we have $68 billion of appropriations for the Defense Department that have nothing to do with the defense of this country. We don't get all of these savings if we take it out of the Defense Department, but we get $3 billion or $4 billion if we take it out of the Defense Department. That $3 billion or $4 billion could fund NIH back at a level it should be funded or protect Madeline from further decline in her standard of living.

I have made my point. I understand my perspective is not in the majority, but I will guarantee my perspective is with the majority of Americans, that we ought not to have these renewable energy initiatives. I don't think we would find anybody in the country who would disagree with me that they ought to be consolidated. They ought to be run efficiently. They ought to have metrics on them, as well as the other hundreds of sets of duplications.

We are going to get another report next month from the GAO, actually in March. It will be their fourth. They are so discouraged because they do all this hard work, make recommendations, and then we sit on them. We don't act.

If I were to have a challenge to my colleagues, it is first to read the reports over the past 4 years and look at the data that shows where we are really spending our money. Then, please, for Madeline and the sake of next generation, act on it. Don't ignore it.

I know it is not easy work. It is hard work. I have done oversight for 9 years in the Senate. But it can be done, it should be done, and the Madelines of America are worth it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. The remarks by the Chairman from Oklahoma are very interesting and telling. I listened to him carefully, and I believe basically he is right on the point. I believe basically that we all agree with the Senator that it is important to reduce the waste and duplication in our government. He points out a lot of it. GAO has done it too.

Our staff has met with the GAO several times on ways to address this problem. We know the problem; we have to act on it, and we have to take the every serious GAO report. Senator COBURN said, is coming out with a new report. If we work on this, the government is going to be more efficient. We
are going to save money, and we are going to respond to problems in America much better. We are a long way from doing this. I appreciate his remarks this afternoon and I hope a lot of my Senators were looking at that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. JOHANNS. I ask unanimous consent to speak for approximately 12 minutes as in morning business.

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

TPA

Mr. JOHANNS. I rise today to discuss a bill my colleagues and I introduced to establish trade promotion authority, otherwise referred to as TPA. Senators Barrasso and Hatch, along with Congressmen CAMP in the House, introduced the Congressional Trade Priorities Act only last week. The Senate Finance Committee held a hearing on it today.

This bill would resurrect the partnership between Congress and the administration to promote a robust trade agenda. That partnership, known as TPA, came about as a way to thoughtfully and pragmatically exercise Congressional and public oversight of the executive authority to negotiate trade agreements. TPA effectively combines this authority with the President’s authority to negotiate treaties.

Congress therefore provides the marching orders to the President, and the President, in turn, gets an up-or-down vote on the agreement that is negotiated. Some might ask why would we do this? Why should Congress set rules for itself to consider trade agreements through a very special legislative process? Simply put, negotiating modern trade agreements would be virtually impossible without providing some assurance that agreed-upon provisions, negotiated provisions, won’t be picked apart after the negotiators shake hands.

Trade agreements span a multitude of issues affecting international commerce. To reach these agreements there needs to be extensive negotiation by representatives of the countries involved, but Congress is hardly equipped to engage in multilateral negotiations with foreign countries. We know that. We can hardly negotiate with each other these days.

TPA helps Congress set priorities for trade agreements and engage with the President throughout the process. During floor consideration, amendments cannot be offered because it would undermine our Trade Representative. It would undermine our Trade Representative’s hand in negotiation. Imagine our negotiators signing a deal, shaking hands with our counterparts from other parts of the world, and then bringing the deal to Congress. Then, after 535 people offer a plethora of amendments, they have to go back to the other countries and try to reopen negotiations because everything has been changed. No one would ever negotiate a trade deal with the United States again.

So why is that a bad thing? Should we negotiate trade agreements at all? I would argue, unquestionably, the answer is absolutely yes. White Houses from Read to Reagan have agreed.

Furthermore, the overall benefit of free trade is undisputed by the economists. A free rules-based trading system is much better for America than a system where the government picks winners and losers, and it is better for American jobs when the playing field is a level playing field.

I want to give an example: Colombia. In 2011 Congress passed a trade agreement with Colombia—already one of our most important allies in Latin America. That trade relationship is thriving as a result of that agreement. Consider this: Between 2011 and 2013 U.S. goods exports to Colombia have increased 18 percent. At the same time U.S. goods exports to the rest of the world, to say nothing of competitors, has increased 1 percent. Trade agreements are a great benefit to Americans as well as in corners of the world where they need a strong ally.

Unfortunately, that is a message that doesn’t always make it through. Instead, we hear a chorus of scare tactics about job losses, environmental concerns—whatever it is. Critics ignore the proven power of trade to expand job opportunities and to improve the lives not just here but around the world. At the same time the lives of millions of people around the world improve. Almost all economists would agree that countries should move toward more free trade, not less.

One need only examine tariff rates to understand why it is in our best interests to pursue trade agreements. U.S. barriers to trade are already very low by global standards. Our average tariff rate is 3.5 percent. Compare that to our trading partners. Vietnam has an average tariff rate of 10 percent. Malaysia’s average is 6 percent. Japan and the EU both have average tariff rates of 5.3 percent. Only New Zealand has a lower rate than we do. So trade agreements help to level the playing field by bringing down tariffs imposed on our goods by our competitors. Put simply, trade agreements knock down barriers. They open doors for U.S. producers and manufacturers to get our economic engine going again.

Critics falsely claim we are going to experience a flood of cheap imports as a result of new agreements.

My friends, that simply doesn’t make sense when our tariffs are already low. Trade agreements narrow our competitors’ high tariffs. They level the playing field.

The benefit to trade is especially clear for agricultural products—huge drivers of the economy in my State. Our average tariff on these imported products is 5 percent. Malaysia’s is 11 percent, the European Union’s is 14 percent, Vietnam is at 17 percent, and Japan has an agricultural tariff rate of 23 percent. These countries all already have a number of trade agreements in place with other countries. That means we face restrictions while our competitors reap the benefits of the open market. We are on the sidelines while other countries are filling the void and creating the jobs. Trade Promotion Authority paves the way to lowering these barriers and, in some cases, eliminating them altogether.

Of course, tariffs are not the only barriers our exporters face, and TPA would help us address the others too. Countries also impose nontariff barriers, often claiming some illegitimate basis in science, and they have brought our industries to their knees. Modern trade agreements address those barriers as well, and we cannot get good trade agreements inked without TPA.

In general, the U.S. abides by true science-based trade standards. This is less common, however, in the rest of the world, to say nothing of competitors. Trade agreements help bring export markets in line with the same kind of science-based standards that we apply to our imports. So if you are concerned about foreign countries blocking American products, you should support TPA.

Without TPA it becomes much harder to open those markets for American workers.

We should all get behind this TPA bill and get it across the finish line so that trade agreements can clear the way for more Americans to be hired as export demand increases.

I am pleased President Obama now recognizes the immense benefit that trade provides to our great Nation. Despite being all talk and no action on trade early on, this administration is currently negotiating the two largest trade agreements in history. In my opinion, it is time for the partisan bickering to end. There are clear job-creating benefits to our country, and it is time for the President to make that case to the American people and to his allies in Congress.

In a couple of weeks the President will have an opportunity to do so in the State of the Union address. I hope he follows through. Given the ambition of potential agreements across the Pacific and the Atlantic, the President must lay the groundwork, the vision, for the passage of this legislation. Creating jobs in this Nation is too important to leave at the mercy of electioneering politics. It really is time to act. So my hope is we will pass TPA quickly so we can put Americans back to work.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.
Mr. SESSIONS. My late colleague Senator Byrd liked to say there have been two great Senates in the history of the world: The U.S. Senate and the Roman Senate. He understood the special and crucial role the Senate fulfills in our constitutional Republic. The Senate is where the great issues of our time are supposed to be examined, reviewed, and discussed before the whole Nation, in public. Yet in the last few years we have witnessed the dramatic erosion of Senators’ rights and the dismantling of an open process.

We fund the government through massive omnibus bills. This is the bill before us now—1,583 pages stacked up here before us that no one really has a chance to read or evaluate or analyze. Senators are stripped of their rights to offer amendments. We won’t have amendments. Bills are rushed through on the threat of panic, crisis or shutdown. The government shuts down. Secret deals rule the day. Work is done outside the public view, and so millions of Americans are essentially robbed of their ability to participate in the process by examining what their Senators do.

Under the tenure of Majority Leader REID, the Senate is rapidly losing its historic role as that great deliberative body. If this continues, America will have lost something very precious.

One of the tactics by which Majority Leader REID has suppressed Senators’ rights and blocked open debate is the technique called “filling the tree.” This basically means that when a bill comes to the floor, the leader will use his right of first recognition to fill all the available amendment slots on a bill and then block anyone else from offering an amendment. One man stands in the way of his 99 colleagues. I said but not really all alone does he stand there. His power exists only as long as his Democratic colleagues support his blocking of amendments.

This prevents the body from working its will. It prevents legislation from being improved by amendment, and it prevents Senators from being accountable to their voters on the great issues of the day. This is, of course, why it is done. It has nothing to do with time. It is done because the majority leader does not want to have his colleagues vote.

Our majority leader has used this tactic—filling the tree—time and time again. In perspective, in just 2013 alone, six previous majority leaders filled the tree only 49 times combined. Senator REID has filled the tree on 30 more occasions than the six previous leaders combined. In so doing, he denies the citizens whose elected representatives are in the Senate the right to offer an amendment. One man stands in the way of his 99 colleagues. I said but not really all alone does he stand there. His power exists only as long as his Democratic colleagues support his blocking of amendments.

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Recently, this tactic manifested itself in a dramatic way. To the surprise and shock of many, the December spending agreement contained a provision to cut the lifetime pension payments of current and future military retirees, including wounded warriers, by as much as $120,000 over their retirement period. Other Senators and I have had many ideas about how to fix this problem, but we were blocked from offering them by the majority leader. I tried to offer an amendment to replace the cut with a modified Troop sepulture used by illegal immigrants—cited by the Department of the Treasury—to claim billions of dollars in free tax credits they are not entitled to—billions. It would have more than paid for this. But Senator REID and his conference Members, save one—one broke ranks—stood together to block my amendment from a vote.

So I would ask my colleagues: Are you comfortable with this? Do you like the idea of leaving one person in the Senate the right for the right to offer an amendment in the Senate? Do you believe the Senate should operate according to the power of one man?

This omnibus bill, though it restores pension payments to our combat wounded warriers, leaves more than 90 percent of those cuts in place. Shouldn’t we be allowed to offer amendments to provide a fair fix for all our warriors and veterans?

But blocking amendments is only one of the many abuses. The other erosion of the Senate has also been front and center in the budgeting process. We are now in our fifth year without adopting a budget resolution. We went over 4 years without the Senate even passing a budget, as required by plain law in the 1974 Budget Act. Instead, taxpayer dollars are being spent through a series of late-minute negotiations and legislative pay caps that are driven through the Senate. This gives each Member when the appropriations bills hit the floor, a chance to review and analyze each part of the budget and offer suggestions for saving money, improving efficiency, and better serving the taxpayers. That is the way the process is supposed to work.

But under the tenure of Senator REID the budgeting process has been totally mismanaged. We have ceased consideration of appropriations bills altogether, basically, relying more and more on autopilot continuing resolutions and catch-all behemoth spending packages like this one. In fiscal year 2006, for example, every single appropriations bill was debated, amended, and passed in the Senate. In 2006 every appropriations bill was passed, considered, and voted on, and that was good. That is better than we had been doing in the previous years. There were failures during the previous years.

But in 2013—here we are, here—the red indicates that no bill was passed in the Senate. In 2013, again in 2014, none were individually passed. All the funding was done as part of this omnibus process.

I want my colleagues to look at this one time. The green shows that the bill was brought forward to the floor and was passed. The yellow shows it was brought forward out of committee but not passed on the floor. The red shows it was not even brought to the floor, brought out of committee to the floor to be supposed. Do you see how the red has continued in the out-years?

What is happening today is contrary to good policy. It is contrary to the whole idea of what a Senate and a Congress ought to be doing. We have to stop it. I know we have had a lot of frustrations lately, but that does not excite this trend. It has to end.
In my first year as a Senator—I guess the second year I was a Senator, 1998—every bill was passed. Every bill was passed in 2010. But we have gotten away from that completely. We can go back to that. It is not impossible. Those first years came here, the floor was all debated and amended on the floor and went to conference with the House to settle our disagreements, and then a bill was sent to the President for his signature or veto. Over time, however, that has happened less and less frequently, to the point that nowadays we do not debate appropriations bills at all.

Look, Senator MIKULSKI is a great leader in the Senate and one of the people I admire greatly, and so are Senator SHELBY and others. How we get into this process I do not know. But I will just say this: I think it is fair to say that Republicans have clearly advocated for bringing the bills to the floor and having debates on them. The ranking on the Budget Committee—have clearly advocated we process a budget the way we are supposed to do. But Senator REID has made the decision, backed by his conference, to not bring up these bills. It is a political decision. It is a decision to avoid having to take votes on disputed questions of what should be funded and what should not be funded. That is the problem we are in. So we have crammed all these appropriations into this huge bill under threat of a government shutdown.

A more ominous development, however, is the breakdown of the appropriations process in the Senate and how it is infecting the House of Representatives. It is spreading like the threat of a government shutdown. Appropriations bills and sent them to the Senate, but the Senate did not consider a single one of them. Last year the House Appropriations Committee called the consolidated appropriations bill. It is consolidated because it consolidates the work of 12 separate subcommittees. As the chair of the full committee, I also chair a subcommittee called commerce, justice, science. I would like to say that what we did in our bill advanced, really, the protection of the United States in terms of Federal law enforcement, important domestic violence programs, but also we promoted trade and new ideas in science. I would like to share what we did. Before I do, I want to explain—many people do not understand, at this point, the Budget Committee and the Appropriations Committee.

The Budget Committee gives us the macro picture, what should be spent on discretionary spending, mandatory spending—spending for veterans benefits, which I believe ought to be mandatory—and also what our tax policy should be. Senator MURRAY of Washington led that effort. We passed that bill in April. We tried to go to conference, but there was objection to it. Finally, after 3 weeks of shutdown, we were able to get it done.

This committee was given the job, after the budget was passed, to do the work of the Appropriations Committee. The Appropriations Committee takes the work of the Budget Committee and other work in the Federal checkbook, line by line.

I would like to elaborate on that, but I know the Senator from New Hampshire has come to the floor—one of our newer members of the committee, but she is not new to good government. She comes to the Senate with an incredible background of serving New Hampshire, particularly in the executive branch as Governor. She brings a sense of what government can do—that Yankee frugality, for which New Hampshire is known.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I thank the esteemed chair of the Appropriations Committee for her kind words, and especially for all of the work she has done to get us to this point where we have an appropriations bill before us. I know she has worked very hard with Ranking Member SHELBY, the House Appropriations Committee Chairman HOGGANS and Ranking Member LOWY.

I was Senator MIKULSKI’s leadership on this bill that got us to an agreement to fund the government for the rest of 2014, and to do it in a way that will support job creation, economic growth, and our national security. So I thank the chairman.

I am a new member of the Appropriations Committee. I am currently the chair of the Legislative Branch Subcommittee, and so I also want to thank Senator HOEVEN, a member of our subcommittee. It has been a real pleasure to work with him to draft the subcommittee work for the Legislative Branch Subcommittee.

For New Hampshire, this bill includes funding for the continued development for the new KC-46A aerial refueling tanker, of which we are very proud. The first round of those tankers will be based at Pease Air National Guard Base in New Hampshire. It also makes investments in the new military construction project at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. We are very proud in New Hampshire of both Pease and the shipyard because they play a very important role in our national defense. These strategic investments will create jobs, boost the State’s economy, and support our men and women in uniform.

I am also very pleased that this omnibus bill funds the Beyond Yellow Ribbon Program. This is a program that connects service men and women and their families with community support, training, and other services. As
we look at the men and women coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan, the Beyond Yellow Ribbon Program has been a very important program to help reconnect those returning servicemembers to their community. It has also been very important in New Hampshire. The Beyond Yellow Ribbon Program has been critical in States such as New Hampshire with many members of our National Guard and Reserve returning from duty overseas.

Therefore, we also fund the complete activation of the Berlin prison, just as it funds the Bureau of Prisons. In New Hampshire that funding is going to allow us to get to a full complement of about 250 local jobs in northern New Hampshire, which is very critical to the northern part of our State. It is going to provide a $40 million annual boost to the economy in northern New Hampshire.

I am especially appreciative to the chairwoman of the committee and to all of the members for the effort to help the fishing men and women in New Hampshire who have just been devastated by declining fish populations. The bill authorizes $75 million in disaster relief for those members of our fishing community, so many of whom have had their whole livelihoods taken away from them. This disaster relief money is going to help them during these difficult times. It will help them to recover and rebuild what I believe is one of the most critical economic sectors still in New England. It is certainly one of the oldest.

I also note that this bill reverses some of the reckless cuts from sequestration and instead makes important investments in the future of this country—in our education, infrastructure, and in science and innovation.

Yet it also makes strategic cuts. For example, one of my favorites in the bill is that it prohibits taxpayer-funded expenditures on oil paintings for public officials. This is an idea that Senator Coburn has been working on for over a year, and I think it is exactly the kind of government spending we need to get rid of. It sends a message—a signal. Even though it is not a lot of money, it is symbolic for the public to know we are trying to address anything we can, and this is one piece we can agree on, and hopefully it will lead to others.

The bill also requires all Federal agencies to become better stewards of taxpayer dollars because it invests in those local communities that help us rebuild our Nation’s deficient roads and bridges and creating jobs.

As we all know—and I know the chairwoman would readily admit—this bill is not a perfect bill. But the legislation before us is a product of the kind of bipartisan compromise that we have to have more of in Washington these days.

While I am very pleased that the bill addresses military retirement cuts for some retirees—survivor widows, survivor benefits, and for the disabled—we still need to keep working until those cuts are repealed entirely for all military retirees. It is something that I early this year. It is a problem and I will continue to work on it. I know there is a commitment from so many of us here in the Chamber to address that.

I will also continue to work to provide full funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, LIHEAP, which helps seniors and low-income New Hampshire families pay their heating bills, especially during the winter. Without the full funding that the bill provides, we are making a small increase in that program, but unfortunately, it is not enough to address the challenges so many families in New Hampshire and in the cold parts of this country are facing as we continue through this very cold winter.

Small businesses in New Hampshire have not forgotten that during the shutdown they faced uncertainty and declining revenues. Federal employees and military families made ends meet while being furloughed, and that shutdown—a completely manufactured and unnecessary crisis—cost this economy $24 billion.

I think—in talking to business people around New Hampshire and around the country—one of the most important things that this bill does is it takes the prospect of another manufactured crisis off the table. It puts in place a responsible, bipartisan economic recovery plan, makes ends meet while being furloughed, and that shutdown—a completely manufactured and unnecessary crisis—cost this economy $24 billion.

I had the opportunity this week to meet with the head of the business community in New Hampshire and the things he pointed out to me is that right now we are seeing the lowest percentage of private investment in our economy that we have seen in a very long time—in decades. It is most important that we in Washington provide the business community some certainty so they will make those investments because that is how we create jobs.

We need to put people back to work, and I think this legislation goes a long way to create that certainty and say to the business community and to those people who are unemployed: We are going to keep working on your behalf. We are going to try to make those investments and make sure we create the jobs to put you back to work, to keep this economy strong and growing, and to keep this country competitive.

In closing, I just want to say to my colleagues that now is the time for us to build on this bipartisan success we have seen and that the chairwoman has been able to accomplish with all of her other negotiators. We have this opportunity to build on that and to further promote job creation and economic growth.

Our country needs us to work together on behalf of small businesses, on behalf of the middle class, and on behalf of all families. I urge all of my colleagues in the Senate to support this bill. We are going to try to make those investments and make sure we create the jobs to put you back to work, to keep this economy strong and growing, and to keep this country competitive.

I urge all of my colleagues in the Senate to support this bill.

I yield the floor, and again I thank the chairwoman for her efforts. Ms. MIKULSKI. The Senator from New Hampshire is very generous with her remarks, and I want to respond by saying a few things.

First of all, the way the Senator speaks about New Hampshire is the way I also speak about Maryland. When people think about government spending, they think it just goes out in the ether and doesn’t generate anything. As the Senator has said, what is spent by the Federal Government really creates jobs in the private sector.

She spoke about prisons. First of all, we appreciate New Hampshire’s willingness to accept a prison. Many States don’t want them, shy away from them or are afraid of them. New Hampshire has really met a national need, and we know that the staffing that will be provided by the exceptional, patriotic, hardworking people of New Hampshire will keep our country safe.

Those same guards and administrative staff will be out in their community spending money on housing, at the local grocery store, maybe needing a wedding planner or whatever. So that is one area.

In terms of New England fisheries—for those of us who are coastal Senators, we know what that means. Fish and seafood is part of our history, and it is actually part of our State’s identity. For us in the Senate, the coastal Senators have kind of an affinity with each other for it.

We thank the Senator from New Hampshire for her dedication.

I also want to comment that the subcommittee on legislative affairs that you chair also—it is not like it funds legislators. It funds things such as the Capitol Police, who are sentry here doing their job, and as seniors.

I thank my colleague for her work, and we are so pleased to have her on the committee.
Mrs. SHAHEEN. I thank the chairwoman very much.

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, would the Senator yield?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I just want to take this opportunity to thank the two Senators who are present. In America’s space program, which was potentially on a downward slope, the two Senators have crafted an appropriation that will keep us with a very robust American space program, including the first “A” in NASA, which is aeronautics. From science to the new big rocket, its capsule Orion, to the commercial, to the unmanned program exploring the heavens, the chairwoman and the ranking member have it right. I wanted to take this opportunity to express my profound thanks. The Senators are continuing the dream that we built on 3 years ago.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I thank the Senator from Maryland. It is wonderful for both me and Senator SHELBY. Senator NELSON is an astronaut Senator. To hear an astronaut Senator say he thinks we are doing the job right means a lot.

The Senate has been blessed by having three astronaut Senators: Senator Jake Garn, a Republican from Utah, Senator John Glenn of Ohio, and Senator BILL NELSON.

Some of us have been in orbit a long time, but Senator Nelson actually knew what he was doing. So I thank my colleague very much. We are trying to add gravity to this bill.

Mr. NELSON. The Senators are doing it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Madam President, I want to pick up on what Senator MIKULSKI was talking about. Senator NELSON has not only been an advocate for the space program for NASA—and he is the one who knows, has been up there. I was traveling with him one time, and I believe we were over Asia, and he was showing me from the plane—we couldn’t see as well as he could—the rotation. I was very impressed.

He has been a stalwart in the advancement of the space program. We both worked hand in glove with him.

I do believe this is a pretty good appropriation considering where we are. I am hoping we get back to regular order since Senator MIKULSKI and I have advocated for this. We are hoping maybe later today we can vote this bill out with a vote like the House had yesterday.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I am pleased to come to the floor today to follow-up on the very eloquent remarks by the Senator from New Hampshire and the ranking member and chairwoman.

I am here today to offer a few comments about the appropriations bill. But before I do, I thank the chairwoman and the ranking member for really being a great inspiration to all of us. Amidst all of the controversy and dustups and toxic atmosphere and nonpartisanship going on—or lack of cooperation going on—it is wonderful to see the two of them working so closely together on this bill that is so important to the country.

As the great Senator from New Hampshire said: This is a bill for the people, for jobs, and for our economy. It sends positive signals across a breadth of industries where the Federal Government is stepping up to be a more reliable partner in these public-private partnerships that are represented in the funding of this bill—whether it is building our highways, building our space programs, funding our Department of Defense, sending money to cities and counties that are doing all sorts of innovative and remarkable things with community development block grant funding with a lot of private partners.

Contrary to popular belief and contrary to some things you might hear on the radio and on television these days, the Federal budget does a lot more than fund the government. It does a lot more than provide employment to government employees. It is sending out literally millions of green lights to small business contractors and to large businesses saying, Let’s go. The yellow light was blinking a few years ago; the red light had been on for the last couple of years. This bill literally sends out millions of blinking green lights saying: Get to work. Let’s go to business. Let’s build highways. Let’s build levees. Let’s build a space program. Let’s invest in the middle class.

In addition, I wish to say how proud I am that under the leadership of Senator MIKULSKI, she has managed to do this within budget constraints. This is not a free spending bill; this is a smart spending bill. It is responsible in so much as we are also mindful of reducing our debt over time, mindful about paying down our bills.

That is what is so remarkable about this and why I am so proud to support it. I hope we can get as strong a vote as the House did on this bill to show strong bipartisan support, because while it does address our debt and our deficit, it does so in a smart way with investments in what we have agreed to that make a difference to the private sector.

I can tell my colleagues that in Louisiana this is going to have immediate positive effects, and I wish to highlight a few of those now in terms of the Homeland Security bill. I am proud and happy to be the chairwoman of the Homeland Security appropriations bill. I have worked very closely with my colleague Senator CARPER, who is chair of the authorizing committee, and our ranking members, Senator COBURN and Chairman JOHNSON, as we authorize stronger airports of Homeland Security and then fund some of these initiatives. I will hit the highlights of just three or four.

One of them is the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard is in our Homeland Security bill. It is a very important component of our government. It is one of the most popular components of our government—popular broadly with businesses, very popular with the people the Coast Guard has saved from drowning or from wrecks in our open seas, but also for the hundreds of companies and businesses that have contracts with the Federal Government to provide the real cutting-edge shipbuilding that needs to go on in this country. The Senator from Alabama knows this, the Senators from Mississippi know this, the Senator from Maine, the Senators from Louisiana. We have lost a great deal of shipbuilding in our country to other countries. It is important that we keep as much shipbuilding here through the Homeland Security bill and through our national defense bill and partnerships that are made in America, ships serving Americans, providing good, solid jobs.

I am proud to support this, along with the tremendous support Senator COCHRAN, who is a member of my committee, and particularly Senator BEGICH, from Alaska, who fought very hard for a good outcome on the Coast Guard budget, which is above the administration’s request and has a modest increase and will be supporting so many important projects for our Coast Guard and the men and women of our Coast Guard. It provides $10.2 billion overall, which is a significant increase, and we did so within our budget constraints.

Another piece I wish to highlight is our enforcement of Immigration and Customs laws. We are in a big debate about immigration reform and the importance of finding common ground on immigration reform for the benefit of our businesses and our economy here in America that demand clear rules of the road, clear processes for people to become citizens and to pay their taxes, while we come here legally. Protecting our borders is an important component of that as well. In our bill we have put the resources necessary behind enforcing those tough immigration standards and requirements.

We are protecting our border, providing resources for the bill, and that is important to many people in this country as well as people in Louisiana, to have an immigration system that makes sense as well as to provide appropriate jobs and labor to come in and help with so many of the jobs that we have in Louisiana today.

We also had a focus in our bill—I think the chairwoman will be happy to hear this—about stepping up an additional 2,000 Customs officers at our airports. We have an international airport in New Orleans. We get a lot of international travel. We may be a little
city, but we fight way above our weight, as does our State, when it comes to international travel. We are a very sought-after destination and we are very happy about that. But there are other States such as New York and Nevada that have international travel. Even the State of the Presiding Officer, North Dakota, which is a smaller State—there is a tremendous amount of business coming into the State of North Dakota, both domestic and international, because of their oil and gas jobs and their energy sector jobs. What a howdy-do it is, arriving at our airport or to work with businesses here, or to partner with businesses here to create jobs, and one has to wait in line in Customs for 5 hours. That is no way to greet business men and women bearing gifts of investment and money for our country.

I have taken a strong leadership position on this with the travel and trade organizations, both in hospitality and in international business. I wish to thank their coalition for fighting hard to make sure this bill reflects the fact that business is global, it is international. Our business people are out and in all the time, building wealth for America, but, particularly, the wealth for America, and business people come here to help create wealth and help our middle class to grow. Having Customs agents who operate, making lines shorter, will certainly help that, while keeping our borders safe and keeping open for business, Louisiana is a trading State and we are a big port State. We understand trade, we understand international business, and I am happy to be able to fight hard for those priorities.

I wish to mention two other issues. Many committees are working on cybersecurity. Homeland Security does not take the lead on cybersecurity; the Department of Defense and National Security Agency do. But there are ways of coming to secure our government and our government private sector partners. Homeland Security does take the lead. We have stepped up some investments in cybersecurity. As the Senator from Alabama most certainly understands in his leadership role, this is a real threat not only to our government, to the Department of Defense, to our government as a whole, but to many businesses in America—private, large and medium-sized and small. They are feeling the effects of these saboteurs and attackers. The government has to stay focused and well invested, working with the private sector, to make sure our defenses and our security are up, and our bill recognizes that.

Finally, something close to my heart and close to my home is the funding for disaster relief. I hope no one ever has to go through what we went through along the gulf coast for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. I know everybody who has had terrible storms and floods. But there has never been a storm or a disaster such as this, and I pray to the Lord there will never be another one after it. The damage that was done in dollar amounts, the damage that was done across a vast stretch of land, from Alabama to Texas, the devastation it caused in terms of numbers of homes and businesses lost is unparalleled.

Sand was washed into the city, and because the northeast is more dense than we are down South, they lost more homes technically than we did, because the dollar damage is still far better in the coastal parishes of Louisiana and Rita. But whether it is Sandy in the east or whether it is floods in North Dakota, which they have had their share of, or Colorado or whether it is storms on the gulf coast, we have to be ready with money to send immediately when people need help.

I am going to say this because it has been a matter of argument between some here: When a disaster strikes, I am not going to look for an offset. I am going to look for the Coast Guard and FEMA to show up with the equipment they have to help people who are either drowning, on their roofs, or watching their houses burn to the ground. I am not going to look for an offset. So as long as I am chairman of this bill, we will use on an emergency basis when emergencies occur, as they do fairly regularly, unfortunately, in the States we represent down in the gulf coast. Because we are right in the middle of that hurricane alley, our storms are getting bigger and more fierce, and we have to be at the ready.

We have helped Maryland. We have money in for Sandy recovery and there is money in here still for the ongoing recovery. It is phasing out now in the gulf coast, but there are still some projects that have ongoing work, even 9 years after Katrina and Rita.

Let me say it has been a pleasure to work with my colleagues. I wish to thank Senators BEGICH and COCHRAN for their great work with the Coast Guard and helping me negotiate this through the process. Again, I think these are just some of the highlights of our bill. Nothing would have been possible without Senator MIKULSKI and her determination to get the green light on, because people in my town, in Nevada State are tired of yellow and red. They want to work, they want to go to work. They want to build buildings and build roads and get projects underway. We have lots of permits pending that the money in this bill will allow to be released. So I am proud to vote for it. This is all about jobs, economic competitiveness for America, and good jobs for Louisiana. I am sure every Senator, or almost every Senator, will say the same about this bill, because it was well done. It is a job well done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Madam President, I rise today to again express my great disappointment about a matter of importance to Wyoming and many other public land States that have not been properly addressed by this omnibus bill here in the Senate. Instead of producing a legislative solution based on discussions with our colleagues, debate and consideration in committee, and a fair and complete process on the floor, we have a bill before us that was put together by making another deal. Simply put, the Senate fails to do its job when we refuse to allow a fair, free, and open debate about an issue that is of such great concern to the people who will be affected by the decision.

It is no secret; anyone who has seen the Senate in operation as we take up this legislation will know that the back-room deal does not include critical funding that nearly 1,900 counties in 49 States—49 States; that is all but 1 and 3 U.S. territories rely on. One would think this kind of participation would draw an extraordinary amount of interest. We all came to make sure this bill was written with the best interests of all the States and all of our constituents in mind. Unfortunately, that did not appear to be the case.

So what program is it that draws such interest from 1,900 counties, 3 territories, 49 States—concern from such a widespread portion of our Nation? It has to do with payments in lieu of taxes. It is a program that has been in place for decades; it is not an issue that is new to the Senate. That is why I recently led an effort by several of my Senate colleagues urging that appropriators include this critical funding in the Interior appropriations. If they had done that, we would have already completed the work to produce a well-reasoned, well-thought-out answer to an issue of such importance to the States. Unfortunately, our efforts were thwarted by making another deal.

Today I am before my colleagues hoping with all my heart that I can make the Senate understand how crucial this funding is to almost every State in the Union.

This body often overlooks the important role of local government in the lives of our constituents. I know this because before I came to the Senate I served as a mayor, as did another handful of people in this body, and I know that our States have several of these local county officials. Communities and counties are responsible for providing fire protection, law enforcement, sanitation, public health, and education, just to name a few. They provide these services largely by raising revenue. One common source is through property taxes. In States where there is little federally owned land, local communities have a large number of private homeowners to help provide these services. However, there are States where the Federal Government is entitled to retain most if not a majority of its ownership of the land. The problem is that these Federal lands cannot be taxed.
Yet local governments must still provide critical fire, law enforcement, and health services in these areas and for the people who work on them. In order to make up this shortfall, Congress created payment in lieu of taxes to compensate local governments to offset the losses having not been able to transfer Federal lands within their boundaries.

For decades, the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program has provided counties and local governments with funding to help meet critical community needs. One of the reasons the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program was instituted was because of the creation of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, which placed a major hurdle on the Federal Government from disposing of public lands. In place of the Federal Government’s ability to move land from Federal to private ownership Congress decided to reimburse county and local governments with payments that would replace the revenue lost from the public lands. They would have received if those Federal lands had been transferred to private ownership. It seemed the only fair thing to do back then, and it is still only fair to live up to our obligations as a nation to provide the States with the revenue they are losing because of the laws we have enacted.

I have to tell you, we are talking about about 1,900 counties in the United States; 49 States. In some of those counties, 80 percent or more of the revenue they receive from the Federal Government is from the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program. That is a big cut to make—in 1 year. No transition, just boom, gone. How do you adjust to that if you are those local government people trying to figure out how to balance your budget? After all, I am not aware of anybody who lives at the Federal level. They all live at the local level. So it is the local folks who have to take care of the people.

If we fail to adequately address this issue, this will affect our communities, their ability to make do with less—a lot less—because we are breaking a promise we have made. By doing so, we are forcing them to reduce—or even eliminate—the vital resources upon which their citizens rely.

I wish to emphasize and make it clear that this is not an additional source of revenue. It is not a bonus. County and local governments depend on this revenue when they plan their budgets each year. It is part of the law. They count on it, and without it, their counties and local governments will be bankrupt.

The decision by the Appropriations Committee to not include the vital payment in lieu of taxes funding in the omnibus will place counties across the country in very difficult positions and great financial hardship for them all, especially since there was no transition, there was no warning. It was just done.

We need to stop playing games with the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program and find a way to ensure it is adequately and fairly funded now and for years to come. We could learn a lesson from local governments. I remind you, that is where everyone lives. Many are obligated to have a balanced budget. That forces communities to budget in advance, debate priorities, and stick to considering spending measures through the fiscal year. That is the only way.

As we look for ways to adequately fund payment in lieu of taxes, we also need to be sure we are not robbing Peter to pay Paul. I was extremely disappointed to see the provision in the omnibus conference report—not the conference report comes to us for an up-or-down vote. We do not have any chance to debate them on the floor. We do not have a chance to amend it. But the conference report for the highway reauthorization in 2012 robbed the abandoned mine land trust fund—trust fund—to pay for the payment in lieu of taxes obligation that time. They got paid, though, but we stole from a trust fund to do it. Again, it was a conference report. The provision in the House conference report was not part of the Senate conference report. We do not have a chance to amend it. We need to have a conference report come to us for an up-or-down vote. We do not have any chance to debate them on the floor. We do not have a chance to amend it. But the conference report for the highway reauthorization in 2012 robbed the abandoned mine land trust fund—trust fund—to pay for the payment in lieu of taxes obligation that time.

Six years ago, we made a promise to the current highways? We will not have collected that yet. Where do we steal it from next time?

The Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program represents a promise we made to counties and local governments all across the Nation. They are looking to us to see how we will act and to see if we are going to keep that promise. If we fail to do so, it will have an impact on almost every one of us who will surely hear about the repercussions when we go back home to meet with our constituents. I encourage and urge the Senate in the strongest terms to reconsider the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program and the impact we may be bringing to people across the Nation by failing to include it in this legislation.

These are governments that—they have been promised funding from the Federal Government. What happens if the people with the private property do not pay their taxes? The local government gets to put a lien on it and gets to put it on the market. Maybe that is what we ought to do with this Federal land: put a lien on it, put it on the market.

It is a debt the Federal Government said they would pay and they are not paying. It is payment in lieu of property taxes. If the property taxes are not paid, there is a way the local government can make up for it, but there is not if the Federal Government just decides to quit paying, and that is kind of what we did. We said taxes are hard to pay. If everybody in America said taxes are hard to pay and quit paying them, we would be in one heck of a fix. We cannot do that to the towns and counties either.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, before the Senator from Wyoming leaves the floor, I wish to comment about some of the things he said about
PILT and assure him that should the ambassadorship go forward for China, should RON WYDEN become the chair of the Finance Committee, I will become the chair of the Energy Committee, and he has my commitment now to help him with that.

I am very aware, having served on that committee for 10 years, how important PILT is—payment in lieu of taxes—to some of the States in the West, primarily less populated States. Their tax base is very affected by the fact that the Federal Government owns a great deal of land.

The Senator knows only 2.5 percent of my State is Federal land. Through the Chair, I would like to ask the Senator what percent of his State is Federal land.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Madam President, 49 percent of Wyoming is Federal land. We understand the value of having some Federal land. We like the people who come to visit it. But there are a lot of expenses that go with that, and to just jerk the money away—right away.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Yes. I mean, in the committee the Senator is talking about with Senator WYDEN, what we have always talked about is a transition to do anything. There are a number of ways we could transition this that I do not think would work. The Federal Government or hurt the local counties, but it requires a lot of flexibility, it requires going through the regular process in committee and then coming to the floor and making some decisions. This is wrong to just steal it one time.

Ms. LANDRIEU. If I could be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I want to commit to work with the Senator. I am very sympathetic and understand his position, and we will be talking to the leadership on both sides to see what we can do. It is very hard for that money to come away at such an abrupt time, and there is very hard for that money to come away at such an abrupt time, and there are some issues that I know are pending before the committee where that could potentially get resolved. So I just wish to offer my help and support at the appropriate time.

(The further remarks of Ms. LANDRIEU are printed in today’s Record under “Miscellaneous.”)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WAREN). The Senator from Texas.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, 4½ years ago the United States went through a terrible recession, what we now know as the great recession. But since that time we have had the slowest economic recovery since the Great Depression, and our labor force participation rate, which is a fancy way of saying the number of people, the percentage that are actually in the workforce looking for work, is much lower than it was at the height of the recession. So even though the unemployment rate is coming down little by little, the main reason that is true is because people, many people, are simply giving up looking for work.

Last month alone 345,000 people dropped out of the workforce. Even when we look at those people between the age of 25 and 54, their participation rate is significantly lower than it was when President Obama took office.

Meanwhile, 4 million people who are still in the workforce have now been jobless for more than 6 months. As I mentioned, if the Obama economic recovery had been as strong as the Reagan recovery in the 1980s, we would currently have millions more private sector jobs. So what is the President’s big idea for helping the economy getting back on track? Last night, according to published news reports, he was drinking martinis and plotting his 2014 political strategy with his fellow Democrats.

He apparently told the Democrats present—at least reportedly—that he would continue to go it alone if he could not get bipartisan support for his legislative agenda by the end of his term. He would do that if Republicans did not cave in and give him every single thing he wants on every issue.

So rather than talking to Republicans in bipartisan discussions about how we can come together on real solutions to the problems that face our economy and people being out of work, the President instead has defaulted in favor of poll-tested ideas and political gimmicks leading into the run-up to the 2014 election.

Sipping martinis and plotting politics while millions of Americans are out of work shows how out of touch the President has become, and unfortunately so many of the folks who vote with him on each and every issue that comes before the Senate. But putting last night’s party aside for a moment, I would ask my friends across the aisle a few questions about the recent Senate debate about unemployment insurance.

The first question: If extending unemployment insurance benefits for the long-term unemployed is so important, why did the majority leader not schedule a vote last month before those benefits expired on December 28? That is the first question.

Second question: Why would you want to add $6.4 billion to the national debt, when our national debt is already $17.3 trillion? Why would you want to do that if you knew the bill had no chance of passing, because Republicans were not going to agree to a bill that adds to the national debt?

You might think it is hard to find $6.4 billion in an annual spending budget of $3.3 trillion. I will do the math for you. The $6.4 billion is roughly .0017 percent of what the Federal Government spends in a given year. It seems to me that to be relatively easy to do.

In fact, Republicans had amendments that would pay for the 3-month extension as well as restore the pension benefits for the military that were cut in the earlier budget deal. But the majority leader refused to allow an open amendment process that would have allowed a vote on either one of those. I would ask the majority leader, rhetorically to ask, why isn’t he here in the Chamber, but I am sure he has people listening—why is it the majority leader refused to allow any progrowth measures to the final bill? Republicans had a number of amendments that would have improved education and training and development of our unemployment compensation system.

If you look at the three major causes of long-term unemployment, one is education. We need to deal with that. The other is upward mobility, that does not involve playing politics while millions of Americans are looking for work. For starters, let’s pick some of the low-hanging fruit. I bet the President, based on some of the remarks I have seen attributed to her, would agree with the Canadian Government has spent years urging President Obama to approve the Keystone XL Pipeline, which would create thousands of well-paying jobs, middle-class jobs right here in the United States. This administration, this President, actually promised Republicans in a meeting he had with them last year that he would make a decision by the end of last year, 2013. We are still waiting for his decision. As I understand it, every barrel of oil we transport on the Keystone XL Pipeline from a friendly country such as Canada means less oil we have to import from...
volatile regions of the planet such as the Middle East.

But beyond the pipeline issue, which is the lowest of the low-hanging fruit in terms of creating jobs and getting the economy moving again, the Obama administration would do well to generate a little more support for our energy production. We have had a renaissance in energy in America thanks to innovation in the private sector, primarily the now some six-decades-old practice of fracking. A drilling rig can now be set up in some corners, but also horizontal drilling, pioneered by none other than George Mitchell of Texas who recently passed on.

This combination of fracking and horizontal drilling has led to a proliferation of domestic energy supply, natural gas and oil right here at home. Again, every barrel, every MCF of gas we produce here domestically means less energy we have to import from abroad.

We all know that nationwide the oil and gas industry represents a rare bright spot in the U.S. economy. According to one study, by 2033, unconventional oil and gas resources alone will be supporting 3.5 million jobs and contributing $1 trillion to our economy. Why would not the President and our Democratic friends embrace something like that, that would create so many jobs right here in the United States, instead of playing political games and plotting out the next election?

Yet on top of that, to make matters worse, the administration is proposing a proliferation of new regulations on fracking that occurs on Federal lands. I think my friends who perhaps are not familiar with this process should listen. Fracking has been going on for at least 60 years in Texas under the regulatory authority of the Texas Railroad Commission and local jurisdictions. But if you drill a well and you put the casing in and you cement it properly, there is absolutely zero threat to groundwater or drinking water, because the target of the fracking is deep below the surface. So by using good drilling practices and cementing of the well casing, there is virtually zero threat to drinking water and the concerns that many people have expressed but which are not grounded in experience.

Think of it this way: If the Federal Government had made such a hash out of health care after ObamaCare by taking over one-sixth of the economy and our national health care, what I worry about is what they would do if the Federal Government decides to take over regulation of fracking. Because it has been handled appropriately at the State and local level, I am afraid they will make a hash out of that as well.

In addition to the other regulations I am concerned about, the administration has announced new regulations that would impose massive additional costs and deliver very little in the way of economic or environmental gains. More regulations are never a good idea if they put an additional burden on business and produce no tangible benefit to the environment. But they are especially harmful at a time when our economic recovery is so anemic and our economic recovery remains so fragile. We simply need to stop placing additional regulations on the vital sectors of our economy that we need in order to grow and prosper and create new jobs, especially when there is no demonstrable environmental benefit.

For this reason, let’s eliminate all new regulations that do not pass a simple cost-benefit analysis. One new study shows that the Obama administration has imposed more than $112 billion worth of net regulatory costs on the U.S. economy and added an equivalent of 158 million hours of additional paperwork on American businesses.

My colleagues Senator PORTMAN and Senator ROBERTS have each sponsored new legislation that would introduce safeguards to prevent unnecessary job-killing regulations. This brings me to ObamaCare. One of the things that organized labor, which was one of the biggest supporters of ObamaCare, has now come back to the White House and campaigned against the concept of the incentives for employers to take what was full-time work, a 40-hour workweek and make it part-time work.

Indeed, that is because the President’s health care law defines full-time employment as 30 hours a week or less. Yet on top of that, to make matters worse, the administration is trying to derail that as well. I am afraid they will make a hash out of that as well.

The stalemate on tax reform reflects a broader problem in Washington. Despite the long-term unemployment crisis and despite the massive drop of people in the workforce and actually looking for work, the President has still failed to put forth any serious job creation agenda. Sure, he wants the government to take more of your hard-earned tax dollars and spend them, because he thinks the government can do a better job than you can spending your own money, but it hasn’t worked. Jobs and the economy remain America’s top concerns. Yet, unfortunately, the President is already now in full reelection mode, recognizing that in his second term his ability to get things done is going to be highly dependent on the midterm elections in November 2014. Hence, rather than working with Republicans to try to address these problems, there are team meetings at the White House sipping martinis and planning strategy for November 2014.

Americans deserve better. They deserve a comprehensive job creation agenda that includes serious tax reform, serious regulatory reform, and serious health care reform, an agenda that makes it easier for business to hire workers and easier for families to provide the American standard of living. We have done our best to propose such an agenda but, unfortunately, we are still waiting for the majority leader and the President to take us up on that offer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. I am going to speak briefly. My Republican colleague across the aisle has noted he would like to speak next.

I want to take a moment and talk about what has been unfolding on Capitol Hill, with the House, Senate, the Republican caucus, and the Democratic caucus working to pass an appropriations bill, a spending bill, a bill we refer to in Congress as an omnibus, meaning that it covers all 12 sections that are normally allocated within the appropriations or spending bill would be.

I am a new member of the Appropriations Committee. This is the first time I can stand on the floor and feel as though I have gone through a process that is something similar to what our colleagues have done in a bipartisan way over many generations. But that bipartisan collaboration has been sorely missing in the time since I first
Mr. ROBERTS. Earlier today Senator Graham and Senator McCain spoke to this issue. I could not speak at that time as I had a conflict, but my remarks are pertinent to the issue they spoke about.

It has been an agonizing 16 months. But this week, through the investigation efforts of the House Armed Services Committee and the Senate Intelligence Committee, we have learned that circumstances surrounding the terrorist attacks on our U.S. consulate in Benghazi and the murder of four Americans, as told by this investigation, simply are not factual.

A year of news reporting and these congressional findings confirm an egregious disconnect between what the administration has alleged and the facts of what happened. As we say in Kansas, simply put: It just doesn’t add up.

We now know this tragedy did not have to happen and, most certainly, the hard-to-understand actions and behavior of those involved have added unneeded hubris, scandal, and conduct difficult to comprehend. This is a mess that still has to be cleaned up. It demands clarity, honesty, and simply owning up to the truth.

I come to the floor to discuss this tragedy not so much as a Republican Senator from Kansas, but always a Marine. I fear our lack of truth and understanding has broken a bond that those who risked their lives for our Nation all share and believe in—the bond that is now home in harm's way and the bond that is now home to work on a military base and has gone overseas. They don't come home. We have in Oregon a robust Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program to help bring employers together with our men and women who serve in the Guard who have come home to civilian life.

I wish to say thank you again to the President, as a Marine, with the personal involvement, the extra $1 billion for Head Start and the extra $1 billion to give the military services an additional $3 billion for Head Start and the extra $1 billion that will go to support IDEA and title I funding, large formula allocations. We have 200 school districts in Oregon. Those school districts are often too small to have a grant writer to compete in some newfangled competition for X, Y, or Z. They need core funds to reduce the number of students in the classroom, to address the challenge of providing education for students with special needs. That helps significantly in that direction.

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I wish to say thank you again to the leadership that was displayed, the bipartisan leadership of the Senator from Alabama and the Senator from Maryland. Well done. I am honored to be part of this process of trying to shape our Senate spending plan, our congressional spending plan, to address emerging challenges in America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kansas.

BENGHazi

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The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kansas.
past year. I applaud my colleagues on the Senate Select Committee on Intel-
ligence for their report released yesterday detailing the events surrounding the
attacks. The headlines from this report now read: "Benghazi could have been
avoided.

While the results of these investiga-
tions have brought more truth to light, they have also brought more questions
to mind. As a Marine, I know there is no mission our Marines cannot accom-
plish or complete. If press reports are accurate, and I believe they are, four
Marine rapid response unit was delayed by an hour—required to change out of
their uniforms into plain civilian clothing—and then, ultimately, simply
turned away.

Our commanders have testified it was
the State Department that declined the Marines in Benghazi, yet they have
been reluctant to point the finger at the State Department. Somebody made
call. Someone gave this order. Fact sheets and more relevant facts are now becoming pub-
lic, the obvious questions increase.

In the Senate Intelligence Commit-
tee’s report—and I urge every Member
to read this report because it is a good
report that clearly states that individ-
uals within the administration have
continued to stonewall Congress from the
truth. I am not going to go into every
detail here on the floor—it is all
here in this report—but enough is
enough.

Congress has the constitutional duty
to ensure the Executive Branch does
not abuse its power. That power has
been abused. No one who has played a
role in this debacle has been held ac-
countable—no one—let alone brought
to justice, as promised by the Presi-
dent. In fact, just the opposite. We
have released individuals who have re-
turned to start working on the next
terrorist attack.

Likewise, this report makes it clear
U.S. personnel raised alarms for months before the attacks. Requests for
additional security were made by the
previous Ambassador as early as
February 2012. Yet, the State Depart-
ment’s Deputy Assistant Secretary for
International Programs, Charlene
Lamb, rejected the request because Libya was a “political game,” and the
administration did not want to “look
bad,” according to the Senate Intel-
ligence Committee report.

The absurdity and egregious behavior
of putting politics before security is
overwhelming. Lives were at stake. It
has been confirmed that our top mili-
ty leaders, General Ham, General
Dempsey, and Secretary Panetta, knew
immediately—immediately—this was a
terrorist attack and not a protest. And
so did the President.

We knew AQIM, AQAP, the Muham-
mad Jamal Network, and Ansar al-
Shariah—found by Sufian bin Qumu,
a former detainee—were all involved.
This just raises more questions. Why
were there no contingency plans in
place? We had actionable intelligence.

The British left. The Red Cross left.
There certainly were no flags flying in
Benghazi by any western nation, and the
consulate had already been at-
tacked.

Why didn’t we deploy immediately,
with an assumption that there would be
follow-on attacks? Why were those who
paid the ultimate sacrifice left to their
own devices that day—on September 11—anyone could anticipate would
bring trouble?

Our sources have testified the
United States was not even looking at
Libya, but rather Tunisia, Egypt, and
Sudan. Less than 1 year after Qadhafi,
and no one was concerned about safety
in Libya? Does anyone believe this as-
essment? Given the turmoil and dan-
ger, did the State Department really
believe that we could normalize Libya?
That the country was stable?

This has been an incredible example
of condescending arrogance and elit-
ism, putting politics and personal
agenda ahead of protecting the lives of
Americans. The insult is that 16
months later we still can’t get the
truth. We now know, without a shadow
do ub of doubt, there was actionable intel-
lige nce. Yet no action was taken. I per-
suaded the President, who was a Ma-
rine, am fed up with the lack of ac-
countability this administration has
taken in response.

I am fed up with the stonewalling
by several of those in the State Depart-
ment and the Pentagon. I testified in
the Intelligence Committee for testi-
mony.

When then Secretary Clinton came
before Congress to testify, she replied:
“What difference does it make?” The
difference is our Ambassador and three
other patriots did not have to die. The
families of Ambassador Stevens, Sean
Smith, Tyrone Woods, and Glen
Doherty deserve better from this coun-
ty. They deserve more from this Presi-
dent.

With that in mind, I want to make a
simple and very respectful request of
the President. I simply ask that he
take the opportunity during his State
of the Union speech on Tuesday, Janu-
ary 28, to give those families and all
Americans the whole story.

Mr. President, I simply ask that you
be forthright with the American peo-
ple. Help us get beyond this tragedy.
Help us restore confidence and faith for
our personnel serving overseas and in
harm’s way, that the sacred bond of al-
ways having their back is not gone.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to
speak with 40 young Marines, all sec-
ond lieutenants, who are just about to
finish The Basic School at Quantico,
VA. They are going to be great officers.

They deserve more from this Presi-
dent. And no one was concerned about
safety in Libya. Absolutely astonishing.

With passage of this bill in the Sen-
ate, the threat of another government
shutdown is averted and the crippling
effects of the sequester will be re-
versed.

America’s vets are well served by
this agreement. As chairman of the
Senate’s Subcommittee on Military
Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Re-
lated Agencies, I worked to provide the
VA with robust funding to ensure our
vets receive the benefits they have earned and deserve.

The bill provides $63.2 billion for the
VA, $2.3 billion above last year. It fully
funds a host of vital programs, includ-
ing compensation, pensions and health
care, and it targets funding for crucial
efforts for homeless vets, rural
health care, medical research, suicide
prevention, women vets, and Iraq and
Afghanistan vets, to name just a few.

Of major importance, the agreement
also includes a comprehensive plan to
address the massive backlog of vets’
disability claims. In 2013 the backlog
of compensation claims for service-re-
lated disabilities soared to record lev-
els. In March of 2013 the backlog of
crimes pending for more than 125 days
jumped to over 93,000—more than 70
percent of the total claims
pending. As of this week there are
403,761 claims in the backlog.

The Department has made substan-
tial progress over the past several
months, but thousands of vets continue
to face lengthy delays in having their
disability claims processed. In response
to this problem, I included in the omni-
bus a 10-point action plan to give the
VA additional tools to address the
backlog and to strengthen training, oversight and accountability.

This includes important upgrades
to computer hardware in VA regional of-
fices and $100 million in overtime and
training money to work through the
backlog in processing vets’ disability
claims.

It is critical we do not sacrifice accu-
cacy in the name of expediency, and
my plan also includes quality review
teams, spot audits, and additional
training for claims processors.

Of special importance to South Da-
kota, I have worked hard to expand VA
health care to rural vets. Nationwide,
nealy 30 percent of America’s vets live
in rural areas that are often far from major VA medical centers or clinics. The omnibus appropriations bill builds on the rural health initiative I launched in fiscal year 2009 to close gaps in VA medical care in rural and remote areas. The bill provides $250 million for rural health care, including telehealth and mobile clinics for vets in rural and highly rural areas, including Native American populations.

Our vets deserve the best and highest quality care. The VA. The fiscal year 2014 omnibus appropriations bill provides the VA with significant new tools and funding to carry out its mission, and I look forward to the bill’s prompt passage.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I thank the Senator from South Dakota, for extenuating hearings he has had at the subcommittee level. He has an enormous responsibility in that subcommittee. It is all about military construction—over there and here.

Many don’t realize our military bases are really towns, and they need roads and water supplies. If you talk to a garrison commander, such as those in Maryland, they are small cities. Fort Meade employs over 35,000 people in Maryland—that is a lot of people—from those who work in the commissary to some of our most sensitive national security projects.

So he has done a great job. But what he has really thrown his heart into is veterans. His son is a veteran. One of the things early in my chairmanship we discussed was this issue of the veterans’ disability backlog. Senator JOHNSON led the way, along with Senator MARK KIRK, his ranking member, on extenuating hearings he has had at the subcommittee level. He has an enormous responsibility in that subcommittee. It is all about military construction—over there and here.

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Maryland employs over 35,000 people in Maryland—that is a lot of people—from those who work in the commissary to some of our most sensitive national security projects.

I thank the Senator and his counterpart Senator KIRK. We appreciate what they have done. I think it has been an enrichment to the overall bill to have done what has been done in the Military-VA.

Madam President, we are waiting for other Senators to come to the floor. I have to talk about my own subcommittee.

I chair the Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee, and my ranking member is also the vice chairman of the full committee, Senator SHELLBY. We worked very hard on this bill, also with our counterparts in the House, Chairman FRANK WOLF and Ranking Member CHAKA FATTAL. The CJS bill we agreed upon provides $51.6 billion in discretionary spending. It focused on community safety, on our jobs and our economy. We used those priorities to guide funding decisions, from Federal law enforcement to space exploration. What could keep America safe? What could make America better? We cannot have vital communities unless they are safe.

The CJS bill has money in here for key grants to help State and local police departments. The legislation we worked on adapted the GIPS and the COPS Program that will put cops on the beat.

We also want to deal with the prevention of violence as well as the prevention of crime. This bill includes money for the Violence Against Women Act, for the FY 2013 Violence Against Women Act, with $29 million more than sequenter. What it will mean is more help to local enforcement to prosecute, more money to help with prevention for those who are victims of domestic violence and to be able to provide lifesaving shelters and transitional housing. We are very proud of that.

As we add more police to the streets and neighborhoods in our communities, we want to make sure the police are on the front line, and we were able to have funding in here to provide a grant program to buy bulletproof vests. We are often disturbed when we talk to our local police chiefs that the crooks and drug dealers and bums have better equipment, technology, better guns, more rapid guns, or they have bulletproof vests while our police officers are out there defending us without vests. We wanted to make sure our officers have what they need.

We also have money in here to deal with prevention. We have money for youth mentoring programs but also to tackle gang violence in our communities.

This is where bipartisanship really worked. Our colleague Senator Kline of Illinois Violence Against COLA for both the disabled and the survivors. And we are going to say: Promises made, promises kept.

SHELBY of Alabama, my ranking member, and I also funded America’s space program. This total funding will be $17.6 billion. Working with Senator SHELBY, we wanted an enhanced space program to assure America’s premier leadership in human space exploration and in science and space science as well as aeronautics. We worked with the SLS rocket, which will take human beings beyond the Earth orbit. The bill has $1.6 billion for that also, but we also funded operations and research on the International Space Station.

The Presiding Officer might have read recently that NASA has extended the duration and operation of the space station. It costs a lot of money to build it and there was a lot of risk of human lives to go up there and assemble it. “Gravity” might win in the Academy.
Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I come to the floor to speak in favor of the Omnibus appropriations bill we now have before us. First and foremost, it is noteworthy that this is a bill, not a continuing resolution. For the first time in years, Congress has returned to regular appropriations process. Senior members of the Appropriations Committee from both parties have come together to negotiate their priorities, program by program.

As the chairman of the Subcommittee on Labor-HHS, Education and Human Services, I view this as a huge step onto a better path. The Labor-HHS bill, as it is sometimes called, has been in continuing resolution every other year since 2009. This is an irresponsible way to allocate $160 billion in taxpayer funds, and I am pleased that we are putting a stop to that kind of destructive trend today.

For the past year I have had people come up to me and say: There is no way you are going to have an agreement on Labor-HHS. Labor-HHS will be left behind, and it will be folded into a continuing resolution.

I guess no one could imagine that Democrats and Republicans would be able to sit down and come to a fair agreement on health and education issues. I think that attitude sold our subcommittee short. I am proud to say we have worked out a fair agreement.

Another Senator JERRY MORAN from Kansas, as well as my colleagues on the House side, in-...
maximum Pell grant to rise by an estimated $85, to $5,730 this year. It allocates an additional $700 million for community health centers, which is so important to my State of Iowa and, quite frankly, to every State in this Nation. It provides higher funding for activities that support safe and healthy workplaces and, as I said, school environments.

Most in Washington know that the staff of the Appropriations Committee worked diligently on this bill all through the night. We all appreciate and commend their excellent work. I would like to thank these unsung heroes for all of the long days and nights and weekends they worked.

I first wish to thank my clerk, the head of my group on Labor-HHS, Adrienne Hallett, and her team; Mark Laisch, Lisa Bernhardt, Mike Gentile, Robin Juliano, Kelly Brown, and Teri Curtin. On the minority side, I thank Laura Friel-Dill, Jennifer Castagna, and Stephanie Hallett. I also thank Chuck Keifer and Gabriel Batkin—on the full committee—for their hard work and diligence and for sticking with us through this to make sure we got it done. On the minority side, I thank Bill Duhnke for all his hard work.

I also thank the two principals who are here today. First, I will thank my longtime friend, going back to our days in the House together, Senator SHISHI from Alabama. These were long and tough negotiations, but the one thing I have always appreciated about my friend from Alabama is that he is fairminded and willing to negotiate. He understands it is a two-way highway. You give a little, you take a little, and we work these things out. Again, I thank my friend for hanging in there and getting this hammered out.

There are not enough accolades in my book or any book I know that has been written to say what a great job Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI did. She gave it her all and really worked hard with Senator SHELBY and her counterparts on the House side to bring this bill to fruition.

There were a lot of doubters who said: No, we won’t get it done; they are not going to be able to hammer it out. BARBARA MIKULSKI never gave up. She was willing to stay there for long hours days on end to get this job done. Again, I think a lot of us who served on the Appropriations Committee for a long time—30 years for me—I guess in all the time I was on appropriations, we had four chairmen. We had John Stennis from Mississippi when I first got here and, of course, Senator Byrd, Senator Ted Stevens from Alaska, and Senator Dan Inouye from Hawaii. We think of them as sort of the giants of the Senate, which is a well-earned accolade or praise. I might say. People probably will remember them. I hope that now that they are gone. We had the sad passing a year ago of Dan Inouye. Well, I can tell you, no longer are they working with others to make sure we got to this point.

Most in Washington, as I said, know that our staff works very hard, but there is just another person I want to sing out. He is not here. In fact, he is not even on the Senate side, but I worked with him for a long time, going back to when Congressman Obey chaired the House committee on Labor-HHS back in the early 1990s. He has been a longtime member of the House appropriations staff. David Reich is currently the minority clerk for Labor-HHS. He is retiring once this bill passes. David has spent nearly his entire career on the issues in this bill. He has been on or around the Labor-HHS subcommittee since 1996. His collaborative nature, his insightful questions, and his thoughtful approach to the drafting of this bill will be sincerely missed and I want to thank him for his dedicated public service to our country and especially to this committee.

In light of the investments I mentioned, plus many more that I simply don’t have time to talk about. I urge all of my colleagues to support the Omnibus appropriations bill. Given the tight overall budget, these are all remarkable achievements.

I have always been proud in the fact that the Labor-HHS bill, as it is called—Labor, Health and Human Services, Education bill—is a bill where we invest in America’s human infrastructure, and that is what this bill does. We have had to make tough choices, but this new bill lives up to that high calling of investing in America’s human infrastructure.

Again, I thank my friend and colleague from Alabama. We were together on the Labor-HHS committee until he took the position as the ranking member on the full Appropriations Committee, but we always had good comity of working together, and I appreciate it very much.

With that, I yield the floor.

HARKIN. I first met him 35 years ago when I first went to the House. He had been there a couple of years—a veteran. We have worked together on a lot of issues.

Senator HARKIN is absolutely right when he says we can’t say enough about the leadership of the chairperson of this committee, Senator MIKULSKI. She has reached out to both sides. She wants the process to work, as do most of us, and this is an example of that.

I hope later this afternoon that we are going to get a good vote, just as the House did, on this bill. This a big step in how we should be running the government.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise today together with Senate Armed Services Chairman LEVIN and Senator MCCAIN to clarify the intent of section 8102 of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act contained in the consolidated appropriations bill, 2014. This language should not be interpreted to supersede section 2822 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014.

I concur with the reporting requirements and limitations established by section 2822 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 and fully expect the Department of Defense to comply with them prior to obligating funds for projects in Guam.

We have also sent a letter to Secretary Hagel from me, Vice Chairman COCHRAN, and Chairman FRELINGHUYSEN and Ranking Member VISCOSKY of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee directing the Department to comply with the requirements in section 2822 prior to obligating funds.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the joint letter sent to Secretary Hagel on this subject be printed in the RECORD.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank the Senator from Illinois for addressing this important issue. I appreciate his assessment and his clarification of the relationship between the provision in the National Defense Authorization Act and the provision in the DOD Appropriations Act. Senator McCAIN and I have spent a lot of time working on this issue, and we believe that the reporting requirements and limitations established by section 2822 are in the best interests of the Department of Defense and the country. I appreciate the willingness of the Senator from Illinois to work with us to ensure that the Department abides by this provision.

Mr. MCCAIN. I thank Senate Armed Services Chairman LEVIN for working with me to clarify language in the consolidated appropriations bill of 2014 that directly contravenes section 2822 of the National Defense Authorization Act. To date, Congress has not received sufficient cost-analysis supporting the Department of
Defense’s proposed movement of troops from Okinawa to Guam. For this reason, in the authorization bill, the Armed Services Committees explicitly prohibited any premature investments in Guam until the Secretary of Defense provides Congress with, among other things, a report on military resources necessary to execute the U.S. force posture strategy in the Asia-Pacific region.

I also appreciate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Dunham for agreeing that the reporting requirements in section 2822 of the NDAA must be satisfied before the Department of Defense can obligate funds for investments in Guam if the report finds they are needed. In furtherance of these requirements, I fully expect the Senate Armed Services Committee will provide close and careful oversight over the use of any monies that may be appropriated for the transfer of forces covered in this plan and obligated by the Department for that purpose and, specifically, hold hearings to determine the extent to which any plan to realign forces from Okinawa to Guam will sufficiently support our operational requirements in the Asia-Pacific region.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Chairman and Senator MCCAIN for their leadership on this issue.

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

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

Hon. CHUCK HAGEL,
Secretary of Defense, The Pentagon, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY HAGEL: We are writing to clarify the intent of Section 8102 of the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 (Public Law 113–66).

This bill isn’t perfect. It shortchanges our financial regulators, zombies out local communities with large amounts of Federal land, and leaves some other programs at lower levels than is required. Hopefully the PILT funding will be authorized in the farm bill.

This bill is a significant improvement from years of shutdown threats and continuing resolutions that have put our Nation’s government on autopilot. This is the first time in 3 years that we will have completed all 12 appropriations bills to properly allocate funding for all Federal agencies.

For the military, the bill provides $487 billion in base DOD appropriations—the funding level established in the budget agreement—and $85 billion for overseas contingency operations. As a result, it appears that DOD’s operations and maintenance funding will be reduced by about $9 billion this year—a substantial reduction, but less than we feared would be the case. While this is a tight budget, we are very concerned at this point about the much greater reductions in DOD funding that will be required in fiscal year 2015 and subsequent fiscal years.

I am pleased that the Defense appropriations bill is consistent with key actions that we took in the National Defense Authorization Act, including provisions on Guantanamo detainees, measures to address sexual assault in the military, and the implementation of the new START Treaty. I commend the Appropriations Committee for amending the military retired pay COLA change included in the budget agreement to exempt military retirees and survivor benefit plan annuitants. The Armed Services Committee will be holding hearings to review this issue.

While I have concerns about a few specific provisions, I believe that this is a good Defense appropriations bill and one that deserves our support.

For cutting-edge research, the bill restores $1 billion in targeted funding for the National Institutes of Health that was cut last year due to sequestration. This funding is needed to avoid further loss of promising research and make the investments needed to ensure that NIH can continue to support the next generation of scientists and fund cutting-edge research.

For families and children, the bill will fully fund Head Start. Last year, 1,800 children across Michigan were forced out of early childhood programs due to sequestration, and the new funding in this bill is expected to restore and even grow this important early childhood program.

In addition to Head Start funding, the bill also includes a significant increase in funding to educate children with disabilities. Now, I’d like to talk about a few specific projects that are especially important to Michigan.

First, the bill includes the full $55 million requested for the Department of Energy for fiscal year 2014 to help fund the Facility for Rare Isotope Beams, FRIB, at Michigan State University. FRIB will let scientists, for the first time, create rare isotopes like those produced in supernovae. The isotopes will be studied, advancing our knowledge of the origins of elements and the universe, as well as furthering applied science fields like biomedicine, nuclear physics and nuclear chemistry.

The facility will attract top scientists from around the globe, and is a key piece in attracting and training the next generation of nuclear scientists. FRIB will help keep Michigan, and the United States, at the forefront of cutting-edge science.

Second, the bill provides important funding for Great Lakes projects. I’m pleased that restoration and protection of our treasured Great Lakes will advance with the funding provided in the bill.

Appropriators fully responded to a request from the Senate Great Lakes Task Force, which I co-chair by including $300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative which strategically targets funding at the most significant problems facing the Great Lakes.

In addition, the bill provides more than $30 million for the Corps of Engineers to fight Asian carp and other invasive species from getting into the Great Lakes. The bulk of that funding will be used for the electric dispersal barrier, which was designed to keep the carp from advancing up the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. We need to recognize that this barrier is only a short-term fix, however, and focus on separating the two basins for a permanent solution. I’m pleased the omnibus includes $3 million for the Corps to refine the design of such a barrier and I will press to speed its implementation.

I’m also glad the bill includes language that I requested that would authorize the Corps of Engineers to implement emergency measures to prevent invasive species from dispersing into the Great Lakes by way of any hydrologic connection to the Mississippi River basin.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President. The bill before us is an important compromise. Neither side got exactly what it wanted, but this legislation will provide much-needed certainty across the government. It keeps the government open for business and helps us turn a corner on our fiscal posture.

I believe that this DOD budget will only be obligated for projects in Guam that are included in the FY2014 National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014. This clarification is necessary to execute the U.S. force posture strategy in the Asia-Pacific region.
I am also pleased the bill increases funding by about $12 million from last year for dredging of Great Lakes harbors and channels, operation and maintenance of locks, and repair of breakwaters. The Great Lakes navigation system handles about 180 million tons of cargo—this system is critical to the efficient flow of goods, and I am glad this appropriation will support our economic growth and international competitiveness.

I will continue to work with my Senate colleagues to restore the payments in lieu of taxes, which are used for such critical needs as public schools, emergency response, and road maintenance.

The bill also restores funding for drinking and wastewater infrastructure by providing about $2.4 billion to states for investing in these vital water projects, which will both protect public health and our water resources.

Finally, this bill includes important provisions to help our State's transportation system.

I am pleased the bill again includes language allowing the M–1 Rail project in Detroit to use private funds as a match to federal dollars.

In addition, I am pleased that the bill provides funding that for the FAA to keep control towers open. This is important, for instance, at the W.K. Kellogg Airport in Battle Creek, the Coleman A. Young Airport in Detroit, and the Sawyer International Airport in Marquette.

This bill is an important compromise and I am glad that Democrats and Republicans, from the House and Senate, were able come together to craft this measure.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I first want to congratulate Chairwoman Mikulski and Vice Chairman Shelby for their leadership in bringing these appropriations bills to the floor for final consideration. While I would have preferred these bills to have been brought to the floor individually so that I could amend them, the fact that we have brought them together is nonetheless a noteworthy achievement.

The 2-year budget agreement negotiated by Senator Murray and Congressman Ryan provided the framework for the bill we are considering today, allowing the Appropriations Committees to begin our work of developing bills that will responsibly fund the government.

Since passage of the budget agreement, the Appropriations Committee members worked tirelessly to craft a true compromise.

As the ranking member for the Transportation and Housing Subcommittee, I worked with Chairman Murray to negotiate a bipartisan Transportation and Housing bill. While this bill makes prudent spending reductions—it is $3.2 billion below the original Senate bill and nearly $1 billion below the fiscal year 2013 enacted level—it continues to invest in important transportation and housing programs I would like to mention a few highlights:

First, the TIGER program, which supports transportation infrastructure and economic development in our local communities, is funded at $600 million. Given the current state of our Nation's highways and bridges with so many being structurally deficient, we included additional resources to help eliminate some of the backlog of vital construction projects.

Second, while the overall funding level for the FAA is reduced by $167 million from the fiscal year 2013 enacted level, we worked to provide sufficient funding to ensure air traffic control towers are staffed and that losses are made whole. The bill also fully funds the Contract Tower program to prevent administration officials from arbitrarily closing towers as they attempted to do last year.

Further, the bill includes program reforms for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which will streamline program requirements, increase oversight, and reduce costs to the taxpayer.

I am proud that the THUD bill strikes the right balance between fiscal responsibility and meeting our Nation's housing and infrastructure needs.

The other divisions of the bill are equally important—from national security, to energy, to health and human services—and I would also like to acknowledge the work of the other subcommittee chairs and ranking members in completing action on their bills.

For our military and our Nation's security, I particularly appreciate that this bill includes $100 million for the procurement of the fifth DDG–51 from Bath Iron Works, which Senator Kino and I advocated. This funding will allow the Navy to send a tenth DDG–51 to sea that is capable of performing many roles and missions in support of our national defense. Not only will it add stability to the workforce at Bath Iron Works, but it will also result in significant savings for the taxpayers. The multiyear, 10-ship procurement will save approximately $1.5 billion—that is the equivalent of an extra destroyer at no cost. I thank Chairwoman Mikulski, Vice Chairman Shelby, Subcommittee Chairman Durbin, and Subcommittee Ranking Member Cochran for this important funding.

I am also grateful to see the $11.5 million in military construction funding that will go toward the consolidation of structural shops and improve the efficiency of operations at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. While the Department of Defense has delayed or cancelled $1.1 billion in military construction projects during the next five budget years, this project was accelerated to 2014 due to efforts by members of the Maine and New Hampshire delegations to increase investments to address long overdue modernization needs at PNSY.

For our veterans, I am pleased this bill restores the full cost-of-living increase for disabled military retirees and for survivor benefits, rectifying provisions in the recently-passed budget agreement that unfairly singled out current retirees. Unfortunately, this will not protect all military retirees from a decreased cost-of-living adjustment to their pensions. We continue to work on behalf of our retired servicemembers and their families to ensure that they receive the full benefits they have been promised and have earned by their service to this country. Congress should pass legislation I have cosponsored that completely restores the COLA for all military retirees.

This bill also provides nearly $75 million in additional funding for medical research, including for Alzheimer’s Disease research, treatment, and care-giver programs. This is an important initial step toward the goal of doubling funding for Alzheimer’s research and reaching $3 billion per year over five years, as recommended by the Alzheimer’s Advisory Council. We must continue our efforts in 2015 to increase Alzheimer’s research given the tremendous human and economic price of this devastating disease. We are spending $14 billion annually in Medicare and Medicaid costs on caring for people with Alzheimer’s.

I also want to thank Agriculture Subcommittee Chairman Pryor and Ranking Member Blunt for addressing the needs of our Nation’s farmers and growers, providing critical support for research, and making important nutrition and food security investments during difficult economic times. In particular, I am pleased that the agreement expects USDA to amend its arbitrary decision to exclude the fresh white potato, the only fresh vegetable or fruit to be excluded, from the WIC program. Fresh white potatoes are a healthy, affordable, and delicious food choice, and it only makes common sense to include this nutritious vegetable in the WIC package.

This bill also makes important commitments to our energy infrastructure. I would like to thank Subcommittee Chairwoman Feinstein and Ranking Member Alexander for recognizing the potential for creating jobs by providing robust funding for the Department of Energy wind program, which funds the offshore wind demonstration projects. Federal seed money is helping overcome barriers to the development and implementation of new and innovative technologies, such as deepwater offshore wind, which can position the U.S. as a global leader in this promising clean energy field.

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Finally, this bill makes prudent spending reductions to increase the efficiency of operations at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. While the Department of Defense has delayed or cancelled $1.1 billion in military construction projects during the next five budget years, this project was accelerated to 2014 due to efforts by members of the Maine and New Hampshire delegations to increase investments to address long overdue modernization needs at PNSY.

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funding for LIHEAP will help ensure that recipients do not have to choose between paying their energy bills and paying for other necessities such as food or medicine. LIHEAP continues to be an indispensable lifeline for many Americans during these challenging economic times and exceptionally cold winter.

Helping to meet the water infrastructure needs of smaller States and regions is another vital piece of our national infrastructure. I am pleased to note that this bill includes funding for the operation and maintenance of Army Corps projects at “small, remote, or subsistence harbors.” Ports and harbors are the economic lifeblood for many rural communities—a fact not fully accounted for under the Corps’ budget metrics, which tend to favor larger ports.

The bill also continues to support our Nation’s fisheries, which are so important to the economies of our coastal communities. Typically, in Maine, in September 2012, the Commerce Department declared a disaster in the Northeast groundfish industry. A vital $75 million is included in this bill to help fishermen in Maine and in other areas of the country struggling groundfish industries affected by fishery disasters in recent years. This funding could be used to provide both immediate economic relief to Maine and the region’s struggling groundfish industry, and to make long-term investments that will allow the fleet to survive and become more sustainable in the years ahead.

The American people are weary of watching a Congress that can’t work. We saw the result of this dysfunction when the government shut down in October. We simply must avoid another shutdown and put our Nation back on sound financial footing. That is why I urge my colleagues to support the compromises the Appropriations Committees have achieved.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, today I come to the floor to discuss the consolidated appropriations bill of 2014, upon which we will soon be voting. While I am pleased that this bill will prevent another government shutdown and hopefully signal to the American people that we can actually work together, I will not be voting for this bill due to serious concerns surrounding specific policy riders and spending provisions that will affect the way we are living this period, none of these regular appropriations acts were enacted on or before October 1. In addition, 12 out of the 37 years during this period, none of these regular appropriations acts were enacted prior to the July 31 fiscal year. This is unacceptable and must change.

With our country facing a rapidly growing $17.3 trillion debt, which amounts to more than $54,000 per citizen, it is time for Congress to go back to the “regular order” and consider each one of the 12 individual appropriations bills in turn to fund the activities of our government before the end of the fiscal year, with ample time for debate and amendments, instead of ramming through a massive 1,582-page Omnibus appropriation bills like the one before us today. The American taxpayer expects more and deserves better than what we are giving them in this bill.

The Omnibus includes appropriations policy under review projects that should raise red flags for all of my colleagues. For example, tucked away in the classified portion of this bill is a policy rider that has serious national security implications and is a prime example of the appropriators oversight responsibilities. The provision will not halt the transfer of the U.S. drone counterterrorism operations from the CIA to the Department of Defense. In doing so, it summarily changes a very important policy that guides how we run our counterterrorism operations abroad from a direction that the President has specifically prescribed. And how did most of us become aware of this major policy change? By reading this morning’s Washington Post; that is how. This is outrageous, and it should not have happened. While there may be differing opinions on who should control drone counterterrorism operations, we should be able to debate these differences in the committees of jurisdiction and eventually on the Senate floor. The fact that a major national security policy decision is going to be authorized in this bill without debate or authorization is unacceptable and should not be the way we legislate on such important national security issues.

The $1 trillion Omnibus also includes a wasteful provision directing the U.S. Department of Agriculture, USDA, to continue developing the duplicative and unnecessary NEA Complex. Although the NDAA includes the FDA has a similar inspection office. Congress with the strategic plan which includes, among other things, costs associated with the movement to Guam and a report on military resources necessary to execute the U.S. force posture strategy in the Asia-Pacific region.

While this language will stay in the Omnibus bill due to the inability to offer an amendment to strip it, I am thankful to Senate Armed Services Chairman LEVIN for working with me to clarify the language. I also appreciate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman DURBIN and Vice Chairman COCHRAN for agreeing that the reporting requirements in section 1220 of the NDAA would not be the Defense has a similar inspection office. Congress with the strategic plan which includes, among other things, costs associated with the movement to Guam and a report on military resources necessary to execute the U.S. force posture strategy in the Asia-Pacific region.

Yet another example of the abuse of the appropriations process is the continued inclusion of a misguided policy rider that prohibits the Postal Service from moving to 5-day mail delivery, which would save the Postal Service $2
billion a year. This congressional mandate was initially put in place in 1984 and is the only roadblock keeping the Postal Service from transforming the way it delivers mail, while still being able to provide universal service. The Postal Service loses over a billion dollars each year; however, some in Congress have decided that they know better than the Postal Service leadership and continue to prohibit the Postal Service from modernizing and doing the way it does business. Congress must accept the fact that the Postal Service’s current way of doing business is no longer viable. The American public communicates and conducts business in a completely different way than they did even 5 years ago. We must allow the Postal Service to adapt to changing times in order to have a Postal Service in the future, and this includes 5-day mail delivery to save $2 billion a year.

In addition to these unacceptable policy riders, the bill also includes other examples of pork barrel spending for programs, some duplicative, such as $85 million for Pacific Coast salmon restoration for States including Nevada, a program that even President Obama has called duplicative and mocked in his 2011 State of the Union Address; $80 million in additional funding for Amtrak, which continues to operate in the red year after year; $15 million for an “incentive program” that directs DOD to overpay on contracts by an additional 5 percent if the contractor is a Native Hawaiian-owned company.

There is language that makes it easier for the DOD to enter into no-bid contracts for studies, analysis, and unsolicited proposals. The language in the bill makes it ripe for wasteful spending and earmarks for pet projects. For example, Department of Defense may eliminate competition and use a no-bid contract to gather and submit in confidence by one source.” With the Department facing cuts now and into the future, this type of vague language could lead to costly wasteful spending on programs that DOD neither needs or can afford.

There are $600,000 for a program at Mississippi State University to research how to grow trees faster for replanting after hurricanes. The term “Buy America” provisions that hurt competition and innovation, drive up the costs of procurement, and further increases the taxpayer burden; $10 million for the USDA High Energy Cost Grants Program that go to subsidize electricity bills in Alaska and Hawaii; $10 million for a DOD Youth Challenge Program that was neither requested by the President nor authorized to receive funding in the fiscal year 2014 NDAA; and $3.3 million increase in the STARBASE Program. According to the Internet, this “nice-to-have” but not “necessary-to-have” program “focuses on elementary students, primarily fifth graders. The program’s goal is to motivate these students to explore Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, STEM, as they continue their education. Military volunteers apply abstract principles to real-world situations by leading tours and giving lectures on the use of STEM in different settings and careers.” With a war going on and budget crisis at our doorstep, this is how we elect to spend our increasingly scarce defense dollars? We should be teaching our children to our teachers and parents and not our military.

There is a $7.7 million increase for the Civil Air Program, or CAP. CAP is a volunteer organization that provides aerospace education to young people, runs a junior cadet program, and assists when possible in providing emergency services. Its members are hard-working and we are grateful for their volunteerism. This year, as in the past, the Senate Armed Services Committee authorized CAP funding. However, CAP is auxiliary and thus should not be funded given the need for the military to tighten its purse strings and fund programs that are a priority to our national defense, not auxiliary.

The bill also includes $375 million for Army, Navy, and Air Force “alternative energy research” initiatives. As I have stated in the past, this type of research has yielded such shining examples as the Department of the Navy’s purchase of 450,000 gallons of alternative fuels for $12 million—over 26 dollars per gallon.

There is over $460 million in funding for Defense Department to do research dealing with research for Alzheimer, autism, prostate and ovarian cancer, HIV/AIDS and numerous other diseases and illnesses. While this type of research is important, it should not be funded by Department of Defense. It should, instead, be funded by the National Institutes of Health, the budget of which this bill more than doubles over last year.

We cannot continue this process where massive, unamendable, thousand-plus page spending bills totaling trillions of dollars are voted on 2 days after being made available to Members of this body. No Senator could have read and fully understood the long-term impact the policy and spending provisions this bill will have on the future of this Nation. It is a shameful way to do business. The American taxpayers are footing the bill and our uncontrollable spending habits as well as our inability to cut wasteful, underperforming, and duplicative programs. Furthermore, our refusal to reform our broken tax system and our unsustainable Medicare programs have contributed greatly not only to the current fiscal crisis in our country, but to Americans’ unfavorable opinion of the institutions of our government. We must change course and have a fair and open government-run national government, not a closed process. For all of these reasons, I will not be voting for this appropriations bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I appreciate the comments from my two dear friends, the Senator from Iowa and the Senator from Alabama. They have both been friends of mine for decades, and we have traveled and conspired together—always conspiring for the good of the country, of course. We have shared our thoughts, our philosophy, and our plans, and because we have joined together, we have better legislation.

I want to add my voice to those who have spoken in support of the Omnibus appropriations bill. I spoke about it earlier this week, so I won’t repeat others, but I want the American people to understand the importance of what we are doing.

Only Chairwoman MIKULSKI could have said it as well as she did. This compromised bill represents the end one, and hopefully for a long time—of the sham, the closed process, the politics.” If I spoke for an hour, I would not say it as well as the senior Senator from Maryland did. It shows that the people here want to govern. When they have had enough of political stunts and the longer interminable extremists, they can work together to get it done.

Chairwoman MIKULSKI, Ranking Member SHELBY, Chairman ROGERS, and Ranking Member LOWEY made it possible for the Senate and House Appropriations Committees to do what we all do if we are given the chance. Democrats and Republicans come together and we forge agreements.

Two days ago I spoke about the portions of this omnibus bill that fund the Department of State and foreign operations. But I also know—and I can say this as the most senior member of the Appropriations Committee—the bill also provides funding for many vital programs that have suffered some very painful cuts in recent years. It provides increased funding for public health, including mental health. It is going to increase the National Institutes of Health budget by $1 billion.

In Vermont, local community health centers are essential for rural families. This bill includes nearly $700 million more for these health centers nationwide. I know how important they are. I remember during my first term in the Senate helping to start and support the first community health centers in the tiny county of Grand Isle, with a beautiful archipelago of violets in Northern Lake Champlain. We also have Head Start Programs. These are some of the hard- hit state by sequestration and the bill will help rebuild these programs by investing nearly $1 billion.

The bill invests $194 million more in the Women, Infants, and Children Program, providing nearly 90,000 more mothers and their children with nutrition assistance. Talk about something that has a rebounding effect in this country. We all know a hungry child going to school is not going to learn, and they
are not going to be as productive a member of society later on. None of us in this Chamber goes hungry. No Senator goes hungry except by choice, but a lot of children and a lot of infants go hungry. Now, 90,000 more can be given nutrition assistance.

Many Americans are struggling to pay for college, and this bill maintains funding for the Pell Grant Program and increases funding for TRIO and GEAR Up Programs that help low-income students attend college. Many of these programs reach Vermonters through the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. I am pleased this bill includes investment in this and similar nonprofits around the country.

The omnibus includes funding for programs authorized by the Violence Against Women Act for grants to rural areas, for transitional housing, for sexual assault services, for legal assistance for victims, and support for Native American victims. I remember how we joined together in a bipartisan way to pass the Violence Against Women Act, and when they cut it, they cut it. In the House of Representatives, some very brave Democrats and Republicans stood and said: No, let’s pass the bill the Senate passed. We added a number of things, including Native American victims—something that even some of the previous supporters of the bill were going to take out. We kept it in.

The bill raises the cap on the Crime Victims Fund by $15 million, which is a historic increase and means more money for victims’ assistance grants at the State and local levels. How I wish we had such money when I was a prosecutor so we could help victims of crime.

It also makes a lifesaving investment in the bill the former Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell and I wrote, the bulletproof vest program, to protect police officers and other first responders. Every year we hear of police officers whose lives have been saved because they had bulletproof vests. We provide increases for homeless assistance grants and the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program. We preserve funding for Rural Economic Area Partnership Zones—something extremely important in the basically rural State of Vermont.

The omnibus also lifts the pay freeze impacting thousands of Federal workers in Vermont and millions across the country. They have done more for the country going forward. But before I do that, I come to the floor, as have a number of my colleagues, I rise to speak to this important Omnibus appropriations bill that we have before us today, and I too wish to thank the Senator from Alabama, whom I count as a friend, and the Senator from Baltimore and the great State of Maryland, more broadly, for the work they have done and their colleagues on the Appropriations Committee as well. We are showing the country we can work together. We are going to start the new year on a different note. I am excited to be a part of that effort.

I come to the floor, as have a number of my colleagues, to speak about some of the business yet unfinished, to set the stage for more work we can do going forward. But before I do that, I wish to mention some of the specific good news in the bill.

I am looking at my good friend from Alabama. We have had a lot of fires in Colorado over these last number of years. This bill takes some important steps to help us combat the threat posed by what are now very fast-moving, indiscriminately burning, modern mega fires. We have had mega hurricanes and mega tornadoes. We have mega fires now in the State of Colorado. We have seen those fires not just in my State but all over the West. In the Southeast we have seen increasing fires as well. So the budget includes about $3 billion for firefighting and wildfire prevention programs, which is essentially the same level we have seen in recent years.

I am a little disappointed that the bill doesn’t include the bipartisan Wildfire Disaster Funding Act. This is a bill that I worked on with Senators Wyden and Crapo. It is, therefore, bipartisan. It would allow the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior to access funding to support emergency wildfire suppression efforts. It is a lot cheaper to suppress fires at the beginning than to let them get out of control. It is also a lot cheaper to prevent fires from the grassroots up, from the fires, which, without question, would have been far worse, especially for programs that I support and I believe the distinguished Presiding Officer supports and most of us support.

So we have taken an important step back from the destructive politics of the past few years. Let’s hope it is only the first step. Let’s hope we can go on from here to make progress on other important issues the American people sent us to address.

I do not see any Senators seeking recognition. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, as have so many of my colleagues, I rise to speak to this important Omnibus appropriations bill that we have before us today, and I too wish to thank the Senator from Alabama, whom I count as a friend, and the Senator from Baltimore and the great State of Maryland, more broadly, for the work they have done and their colleagues on the Appropriations Committee as well. We are showing the country we can work together. We are going to start the new year on a different note. I am excited to be a part of that effort.

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I am looking at my good friend from Alabama. We have had a lot of fires in Colorado.
This bill also reauthorizes the job-creating Stewardship Contracting Authority, which allows the Forest Service and the BLM to partner with local businesses to improve fire safety on our public lands. This has been a critical tool in Colorado and it’s important that we have it in this bill.

So where do I think we have some shortcomings? I mentioned a couple of successes and important provisions in the bill. The bill doesn’t address several needs in my State, including support for the Emergency Watershed Protection Program and Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program. It is known as PILT. I listened to the Committee on Appropriations chairwoman and I listened to the Senator from New Mexico Tom Udall and others speak about PILT today. I wish to touch on both the EWP, Emergency Watershed Protection Program, and the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program. We had real devastation in my State last year during the last of historic amounts of rainfall and then the floods that followed. We had enormous support from all over the country. We deeply appreciate that outpouring. It was the most destructive natural disaster in our State that we have ever experienced. Now the floodways that have subsided, thankfully—some 3 months ago—but we are still learning the true extent of the damage. Families and towns are clearing debris from their neighborhoods and from their water sources. They are working to rebuild communities house by house and business by business.

Yet, despite this widespread damage from the floods and the broad consensus that more help is needed, this budget does not fund the Emergency Watershed Protection Program. This is a very important and crucial flood recovery program, and it has been applied all over our country, I think in almost every State.

If we don’t get support sooner rather than later, we could see additional flooding this spring. We have a spring thaw that happens all over our State. Streams will overrun their banks, particularly because we have so much debris still in many of those stream courses. So we need these resources. It is simply not acceptable that we would not have them in hand before the spring runoff.

The Federal Government’s Natural Resources Service, Service, Service to NRCS, estimates that we need at least $122 million to protect lives and property from future flood damage. That support, as I have said, is not included in the bill, but I am going to continue fighting to secure this critical aid for Colorado’s flood-ravaged communities.

Finally, I want to turn to the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program. As I mentioned earlier, many of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle have expressed their disappointment that the bill does not include PILT funding. It includes—when it works—funding for rural counties across the country. Fifty-five of our 64 counties in Colorado qualify for payment in lieu of taxes funding. Those counties qualify because there are Federal lands within those counties.

Those lands are an important part of the character and heritage of the West. But because Federal lands are not subject to local property taxes, they do not support essential services such as schools, roads, teacher hires, our firefighters, and our police.

I want to take an example of what I am talking about. Ouray County is in the southwestern portion of Colorado in the San Juan Mountains. It is home to about 4,400 people. Over half that county is public land, and half of the local school kids are already on free or reduced-price lunch programs. That county’s budget is picked to the bone. Without $400,000 in PILT funds, Ouray County will not be able to maintain local roads or provide other services to residents there depend on.

Those funds may seem small by the standards here in Washington, DC, but they are indispensable for the rural communities in my home State of Colorado and across the West. That is why this week I introduced a bill that would fully fund PILT, and I am really pleased Senator Heller from Nevada has joined me. That fully funded PILT approach would give local communities certainty when it comes to their budgets and their futures. This is a commonsense approach. Let us pass it without delay. I am going to continue to work with all of my colleagues who support the LIFE to ensure that we do the right thing.

I want to take a minute to speak to my county commissioners all over Colorado from those 55 counties I mentioned. I know you are wondering how you are going to keep critical public services going over this next year. To you I want to make this pledge: I will fight doggedly, I will fight every way possible, to make sure you have those PILT funds to which you are entitled and you need sure your communities are secure, are safe, and are preparing for the future.

I want to conclude by saying, again, I intend to vote for this bill, in part because of the critical functions across our government that it supports and because, as the Senator from Alabama mentioned just a while ago, it avoids another costly and unnecessary government shutdown. But I do raise some concerns. I know we will tend to the unfinished business mentioned. I am going to continue working with everyone on both sides of the aisle. I am going to keep fighting for the great State of Colorado in the process. We will do our part to be a great State in the United States. I appreciate the President’s Office’s attention. I appreciate the President’s Office’s service.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair notes the excellent work of the Senator from Vermont, and the clerk will please call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I never would have imagined that today the Senate would be meeting without one of our true heroes, a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, Senator Danny Inouye of Hawaii. He and Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska guided the Subcommittee on Defense of the Senate Appropriations Committee for decades with a steady hand and a commitment to working on a bipartisan basis. I have been fortunate in working on this appropriations bill to have as my ranking member Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi. He has carried on that legacy of bipartisanship. He is my friend. We trust one another. That has made this job so much more complete and satisfying. We have conferred a massive Defense appropriations bill on an expedited schedule and we encourage our colleagues to vote for it on final passage.

Virtually 60 percent of all of the domestic discretionary spending of the United States of America is included in this one appropriations bill. Now for
nearly 2 years the Department of Defense has been in a state of paralysis because of budget uncertainty caused by the Budget Control Act, sequestration, the threat that was never supposed to become a reality, and, sadly, the 16-day totally unnecessary government shutdown.

This bill is the first step in regaining stability and providing a solid foundation for our Department of Defense to plan for its future. It represents a return to a semblance order for both the Budget and Appropriations Committees and for Congress. Finally, we are going to exert our constitutional responsibilities over the power of the purse, to make certain that every Federal tax dollar is spent responsibly.

We are really indebted in particular to two of our colleagues. Chairwoman Patty Murray of Washington, chair of the Senate Budget Committee, sat down with Paul Ryan, the House Republican chair, and hammered out a budget agreement that first got the process moving, 5 or 6 years. Then the assignment was sent to the Appropriations Committee chair, Barbara Mikulski of Maryland. She was able to sit down with Chairwoman Rogers from the House of Representatives. The two of them worked out an agreement on the actual spending that would follow this budget resolution. That was no small feat.

It is also a fiscally responsible bill. It provides $572 billion for the current fiscal year appropriation, meeting the spending caps that were established in the budget. It meets the spending target $25 billion before the President’s request, by making 1,065 more strategic and thoughtful reductions—1,065 reductions in spending from the President’s budget request.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned us and the Nation several years ago: If we do not get the people right, the rest will not matter when it comes to operational defense. This agreement implements the wisdom of General Dempsey. It provides necessary resources to the 3 million men and women who proudly serve America in the Department of Defense. Passage of this bill means that nearly 800,000 civilian employees at the Department of Defense finally will get the pay raise, at least some pay raise, which they certainly deserve, rather than face the threat of furloughs which they faced over any other year.

Unfortunately, this is the first pay raise since fiscal year 2010, but it will make it a little bit easier for middle-class families who work for our government in defense of our Nation to make ends meet. The agreement also contains a pay raise appropriation, meeting the needs before deploying into harm’s way. Training and readiness means survivability.

It provides a $1 billion increase in the National Guard and Reserve equipment account, includes $218 million for TRICARE to ensure servicemembers and their families will not pay higher out-of-pocket costs for medical care, $25 million to fully implement the medical care of Navy Special Victims Counsel, so that the victims of sexual assault in the military through this appropriation will have the advocates, have the counselors, and have the champions they need.

We have increased an already robust budget for suicide prevention by $20 million, to encourage the Department to expand community-based initiatives, offering greater support as well for the Guard and Reserve. We made sure that the medical care our service-members receive will still be the most advanced in the world. It adds $200 million to peer-reviewed medical research programs. No apologies.

Sometimes people come to the floor and criticize the Department of Defense for being engaged in medical research. I can stand and defend every single line item. I will tell you, it will not only benefit our military and their families, it will benefit America and the world for this medical research to take place.

It has $125 million for traumatic brain injury and psychological health, $10 million for prosthetic research. I want to thank Senator Duckworth of Illinois. She has joined me in this effort. She, more than any other Member of Congress, understands the critical importance to have the modern prosthetics and orthotics for those members of the military who suffer a loss of limb during their course of serving our country.

For embassy security, which is a topic we hear from the other side on almost a daily basis, we have added $9 million to the Embassy Septic System Improvement pilot program to try to do something about that. We have increased an already robust budget for suicide prevention by $20 million, to encourage the Department to expand community-based initiatives, offering greater support as well for the Guard and Reserve. We made sure that the medical care our service-members receive will still be the most advanced in the world. It adds $200 million to peer-reviewed medical research programs. No apologies.

Finally, we added a technical correction. I want to make it clear, because this has been the subject of great debate on the floor of the Senate and the House, we added a technical correction to the COLA offset regarding military pensions to make it clear that Congress never, ever intended this to impact medically retired personnel or their families.

We fully funded Navy Growlers, P-8s, and other aircraft, as well as added additional procurement for additional Super Hornets.

In the Army, we protected procurement of Army Chinook, Apache and Black Hawk helicopters, as well as provided an additional 14 helicopters to the Army National Guard. It contains $1.2 billion to fully fund two Virginia-class submarines under a multyear contract.

I went on a tour with the engineers, welders, electricians, and machinists. They have been worried about their jobs through the sequester, and further sequestration would have meant a major disruption.

The agreement also supports the strong view of Congress that we should not retire 9 ships with a century of useful life left in them.

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I want to make sure they are ready for the next challenge, whatever it may be. So we have included $150 million in industrial mobilization capacity to stabilize their rates, to make sure they will continue to serve our military so well.

I see my colleague Senator Reed has come to the floor. I know we have a limited amount of time. I want to make a point which I think he will appreciate. When it comes to major Defense programs, this agreement contains $1.2 billion to fully fund two Virginia-class submarines under a multyear contract.

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Some programs have significant cuts, and that is going to have an impact somewhere.

But what is the alternative to this bill? The only answer is a full-year continuing resolution. The Department of Defense has never operated under a full-year CR, and I hope it never does.

A full-year CR would mean untold billions of dollars would have to be realigned from literally thousands of programs. It would be a financial management nightmare. Programs might be forced to liquidate their tracks because funds were not provided in the right lines, and the effects would ripple throughout the defense industry and American jobs.

This bill takes care of our highest priorities, but not everything can be a priority. I ask that Senators recognize that we had to make some hard choices, that we managed to do more with less, and that the alternatives are much worse.

I inherited an awesome responsibility from Senator Inouye. I also inherited his tremendous staff.

They have worked especially hard this year over the holidays with no fanfare and at great personal sacrifice to ensure that we could get to this day. So I would like to take a moment to thank them.

On the Democratic staff: Betsy Schmid, Colleen Gaydos, David Gillies, Katy Hagan, Kate Käfer, Erik Raven, Jennifer Santos, Teri Spoutz, Andy Vanlandingham, and Maria Veklich.

On the Republican staff, I would like to thank: Stewart Holmes, Alycia Farrell, Brian Potts and Jacqui Russell.

This defense bill provides for the national defense in a responsible, thoughtful way.

It reverses the harshest impacts of sequestration, and provides additional funds to ensure that our troops get the training and equipment they need.

It also looks toward the future, boosting research in medical care, science and technology, and manufacturing innovation.

I hope all of my colleagues who support a strong military and a strong national defense will support this good bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, first let me thank Senator from Illinois for his great leadership on the Appropriations Defense Subcommittee and for joining me in Rhode Island to see those great workers at Electric Boat and many other defense industries in Rhode Island.

I too want to commend Chairwoman BARBARA MIKULSKI and Chairwoman PATSY MURRAY. We would not be here today without their extraordinary efforts, Herculean efforts by two extraordinary individuals. I also want to thank my colleagues from the great State of Alaska, LISA MUKOWSKI, for her work. She is an extraordinary colleague, collaborator. We have worked together to make this Interior subcommittee bill a very good one.

Chairman KEN CALVERT of the House, ranking member JIM MORAN, both super participants and collaborators in this effort. Jim is retiring. I want to thank him for his continued service to Virginia and to the Nation.

I am very pleased in particular in this Interior subcommittee bill that we could make a strong investment in clean water and drinking water infrastructure, as it is known, the SRF fund. This is not only about the environment and public health, it is about jobs. In fact, adopting our provisions in contrast to the House’s lower numbers will keep approximately 97,000 more Americans on the job this year. That, I think, is significant. It is not just about the environment, it is also about keeping people at work.

We have also ensured that we can staff all of our agencies, including the EPA long enough to face furloughs, so they can have continuity of operations, so they can do their jobs more efficiently and more effectively.

For the Department of the Interior, the bill provides solid funding for renewable energy, including the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as well as the U.S. Geological Survey. The bill also includes $306 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

With respect to our cultural agencies, we have also been able to restore sequester cuts to the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, and we increased funding of the Smithsonian, which will help them complete the National Museum of African American History and Culture for its opening in 2015.

One challenge in the Interior bill is the firefighting costs. These are costs that continue to increase. We have fully funded these costs and we have done that by increasing resources significantly. But we have to be aware, if these costs continue to grow, it will be something that is very difficult to sustain. So we have to apply our efforts going forward to see if we can, through suppression efforts, through other efforts, begin to control the cost of firefighting. This is something, particularly for our Western States, that is being sapped from the economy, as estimated by Professor Lawrence Katz at Harvard if we do not act.

Now is the time not only to put these appropriations to work, but also to put our UI programs to work, so that not only can we help Americans, but we can also help our economy. I want to thank in this regard, with respect to the UI efforts, Senator HELLER and Senator COLLINS. They are extraordinarily thoughtful Members, who are committed, as I am, to help their constituents and doing it in a wise and prudent way.

With that, let me recognize the chairwoman who has come to the floor and say thank you, chairwoman, for an extraordinary act of work not surprising coming from a giant like yourself. Thank you.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I thank the Senator from Rhode Island for his comments. I appreciate them. They were well said. But the compliments should be reversed. This is a committee effort. What I am so excited about for this bill is that it is bipartisan, bicameral. It very keenly aware of and very appreciative of.

Funding for the Securities and Exchange Commission, funding for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. This is going to help make sure that Dodd-Frank is working. We promise is actually implemented and the markets are operating efficiently. This is critical to our economic viability and our economic progress.

As Senator DURBNE mentioned, I am extremely pleased to see that the multi-million-dollar submarines were included in this appropriations bill. They are built in Groton. They all begin in Quonset Point, RI, but they are built in Groton finally and often in Newport News. This is a program vital to our national security, vital to employment. About 2,800 people in Rhode Island will benefit from these important programs.

I think we have to do more to invest in our people, invest in our economy, infrastructure, etc., cetera, but this bill goes a very long way.

Let me also pay tribute to people who really deserve, as they say, a shoutout. That is the staff members who did this work: Rachael Taylor, Ryan Hunt, Virginia James, Rita Culp, Professor Lawrence Katz at Harvard if we ask. Brent Wiles, and Emily Lesoski. They did extraordinary work.

Before I leave the floor. Let me conclude one point: We will come together this coming week on a bipartisan basis to pass these appropriations bill. But we still have remaining work to do on the unemployment insurance bill. I hope in the intervening days that we can find a path forward to pass an unemployment insurance bill. I hope in the intervening days that we can find a path forward to pass an unemployment insurance bill on a bipartisan basis because if we do not, there are 1.5 million Americans without benefits, 70,000 more a week lose their benefits, and our economy is losing out, because it is approximately $600 million a week that is being sapped from the economy, as estimated by Professor Lawrence Katz at Harvard if we do not act.

Thank you.
was agreed upon in the House by an overwhelming vote of 359 to 67.

I look forward to this same type of vote in the Senate, but we did it because we listened to each other, we functioned with maximum respect, and saw we could compromise without capitulating on principle.

I note that other Senators will be coming shortly.

I yield the floor, and 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. CRUZ. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. CRUZ. I rise to speak of pragmatism and irresponsibility.

Four years ago, when this body was debating the law known as ObamaCare, reasonable people could perhaps have differed as to whether that law might work. The essence of pragmatism is looking to the facts as they are today and responding.

Today reasonable minds can no longer differ in terms of whether ObamaCare is working.

Today it is abundantly clear that millions of Americans are being harmed right now by this failed law.

The essence of pragmatism is to acknowledge the facts of the future of ObamaCare and for Congress to step up and act to stop the harm that has been caused by this body.

Irresponsibility, on the other hand, is seeing undeniable harm, undeniable facts, and saying, nonetheless, we will do nothing.

What are the facts from the American people?

The facts that we now know today are that already at least 4.7 million Americans who have received cancellation notices, have had their health care plans cancelled because of ObamaCare.

This was, of course, after President Obama repeatedly looked in the TV cameras, spoke to the American people, and made the promise: If you like your health care plan, you can keep it, and your doctor, you can keep your doctor, period.

We now know that promise was false, and for over 4.7 million people pain-fully false in their lives.

Pragmatism is responding to the facts and doing something about it. Unfortunately, what have the Senate majority leader and the Senate Democrats done to protect Americans from ObamaCare? Nothing.

These facts are known and Senate Democrats have done nothing. At least 4.7 million Americans lost their health insurance because of this body. The omnibus bill that this body is galloping on would do nothing for the 4.7 million Americans who have had their health plans cancelled.

It is not only health insurance plans. What else are the facts that we know now?

As Time magazine observed: "Keeping your doctor under ObamaCare is no easy feat."

President Obama looked at the American people and said: If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor, period.

We now know that promise too was deliberately, repeatedly, false. Millions of Americans are facing the very real prospect of losing their doctor.

A good friend of mine, a cancer sur-veyor for Texas Oncology, spoke to the American people. Because Texas Oncology has suggested he does not intend to participate—of losing his cancer doctor, not being able to go to the doctors who saved his life.

This is the father of two young children facing the terrifying reality of losing his doctor because of the conduct of the Congress.

In response to millions of Americans losing their doctors, what have the Senate majority leader and Senate Democrats done? Nothing. The essence of irresponsibility is seeing a harm, seeing the facts, and refusing to act.

What else do we know? We know ObamaCare is killing jobs all across the country. Indeed, ObamaCare is the biggest job killer in this Nation.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has said:

Of small businesses that will be impacted by the employer mandate, one-half of small businesses say they will either cut hours to reduce full-time employees or replace full-time employees with part-time workers to avoid the mandate. 24 percent say they will reduce hiring.

The President has recently been talk-ing about income inequality. This ex-acerbates income inequality. It is why the rich have gotten richer under President Obama. But the people who are struggling—young people, Hispanics, single moms, people like my dad, who 56 years ago washed dishes for 50 cents an hour as a teenage immi-grant—those are the people getting their hours reduced because of ObamaCare; those are the people getting laid off from ObamaCare.

Income inequality is increasing. What have the Senate majority leader or Senate Democrats done to protect Americans from ObamaCare? The an-swer is simple: Nothing. In response to millions of Americans being forced into part-time work, losing their jobs, nothing from Senate Democrats.

What else do we know? The New York Times front-page headline explained "New Health Law Frustrates Many in Middle Class.

I recognize that not everyone is in-clined to listen to a Republican from Texas. So let me instead quote that famed rightwing rag, The New York Times, discussing ObamaCare.

Ginger Chapman and her husband, Doug, are sitting on a care cliff. The cheapest insurance plan they can find through the new federal marketplace in New Hampshire will cost their family of four about $1,000 a month, 12 percent of their annual income . . .

Mr. Chapman is a retired fireman who works on a friend's farm and he and his wife have two sons. Mrs. Chap-man had this to say about the cost of that insurance:

That's an insane amount of money. How are you supposed to pay that?

In response to the middle class, frustr-ated with getting their high premium premiums, what have the Senate ma-jority leader and Senate Democrats done? The answer is the same: Nothing.

But going beyond that, it is not just the middle class that is getting hurt. If we look to look at 24,600 people on the Ohio rightwing group that is getting harmed the worst by ObamaCare, it is young people.

ObamaCare is a law designed to be a massive wealth transfer from young people to older wealthier Americans.

Fifty percent of young Americans today believe ObamaCare will bring worse care, 51 percent believe it will bring higher costs, and 57 percent of young people disapprove of ObamaCare. If the Senate majority leader and Senate Democrats believed they were not in forma-tion? Another famed rightwing institu-tion—Harvard, a Harvard Institute of Politics poll.

Young people in particular are getting hurt by ObamaCare, and we have the Senate majority leader and Senate Democrats done to listen to the young people who are losing their jobs, who are forced into part-time work, who are facing skyrocketing premiums? The answer is simple: Nothing.

Looking beyond that, in my home State of Texas, the average premium in the individual market. But let's take a 27-year-old Texas man. The av-erage premium increase will be 70 per-cent; for a 27-year-old Texas woman, 22 percent. These are young people who are struggling, who are trying to build a family, and their premiums are going up because of ObamaCare. What have the Senate majority leader and Senate Democrats done to listen to young people who are being hurt? The answer is simple: Nothing.

Let's look beyond that, though. Let's look beyond Texas and let's talk about State by State by some of the very real harm. Let's take a State picked at ran-dom: the State of Nevada. If we look at the State of Nevada, 24,600 policies have been canceled in Nevada; in the individual market, a 179-percent pre-mium increase.

It might be that these 24,600 people who had their health insurance can-celed would have Senators representing them. One might hope these people paying 179-percent premium increases would have Senators representing them standing up and saying: Let's act right now. But what have the Senate major-ity leader and Senate Democrats done to respond to the people of Nevada? The answer is absolutely nothing.
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Let’s look at some other States. The State of California. In California, that bright blue State on our west coast, 1.1 million policies have been canceled; a 27-percent increase on average premiums. What have Senate Democrats done in response to Californians suffering because of ObamaCare? The answer is simple: Nothing.

Let’s take another State: Arkansas. Arkansas people are hurting because of ObamaCare. The State is not tracking cancellations, but in the individual market, that’s a 138-percent increase in premiums.

For the millionaires, many of whom populate this Chamber, 138 percent may not be that much. But if you are struggling in Arkansas, you need help. You need relief! And what have Senate Democrats done for the people hurting in Arkansas because of ObamaCare? The answer is nothing.

Let’s look at another State: Louisiana, 92,790 policies canceled because of ObamaCare; a 53-percent increase in average premiums because of ObamaCare in the individual market. I will note, one Senator from Louisiana has fought hard for those 92,790 people in Louisiana who have had their health insurance canceled, and another Senator in this Chamber has fought hard to ensure the response is not to relieve them from ObamaCare. What have Senate Democrats done in response to the people in Louisiana who are hurting? The answer is simple and it is tragic: Nothing.

Let us look at another State: New Mexico, 26,000 policies canceled; 142-percent increase in the individual market. What have Senate Democrats done to listen to the citizens of New Mexico who are hurting—because ObamaCare? The answer is nothing.

Let’s take one more State: The State of North Carolina, 183,800 policies canceled; 136-percent increase. I want my colleagues to think of the single mom raising three kids who receives a notification in the mail that her policy has been canceled not because of anything she has done but because of Congress’s law that is not working.

A 136-percent increase. I want my colleagues to think of the immigrant struggling hard—like my dad was when he was washing dishes—who discovers his premium has gone up 136 percent. What have Senate Democrats done to respond to the people of North Carolina who are being hurt because of ObamaCare? The answer, tragically, is nothing.

Four years ago, reasonable minds might have differed, but today these are the facts. And the facts are Senate Democrats are not listening to the American people. They are not responding to the harm they have caused. I am going to suggest that is the essence of irresponsibility. I have filed two amendments. One amendment to the omnibus bill would simply provide that ObamaCare would be defunded so long as it is the case that ObamaCare is causing Americans to lose the health insurance policies they wish to keep, increasing their premiums, and preventing them from seeing the doctors they want to see. All of those, by the way, were promises Senate Democrats made to the American people that ObamaCare wouldn’t do, and it is exactly what they are doing.

This amendment, if Senate Democrats disagree that they have done nothing, presents the opportunity for them to do what they ought to do: Say it is the essence of pragmatism to recognize this isn’t working, people are hurting, so let’s start over.

So, accordingly, I am going to ask the first of two unanimous consent requests:

I ask unanimous consent that my amendment No. 2685, to prohibit the funding of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act so long as the Act is harming the health of Americans, be called up and agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Is there objection?

Ms. MIKULSKI. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I want to turn to a second amendment I have introduced. This second amendment provides real relief to the millions of Americans who are being hurt because of ObamaCare, but it also corrects something this body did just recently that was wrong. Recently, this body acted to decrease the pensions of millions of veterans—millions of men and women who have served our Nation, who have fought for our Nation, and who have bled for our Nation. This body decreased their pensions irresponsibly. So this second amendment I would introduce defunds ObamaCare because millions of Americans are hurting, and it uses the savings from defunding ObamaCare to restore the pensions to the hard-working men and women of the military, which never should have been taken away in the first place.

This is an opportunity for all 100 Senators to demonstrate we stand together with the working men and women in the military and with all Americans who are struggling to make ends meet, struggling to achieve a better life.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that my amendment No. 2686, to prohibit funding of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and to fulfill our Nation’s promise to our military retirees, be called up and agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Ms. MIKULSKI. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, last year Members of this body could say they didn’t know. They didn’t know people’s plans would be canceled. They didn’t know premiums would skyrocket. They didn’t know people would be shut off from seeing their doctors. Now they know. Now they know. And the response of the majority leader and Senate Democrats, tragically, is to do nothing.

This body faces a choice—a choice between pragmatism and irresponsibility. Once this body makes this choice, ultimately, in November, the American people will have a choice as well. At the end of the day, every elected official should not ignore the facts but should listen to the American people. We need to make DC listen.

The majority leader and Senate Democrats right now are not listening to the American people. Instead, they have chosen a course of conduct of doing nothing, that is not responsible, and I hope that, in time, they reconsider.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

Ms. MIKULSKI. 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.

Mr. SHELBY. 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. SHELBY. Madam President, we have had a spirited debate today for very important reasons, and I will conclude my remarks on this bill by observing that, with very few exceptions, we have heard nothing but positive comments from our colleagues today here in the Senate.

We have also heard what an important step this will be to reestablish the regular order of the Senate appropriations process. In the appropriations world, regular order means receiving the President’s budget, holding hearings, marking up bills, and bringing them to the floor. This bill provides an open amendment process, which both sides of the aisle need and want.

The passage of this omnibus bill will be a giant step, I believe, in that direction, which is in the best interests, in the long run, of each individual Senator as well as this entire institution. I would be remiss if I did not once again recognize the chair of the Appropriations Committee Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI, my colleague, and the lead-counsel she, Senator Barbara Mikulski, by creating an environment in which a compromise could be reached here. Anyone who has attempted to bring a single bill to the floor of the Senate understands what a difficult undertaking that can be. This particular legislation concludes 12 separate appropriations bills.

I also recognize the efforts of the respective ranking members of each subcommittee. The Christmas holiday, as I would all know, is usually an opportunity to refocus their attention on the families and their home States. This past year, however, we asked them to once again go the extra mile, to skip their
holidays, to make this bill a reality. Because of that and their work, they have done that—without hesitation.

As has already been mentioned by a number of my colleagues, no bill ever reaches the floor of the Senate without the effort of many different stakeholders. In this instance it took the effort of literally dozens of staff from both sides of the aisle to bring this together. I personally thank them all for their incredible dedication and professionalism and literally unceasing effort over the last several weeks.

I urge my colleagues once again to support this important legislation, to fund the government and move this body one step closer to being the place we would all like it to be.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, we are coming to the end of a long day and a long journey. This journey began last year when this committee was dealing with a crisis situation in December 2012 when our beloved and esteemed chairman Senator Dan Inouye passed away. Simultaneously, we were dealing with the emergency legislation that Hurricane Sandy required. At that time I was asked by my colleagues, based on our seniority system, to become the chair of this committee. It was my goal in taking over the committee that I wanted to continue the tradition that Senator Byrd, of Senator Ted Stevens, of Senator Danny Inouye, of Senator Thad Cochran, that we would work on a bipartisan basis in the interests of the United States of America. Although we come from different places, different States, and have even different priorities, we are one country. It requires us to make sure we do our job.

An Appropriations Committee is one of two committees that are constitutionally tied. When our Founders wrote the Constitution, they said that there should be a committee that has an annual Appropriations Committee for public review and public vote, and there should be a finance committee to raise the revenue. They didn’t call it the finance committee, but a revenue committee to raise the money to pay the bills.

This bill meets its constitutional responsibility. This is the bill that funds the President for fiscal year 2014. We are a little late, but we have gotten the job done, and we have done that job with due diligence, starting with President Obama giving the Congress his budget.

Remember, the President proposes, the Congress disposes. We took the President’s budget request, and we held our due diligence hearings. However, we faced a real problem. The Budget Committee, which sets the overall cap on discretionary spending, had not passed its report. Many said you must have a budget. Thanks to the leadership of Senator MURRAY, through hard work, we voted on a marathon budget bill that overwhelmingly passed in March. I was so optimistic. I thought: Great, the Budget Committee is done. They have an April 15 deadline. They are going to go right over to the House and begin negotiations, and we will get our allocation with our cap. Remember, we have a cap and we have a cap on discretionary spending. We cannot be wild spenders.

However, it was not meant to be. There are those in the Congress, in the Senate, who did not allow the Budget Committee to meet. Some 22 times we went to conference. We were delayed. We missed our October 1 deadline. We did not bring up our individual bills. But we did have all our bills marked up in full committee in full view by August 1. That is what we operated on.

Then in the fall, when we did get our budget, we did get our discretionary spending and a very stringent deadline. On December 20 we began to move to work with the House to come up with an agreement.

We did. We worked across the aisle, and I thank the Senator from Alabama, my vice chairman, for helping me create the environment. Our mutual respect for each other enabled us to work in a mutual way to move our bill forward.

We reached across the dome to the House Members. We have worked together, and we have finished the bill. We brought to the floor what I think the country needs. Yesterday it passed the House with 359 votes, with only 67 votes against it. I hope we have a successful margin today. These efforts show that we Democrats and Republicans can work together for the good of the country; that we can avoid drama politics with cliffhangers and fiscal cliffs; we can avoid shutdowns; we can avoid government on autopilot.

Most of all, those are process arguments. I did not come to be a member of the Appropriations Committee to be a process guru. Process gets you to the objective you seek, and the objective that I seek is to make sure that the United States of America is the best country in the world; that we lead the world in demonstrating American exceptionalism; that the greatest deliberative body continues to deliberate rather than delay; that the greatest country in the world, through American exceptionalism, knows how to resolve conflict, which we were able to do.

We compromised without any side capitulating on principles—give and take on money, give and take on policy. But that is what America is, give and take.

We were able to do that. At the same time, when I say the greatest country in the world, we ensured national security. We met compelling human need. We continued the opportunity ladder that enabled my family to rise as an immigrant family, and the family of the Presiding Officer to rise as an immigrant family. The Senator from Texas, he speaks so eloquently, often, and frequently about his father. We need an opportunity ladder in this country, and we have it in this bill.

We also wanted to make sure that we have jobs today and are looking for those investments in research and development for jobs tomorrow. But we compromise on everything. We compromise on everything. We have money in this bill for adequate funding for veterans health care, fixing the disability backlog. I know earlier in this debate the COLA for disabled military retirees and survivors of working age will be raised. We have an opportunity here, a chance for a comprehensive solution later on in the year.

I think we have a bill that meets the test of working to ensure America’s exceptionalism, protecting our national security, continuing that great opportunity ladder that made the United States of America great. At the same time, we made those public investments; we were a frugal committee that kept an eye on public debt.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

There have been many accolades for me today. I thank you for them. This is a committee. This bill is not about a “me.” Behind a “me” there is a whole mass of “we.” Working on a bipartisan basis, I thank my vice chairman, the Senator from Alabama, Mr. SHELBY, for being a gentleman of the old school, meaning courteous and civil. He was insistent, he was persistent on those priorities that he represented, and also on keeping that frugal eye that he is known for. But we were able to work together to create a climate in our committee where there was confidence that everybody could be at the table and everybody could have their say.

I thank his staff for their professionalism: Bill Duhkne, Dana Wade, Chris Ford, Jane Lee, and Shelby Begany.

My own staff were no slouches either, and I thank Chuck Kieffer, Gabrielle Batkin, Melissa Zimmerman, Brigid Hall, Vince Matalon, and Eve Goldsher who helped.

But also, all of us had fantastic subcommittee staff, and that staff has backed those subcommittee chairmen.

They worked every single day since December 20, with the exception of Christmas Eve and Christmas day.

Now we are at the end of this journey. As we conclude and vote on the omnibus, the consolidated appropriations bill, I hope the overwhelming majority of the Senate votes yes. Then, later on this month we will hear President Obama’s State of the Union. He will give us his budget. We are going to start all over again with the same atmosphere of respect, openness, and due diligence.

Madam President, I know there are just minutes left before the vote. If there is no objection, I yield back the time and urge the Senate vote.

CLUTCH MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to...
concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 3547, Space Launch Liability Indemnification Extension Act and the Omnibus Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2014.

Harry Reid, Barbara A. Mikulski, Benjamin L. Cardin, Christopher A. Coons, Patrick J. Leahy, Brian Schatz, Jack Reed, Tom Udall, Jeanne Shaheen, Tim Kaine, Patty Murray, Richard Blumenthal, Jeff Merkley, Mark Udall, Tom Harkin, Mark Begich, Mary L. Landrieu.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent the mandatory quorum call has been waived. The question is, Is it the sense of Senate that debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 3547 shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 72, the nays are 26. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN). The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 72, nays 26, as follows:

[Roll Call Vote No. 12 Leg.]

PROVIDING FOR A CORRECTION IN THE ENROLLMENT OF H.R. 3547

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 3547 is agreed to.

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN). The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of New Mexico). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 72, nays 26, as follows:

[Roll Call Vote No. 13 Leg.]

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN). The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of New Mexico). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 72, nays 26, as follows:

[Roll Call Vote No. 12 Leg.]

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN). The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 72, nays 26, as follows:

[Roll Call Vote No. 13 Leg.]

Yeas—72

YEAS—72

NAYS—26

NOT VOTING—2

HOMESTEAD FLOOD INSURANCE AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa is recognized.

FUNCTIONING OF THE SENATE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I would like to continue the discussion about the description of the Senate as a deliberative body and continue to echo the call for the distinguished minority leader for a return to a functional Senate. I have spoken on this issue before. I think it is best to go back to the Constitution and the people who wrote the Constitution for an understanding of what was intended when the Senate was set up. So I do not intend to dwell on the use of the so-called nuclear option related to the filibuster.

The reason I am not going to spend my time on the nuclear option today as in previous speeches is the majority leader claims the Senate’s dysfunction is related to some unprecedented use of filibusters. I think that has been thoroughly debunked, that claim is directly refuted by the very source he has pointed to, the Congressional Research Service.

More importantly, it has been debunked by fact checkers in important media sources in America. Yet, as we know, the Senate is dysfunctional beyond a doubt. To get to the bottom of how and, more importantly, why the Senate is not functioning, we must have a clear understanding of just how the Senate is supposed to function. As I just said, we should turn to the Constitution.

For an understanding of what the Constitution means, there is no better source for this than going back to the Federalist Papers. I have referenced the Federalist Papers before on this subject, but it is worth the detail about what the Framers of the Constitution had in mind when the Senate was created.

Federalist Paper 62, which is usually attributed to the Father of the Constitution, James Madison, begins to lay out the rationale for how the Senate is supposed to operate. He mentioned that the number of Members and the length of terms are different between the House and Senate. Then he said this—but before I quote, I hope you understand that when something was written in 1787 and 1788, they use a little different form of English than what we use. But it is pretty clear what they intended to say about explaining the difference between the House and the Senate. So here begins my quote of James Madison:

In order to form an accurate judgment on both of these points, it will be proper to inquire into the purposes which are to be answered by a Senate; and in order to ascertain these, it will be necessary to review the inconveniences which a Republic must suffer from the want of such an institution.

End of that quote, but I will have more other quotes from the Federalist Papers. In this specific quote, in