

Mr. President, during today people will be watching and they will see a quorum call, nothing on the screen. Why? Because we are in the midst again of one of these never-ending Republican filibusters—hundreds of them. Hundreds of them. Let me remind everyone that Lyndon Johnson was majority leader for 6 years. During that period of time he had to overcome one filibuster. Mr. President, I have lost track; it is hundreds and hundreds of filibusters that we have had to overcome, and we have the Republicans coming here today saying: Well, all we want is a few amendments.

They do everything they can to stop us from progressing on legislation that is good for this country. Anything that is good for Barack Obama they think is bad for the country, and for 5½ years they have opposed everything this good man has tried to do. It is a shame.

So to anyone out there wondering what is going on, it is another of the hundreds of filibusters they have conducted.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

Mr. REID. Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

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

ENERGY SAVINGS AND INDUSTRIAL COMPETITIVENESS ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion to proceed.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 368, S. 2262, a bill to promote energy savings in residential buildings and industry, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, my staff just told me we are now at more than 500 filibusters—500.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the majority leader has brought to the attention of the Senate today the headline news across America. This report by our government about what we are facing with environmental changes in America is a call to action.

I came to the floor yesterday and I made a challenge, which I have made before. I will make it again. I am asking any Republican Senator to come to the floor today and dispute the following claim: The Republican Party of the United States of America is the only major party in the world—the only major political party in the world—that is in denial of what is happening to our environment when it comes to climate change and global warming.

I have said it repeatedly. No one has disputed it. One political party is in de-

nial about a change on this Earth that could literally affect generations to come. As a result, we are, I guess, stopped in our tracks. There is nothing we can do.

This bill before us today—the energy efficiency bill, which is on the calendar—if there were ever anything we should agree on, it is this. If your motive in energy efficiency is to save money for a business or a family, it is in this bill. If your motive in energy efficiency is to create jobs in America, it is in this bill—190,000 maybe 200,000 American jobs. If your motive is to do something for the environment, energy efficiency is the right bill. But here we are stuck in another Republican filibuster. Why? Because they insist on a series of amendments.

The sponsors of this legislation—Senator SHAHEEN from New Hampshire; Senator PORTMAN, a Republican from Ohio—basically came to an agreement on a bill that is bipartisan in nature, and there are 10 or more bipartisan amendments included in this bill.

Has the minority had an opportunity to be part of this process? Absolutely. Yet it is never enough. They want more and more, and they are prepared to slow down or stop the passage of a bill which in ordinary times would have passed by a voice vote. That is not going to happen. Unfortunately, we are going to be mired down in more procedural votes until some of these Senators get the amendments they want.

We wasted a week last week, a week in the Senate when nothing happened, when this bill could have passed. Why? One Republican Senator wanted to offer an amendment on the Affordable Care Act. They have flogged the Affordable Care Act in every imaginable direction, and now this Senator wants to deny health insurance coverage or at least make it more expensive for the staff of Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, as well as Members themselves. That is his idea of a good idea to debate on the floor of the Senate at the expense of this bill.

Well, shame on the Senate. Shame on those who are obstructing us. We have had enough, have we not, of these filibusters and this obstruction? It is time that we roll up our sleeves and get down to the work of the people of this country.

HEALTH RESEARCH

While I am on the subject, I am leaving to go to a committee meeting of the Appropriations Committee to talk about Federal funding for health research. This is another issue which troubles me, because of the lack of commitment by this Congress to one of the most fundamental responsibilities we have as a government.

We are blessed with the best biomedical research agency in the world today—the National Institutes of Health—one of the most extraordinarily public health agencies—the Centers for Disease Control—and we continue year after year to underfund

these agencies at the expense of America's health and at the expense of creating good-paying jobs in our country.

For the last 10 years or more we have failed to give the National Institutes of Health protection from inflation, and as a result their spending power to award research grants has declined by 22 percent over the last 10 years. As to the researchers at the National Institutes of Health, there are fewer and fewer younger researchers. They have lost hope that there is a commitment by this government, by this Nation, to medical research. What is the net result? The net result is that we, at our peril, fail to do the research, to find the cures for diseases that make a difference in the lives of Americans and American families.

The Republicans argue that it is just too darn much money, that we cannot afford medical research. Well, let me give you one statistic to think about. Last year Medicare and Medicaid spent \$203 billion of taxpayers' money—\$203 billion—on the victims of Alzheimer's—\$203 billion. If research at the National Institutes of Health could get to the heart of this disease and find a way to cure it—that would be a miracle—or delay its onset—it seems within the realm of possibility maybe—we could save dramatic amounts of money. Medical research pays for itself.

Listen to what is happening in the House of Representatives. We have a proposal for an extension of a Tax Code provision that will give a break to businesses to invest in research projects. There is nothing wrong with that. I have supported it. Throughout my time in the House and Senate, I have supported it. But listen—listen—to the logic. The Republicans in the House argue that if it is an R&D tax credit that goes to the private sector for research so they can develop new products and services and be more profitable and create more employment, it does not have to be paid for. Over 10 years, it would cost us \$140 billion for the extension of this credit, on a 10-year basis, to the private sector, and the Republicans have argued, yes, this may nominally add to the deficit. But, in fact, it does not. The research and development leads to more businesses, more jobs, more tax revenue to the government, and so they argue we do not have to pay for it.

Now let me step over here. What about the research and development done, the medical research done by government agencies? Is that worth some money to taxpayers? Absolutely. Finding cures for diseases at NIH—Alzheimer's, diabetes, cancer; I could go on—each and every one of them would be a savings to the taxpayers. Yet they argue: No, that is government spending; that adds to the deficit.

That is such upside-down thinking. It is such a denial of reality. Basic fundamental medical research and biomedical research by these agencies relieves suffering, finds cures for diseases, and reduces the expenditures of

our government on health care. I would argue it is just as justifiable, if not more so, for us to be making the same investment in increasing biomedical research over a 10-year period of time—incidentally, at the same cost.

A 5-percent increase—real increase—in spending in biomedical research each year for the next 10 years at the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control, the Department of Defense medical research, the Veterans' Administration medical research—those four agencies—5 percent real growth comes out to almost identically the same cost as extending the R&D tax credit for private companies.

Do them both. Do them both and I guarantee you America will get more than a \$140 billion return for each one of them. Thinking ahead in an innovative way, with some vision toward the future, investing in research is really buying for the next generation a better life in America and a stronger economy for our country.

I want to make that appeal to my colleagues. If we bring the R&D tax credit to the floor and the argument is made: Well, we do not have to pay for that because it is going to private companies, the same argument should be made when it comes to increasing our investment in biomedical research at the most fundamental agencies that promote health in America and the world.

Back to this bill for a moment, I hope that by the end of the day the Republicans will end this filibuster, that we can start moving toward passing this bill. It should have been done last year. It should be done now. These excuses that we need a litany of amendments before we can even consider the bill are just delaying something that is very important for this country.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

ENERGY AMENDMENTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, earlier this morning it was suggested that Republicans are creating a problem on the Portman-Shaheen bill because we are insisting on amendments. I am stunned that anybody would think that insisting on amendments would be unusual or out of order. That is what we used to do in the Senate. We had amendments offered and we had votes on them by both sides.

One Senator, it was suggested, insisted on an ObamaCare amendment. That was dropped 5 days ago. Nobody is

insisting on an ObamaCare amendment on the Portman-Shaheen bill. Senator VITTER had suggested that earlier but decided that was not a good idea on this particular bill because it was the opportunity, we hoped, to get four or five votes on important energy-related amendments. Senator DURBIN actually objected.

So I think it is important to set the record straight this morning. What Senate Republicans are asking for is four or five amendments related to the subject of energy. I would remind our colleagues that the minority in the Senate has had eight rollcall votes on amendments it was interested in since last July—since last July.

During that same period the House of Representatives, where it is often thought the minority has no influence at all, has had 125 rollcall amendment votes. So what is going on is the Senate is being run in a way that only the majority leader gets to decide who gets to offer amendments. He says: Maybe I will pick one for you.

That is not the way the Senate used to operate, not the way the Senate should operate, and I hope not the way the Senate will operate starting next year.

The majority leader, as I indicated, is basically shutting down the voice of the people here in the Senate; that is, the people who are represented by 45 of us. For 7 long years he has refused to allow truly comprehensive debate on energy in this Chamber. We have not had a comprehensive debate since 2007. He had a chance to change that yesterday. Dozens of Senators asked him to do that. We know the American people want us to do it. But he refused. Apparently he does not think the American people deserve a vote on a single energy amendment. Apparently he does not think the American middle class, which is being squeezed by rising energy costs and over-the-top government regulations, needs the kind of relief Republicans are proposing. He clearly must not think the people of eastern Kentucky deserve our help either. Kentuckians in the eastern part of my State are experiencing a depression—that is a depression with a “D”—that the President’s energy policies actually created and are making worse.

The administration has proposed new rules that would make life even harder for those folks, rules that would make it effectively impossible to build another coal plant anywhere in the country. Coal is a vital industry to the livelihood of literally thousands of people in my State. We should be allowed to help them, but the majority leader said no.

Let’s be honest. He does not seem to think the people we represent deserve a say on much of anything anymore. Democrats over in the Republican-controlled House, as I indicated earlier, have had 125 amendment votes since last July, but here in the Senate the Democratic majority has allowed us nine. I said eight earlier. It is actually

nine amendments since last July, that is, rollcall votes. It is shameful. But it says a lot about which party is serious these days and which one is literally playing games. It says a lot about the complete lack of confidence Washington Democrats have in an open debate. What is wrong with having an open debate? They are completely out of ideas, and apparently they do not want anybody to know that Republicans have suggestions to be made. So they are attempting to muzzle us at a time when middle-class Americans are in need of some relief. Do they really think that Americans who have had to cope with rising electricity prices, stagnant wages, and growing hopelessness in the Obama economy—do they really believe the Senate should not even be debating ideas that might help them?

It is hard to think otherwise. So I think middle-class Americans, looking at the Senate these days, are left to draw an obvious conclusion: That their concerns matter far less to today’s Senate Democrats than the political imperatives of the far left. We know the President’s political team must be pleased. One White House aide said they plan to lean on Senate Democrats to “get the right outcome” this week; in other words, to stop the American people from having a real debate on energy policies.

For the President and his political pals, it must feel like “mission accomplished.” This means he can avoid having to sign or veto legislation that might be good for the middle class but offensive to the furthest orbit of the left. It also means he can continue to impose energy regulations such as the one I mentioned earlier, through the back door, to govern by executive fiat, without having to worry about niceties such as Democratic accountability.

After all, far-left activists presumably demand that the President impose those regulations because they do not want the American people getting in the way again. They know what happened the last time they let that happen, when a fully Democratic-controlled Congress could not even pass a national energy tax.

As long as it has a Senate Democratic majority on its side, the far left knows it will not have to worry about the American people messing up its plans again. The majority leader proved that again this very week. The far left will not have to worry about the representatives of the American people voting through the Keystone XL Pipeline either.

Here you have a project the American people support overwhelmingly that would create thousands of jobs when we have rarely, rarely needed them more, and that would pass Congress easily if the majority leader would allow a vote, but he will not because the far left will not let him. If we do get a vote, the Democratic leadership will be sure to filibuster against the jobs the Keystone XL Pipeline will create.

Activists on the left positively hate this energy jobs initiative. They rail against it constantly, even though they cannot seem to explain in a serious way why it is a bad idea. But it is a symbol in their minds, so they demand Senate Democrats block its approval and Senate Democrats dutifully do just that.

Again and again we see the needs of the middle class subsumed to the whims of the left. That has become the legacy of today's Democratic majority. They have diminished the vital role the Senate plays in our democracy. We do not seem to debate or address the most serious issues anymore, even with significant events at home and abroad that deserve our attention, because for the Senate Democrats who run this place, the priority is not on policy, it is on show votes and political posturing 24/7. This reflects a party that has simply run out of ideas, that has failed to fix the economy after 5½ years of trying, and now sees its political salvation not in making good policy for the middle class but in exciting the left enough to save the day come November.

I guess we will see if this strategy pays off. But that is not what truly matters around here. What matters is that millions in our country are hurting and that Senate Democrats do not seem to want to act. Look, they should be joining with us to help our constituents because the American people did not send us here to play games or to serve the far left. Our constituents sent us here to have serious debates on issues that matter to them, such as energy security, national security, economic security. All three can be addressed if the majority leader would simply allow Republican amendments to be considered.

Our constituents want Congress to make good policy. The fact that we do not seem to do that under the current majority is quite tragic. The American people deserve better. They deserve a debate and they deserve to be heard.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES
SPECIALIST RUSSELL E. MADDEN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I want to pay tribute to a brave and honorable young man from Kentucky who was tragically lost in the performance of his military service. SPC Russell E. Madden, of Bellevue, KY, was killed on June 23, 2010, in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Specialist Madden volunteered for his final mission and was in the lead vehicle in a convoy that was attacked by the enemy. His vehicle was struck by a rocket shell. He was 29 years old.

For his service in uniform, he received the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart Medal, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Bronze Service Star, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon, the NATO Medal, and the Combat Action Badge.

Russell Madden joined the Army just under 2 years before his death. His fa-

ther Martin Madden reflects on his son's time in service by saying:

Nineteen months is not a long military career. But 19 months was long enough to graduate basic training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, with honors.

His dad continues:

Nineteen months is long enough to be running and gunning as a lead convoy gunner on convoys that sometimes took 16 hours to move 40 miles to replenish forward operating bases, completing over 85 missions outside the wire in nine months . . .

Nineteen months may not represent a prolonged period of time in the minds of most Americans; however, it is just long enough to create a patriot, to define heroism, and accept a place of honor among those who stand in silent testimonial to the strength of this great nation.

The bond between father and son that moves Martin to speak these words was forged, of course, not just over 19 months but over Russell's entire lifetime. Like so many of the extraordinary heroes who hail from Kentucky, Russell's childhood is full of examples of a young man devoted to a cause greater than himself.

He was the oldest of three children, along with his younger sister Lindsey and younger brother Martin. Like most young siblings, at times the kids would fight. Russell's parents had a unique way to defuse family tussles. Martin said:

In order to settle [disagreements], we placed both [Russell and Lindsey] in the middle of the living room and told them to stand there hugging each other. After about 20 minutes of standing there hugging, we would begin to hear them laughing and having a good time, and we would go in and tell them if they could get along they could stop.

Little sister Lindsey remembers childhood stories like these, just as she remembers her brother's dedication to service. She said:

All he ever told me, every time I talked to him, was that he wanted to make me proud. And he has. He always made me proud.

Russell attended Bellevue High School, where he displayed his dedication to serving on a team as a star athlete in football, baseball, and track. During his senior year, the track team was 1 week away from the State meet when the top hurdler was injured. The whole team was in danger of not qualifying unless someone stepped in. Russell volunteered to run the hurdles, even though he had never run a hurdle event in his life.

Martin Madden recalls:

Russell took off running at full sprint, stopped when he got to the hurdle and jumped over it, then took off running at full speed until he reached the next hurdle and stopped and jumped over that one, throughout the track. It was the most unorthodox style the coach had ever observed, but with the state qualifier taking place next week, the coach allowed Russell to represent the team.

As a result, Russell's first-ever hurdle event was the State-qualifying match. Even using what his father calls his "God-awful ugly style," Russell qualified and ran in the final State competition, where he placed sixth.

Russell was a winner on the football field just as he was in track and field. Every Friday night, during the 1999 season, fans packed Gilligan Stadium to watch Bellevue High play out what would be an undefeated season. Russell played running back and was such a talented athlete that he could also kick field goals and extra points, return kickoffs, punt, quarterback, and play wide receiver—and that is only on the offensive side of the ball. He also played linebacker on defense.

As a result of his all-around athletic success, volunteer work, and coaching of youth football teams, Russell was inducted into both the Bellevue High School Sports Hall of Fame and the Northern Kentucky Youth League Football Hall of Fame. He was also recognized by the Northern Kentucky High School Football Coaches Association for his sportsmanship. Russell graduated from Bellevue High School in 2000.

In 2008 Russell and his wife Michelle learned that their son Parker had a preliminary diagnosis indicating a high potential for cystic fibrosis. Martin said:

Russell joined the Army to fight for his country and provide the medical treatment necessary for his young son.

Russell enlisted in 2008, and during his deployment to Afghanistan was assigned to the 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team based out of the Conn Barracks in Germany.

Russell's father Martin recalls how Russell's fellow soldiers felt about Russell's dedication to them and their team—a dedication that echoed the drive of the young man who volunteered for the hurdles and excelled on the gridiron.

"This . . . is what the soldiers in his platoon told me," Martin said.

Russell said to them:

Guys, I will not let you down. We will get there. . . .

If ever there was going to be a problem, they wanted to be with Russell because they knew he would never let them down.

Respect and admiration for Russell's dedication to a cause greater than himself even reached the halls of the Kentucky General Assembly, which passed a joint resolution to designate Kentucky Route 1120, within the city limits of his hometown of Bellevue, as the "SPC Russell Madden Memorial Parkway." Russell's family was present as the new street sign was unveiled for the first time.

Russell's wife Michelle said:

It is an awesome tribute to my husband. He deserves it. I want this sign for my son to say, "Hey, that's my dad's sign. That's what my dad's done for us." This is what is going to carry on his legacy.

We are thinking of SPC Russell E. Madden's family today, including his wife Michelle, his son Parker, his stepson Jared, his parents Martin Madden and Peggy Davitt, his sister Lindsey, his brother Martin, and many other beloved family members and friends.

It is important that Russell's family knows that no matter how long or how short his time in uniform may have been, Martin Madden is absolutely right that his son will and must be forever remembered and revered for the sacrifice he has made on behalf of our country.

I know SPC Russell E. Madden certainly will be remembered by this Senate. I ask all of my colleagues to join me in expressing the utmost respect for his life and his service.

We extend our greatest condolences to his family for a loss on behalf of our Nation that can never truly be erased. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Republican whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I was on the floor, as was the Presiding Officer, listening to the distinguished Republican leader's glowing tribute to this fallen warrior. We were moved, certainly, by it.

He preceded his comments by talking about what is happening to the Senate and the fact that even though we are debating, supposedly, the first energy legislation to come to the Senate floor since 2007, the majority leader's—Majority Leader REID, who has the power under the Senate rules to basically be the traffic cop, to decide which amendments get heard and voted on and which ones do not—comment was to the effect that the majority leader has essentially shut the Senate down and denied the minority an opportunity to offer their amendments and to get votes on amendments.

I know people listening must say: Well, here they go again talking about the prerogatives and rights of Senators. But that is not what I am talking about. I am talking about the rights and prerogatives of the people I represent, 26 million Texans who are being shut out of a debate on—of all topics—energy.

We take great pride in the fact that Texas is an energy-producing State, and it is one of the reasons why our economy has been doing better than much of the rest of the country, because we have responsibly, and with the right kind of environmental stewardship, taken advantage of this gift of the natural resources that we have in our State.

Thanks to the innovation, and thanks to the investment and the hard work of a lot of people, we are doing better—thank you—than the rest of the country when it comes to job creation.

It really offended me when the majority leader this morning said:

Mr. President, during today people will be watching [presumably in the gallery, on C-SPAN, maybe on the evening news] and they will see a quorum call, nothing on the screen. Why? Because we are in the midst again of one of these never-ending filibusters of the Republicans—hundreds of them, hundreds of them. Let me remind everyone, Lyndon Johnson was majority leader for 6 years.

Well, I would just interject Lyndon Johnson didn't run the Senate the way Senator REID does, when he was majority leader. Senator REID continues:

During that period of time he had to overcome one filibuster.

Mr. President, I have lost track. It is hundreds and hundreds of filibusters that we have had to overcome, and we have the Republicans coming here saying today: Well, all we want are a few amendments. They do everything they can to stop us from progressing on legislation and things that are good for this country.

He is talking about the 45 Senators on this side of the aisle—that we will do everything we can to stop from progressing on legislation and on things that are good for the country. How insulting can you be?

We are going to have differences of opinion, sure. That is why are here. That is why they used to call the Senate the world's greatest deliberative body, because on the floor, not even Majority Leader REID can shut me down or any other Senator who stands and is recognized by the Chair to speak on a matter of importance to their State or to the country.

But to have the majority leader come to the floor and say that what we are trying to do is stop progress on legislation and things that are good for the country—he goes on. Senator REID accuses us of trying to stop:

Anything that is good for Barack Obama they think is bad for the country, and they, for 5½ years, have opposed everything that this good man has tried to do. It is a shame. So anyone out there wondering what is going on, it is another of the hundreds of filibusters they have conducted.

Majority Leader REID has been a Member of the Senate for a long, long time. He knows this is not true.

So why he would come to the floor of the Senate and say it is puzzling to me.

We had 2 years when President Obama and Senator REID's party could do anything they wanted. How is that? Well, because they had 60 votes in the Senate, which is sort of the magic number, when you can basically do anything you want in the Senate because the minority doesn't have enough numbers to stop the majority or to check their power.

So Democrats had the House of Representatives, with NANCY PELOSI as Speaker. They had the Senate, with 60 votes, HARRY REID as the majority leader, and they had Barack Obama in the White House.

What did we get in those 2 years? Well, one of the things we got was ObamaCare. We know it was sold on the basis of: If you like what you have you can keep it, your premiums would go down \$2,500 and, yes, you could keep your doctor too. But none of that proved to be true—none of it.

We got Dodd-Frank. Do you remember Dodd-Frank? That was the legislation following the financial crisis of 2008 and the meltdown on Wall Street that was very damaging to the economy of this country; there is no doubt about it. What we got with unrestrained and unchecked single-party efforts during the time when they controlled both branches of government—the executive and the legislative

branches—was legislation that targeted Wall Street, but Main Street was actually the collateral damage. I hear that from my credit unions and community bankers in Texas all the time, that the regulations are strangling them and keeping them on the sidelines, hurting the economy and hurting job creation.

My point is the Framers of our Constitution understood it is important to have vigorous debate on the differences of opinion each of us bring in representing our various States. The Constitution makes the point, in Article I, Section 1, that "all legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives."

I ask the majority leader, if the Constitution vests all legislative authority in the Senate and the House, what happens when half of the Senate is shut down and denied an opportunity to participate in the legislative process?

The Constitution goes on to state what kind of legislative power is vested in the Senate and the House. Section 8, Article I of the Constitution lays out a laundry list of powers the Congress has—the sorts of things Congress is intended to legislate on. It contains everything from the "Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises . . . To borrow Money on the credit of the United States; To establish a uniform Rule of Naturalization . . . To coin Money . . . To provide for the Punishment of counterfeiting the Securities and current Coin of the United States; To establish Post Offices and post Roads; To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts . . . To constitute Tribunals inferior to the supreme Court."

The list goes on and on. Of course, finally, the last phrase in Article I, Section 8 is laying out the power of the Congress to legislate, where it says, "To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof."

So I ask the majority leader: If the Constitution grants the Congress the power to legislate and specifies all of the things we are supposed to legislate on and do as the elected representatives of our various States, what happens when we are shut out of the process, when we are denied an opportunity to represent the people who elected us to office, who have entrusted us with a sacred responsibility and a stewardship?

It is beyond outrageous. It is beyond outrageous for the majority leader to make the remarks he made this morning that I previously quoted because he knows they are not true. He knows they are not factual. The Constitution itself guarantees my constituents, all 26 million of them, the rights laid out in the Constitution in Article I. When

they vote for a U.S. Senator, they are entitled to have their Senator participate in the legislative process. We are not guaranteed the right to win these votes, but we are given the responsibility and the privilege of representing them in this place, and we cannot do it when the majority leader runs this place like a dictator.

We are debating—supposedly—an energy efficiency bill. As I said, it is the first time we have had an energy debate on the floor since 2007. There are a lot of very good ideas that have been offered to improve the underlying piece of legislation. I have no doubt the underlying legislation would pass. It will pass, if the majority leader allows us an opportunity to offer and debate our proposals for improving the underlying bill, but if he is going to shut us out of the process and deny the people I represent a voice and an opportunity to improve this piece of legislation, we are not going to cooperate.

The majority leader keeps saying no to amendments, and he denigrates our right on behalf of our constituents to offer amendments and to get votes on those amendments. I know I have come to the floor before, as other Members have come to the floor, and tried to speak on this topic. I know sometimes this sounds as though it is all just about process. It is about process. How boring could that be. It is important because in essence the majority leader has imposed a gag rule on the minority in the Senate, a gag rule in the world's greatest deliberative body—no more.

I don't know what the majority leader is afraid of. Is he afraid of a vote on the Keystone XL Pipeline? I think I saw a poll the other day that said roughly 61 percent of the respondents to that poll thought this was a good idea, that we get more of our energy from a friendly source, such as the nation of Canada, and rather than having to transport all of it in tank cars on trains that occasionally crash and cause a lot of damage, it might be better to build this pipeline so we could safely transport that oil from Canada down to refineries in my State, where it could be converted into gasoline, aviation fuel, and the like, and in the process create an awful lot of jobs.

Sixty-one percent, according to that poll I read, said they thought that was a pretty good idea. Yet the majority leader will not even allow a vote on that amendment. He will not allow a vote on minority amendments. He will not allow a vote on Democratic amendments. I bet my colleagues on the other side of the aisle must be frustrated, indeed, because they have been denied an opportunity to participate in this process, too, thanks to the automatic powers being exercised by the majority leader.

Here is another idea this side of the aisle had for an amendment we would like to get some debate and a vote on. We are not asking to win. We can do the math. We know we are in the minority. But these are important topics.

Vladimir Putin invades Crimea, the Russian Army is building up in the Ukraine and causing havoc in that country, and it looks like he is not going to stop. The President said we are going to make sure there is a cost imposed as a result of Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, so we are going to impose a number of sanctions. The fact is, as my colleague from Arizona, the senior Senator from Arizona, has said, Russia is a gas station posing as a country. I think that is a pretty humorous way of saying the energy Russia produces and transmits to Ukraine and Europe is its main source of economic power and revenue. If we could undermine that by exporting more energy from the United States to Europe, that would dissuade Vladimir Putin, perhaps, in addition to other things we might do, but the majority leader will not even allow us an opportunity to vote on that issue. By the way, it will also continue to create more jobs in America.

Here is what the majority leader has done. Since he has been majority leader, he has basically blocked any opportunity for Republicans to offer amendments on legislation 84 times—84 times—including 14 times just this year. He has shut us out. He has imposed the Reid gag rule and said: I don't care what the Constitution says. I don't care that you were elected by the people in your State to come here and be their voice and to offer their ideas on legislation. I don't care. We are not going to allow it, is what Majority Leader REID has said 84 times.

Then he has the audacity to impugn our motives this morning, to insult the job we are trying to do to represent our constituents. He calls that a filibuster. George Orwell wrote a book called "Nineteen Eighty-Four," where he talked about how people can twist the ordinary understanding of the English language in a way that is very dangerous. But I would suggest that no definition of filibuster could be derived from the fact the majority leader has imposed his gag rule, has shut us out of the legislative process, and denied us the opportunity to do what the Constitution guarantees. He calls that a filibuster? Give me a break.

So the majority leader comes to the floor this morning and says: If you are watching C-SPAN or if you happen to be visiting the Capitol and are in the gallery, all you are going to see are quorum calls. You are going to hear nothing but crickets on the Senate floor because there is not going to be anything happening there.

The reason that is true, in large part, is because he has shut down the process. He has denied us a voice. He has denied us an opportunity to participate in the legislative process the Constitution talks about in the provisions I just read.

I am probably not going to persuade Majority Leader REID about the error of his ways because I don't think he cares. I don't think he cares. It is not

going to affect whether he is reelected in Nevada, perhaps, and there is nothing the minority can do, given the fact the majority leader has extraordinary power under the Senate rules and under the precedent of the Senate. He can get away with it, if the Senate allows it, if the public allows it. But that is why it is important to come to the Senate floor and expose this fraud for what it is. It is a fraud.

The majority leader is trying to deceive the American people into thinking that by speaking out against this gag rule we somehow are an obstacle to passing legislation. We have certain responsibilities to the people who sent us, and that responsibility does not include sitting down and shutting up when we are being run over by a freight train by the name of Senator HARRY REID. It is outrageous. It is outrageous.

Thanks to the majority leader we likely will not have any amendments on this piece of legislation. I think at last count there were roughly 30 ideas we had that we would like to offer amendments on. We have even proposed to Majority Leader REID that we would take those 30 or 40 amendments and talk among ourselves and maybe we can reduce those to 5 or so relevant amendments—items that have to do with energy, with jobs, with national security. His answer is, no, forget it.

Instead of accepting responsibility for his decision, he blames us for filibustering. What does he expect us to do? To be quiet? To sit in our offices while he runs this railroad that used to be known as the world's greatest deliberative body, runs over our rights and the rights of the people we represent? Well, we are not going to sit down and shut up. We are not.

Back in my younger days I used to be a practicing lawyer. I would be hired by a client to come into court and make an argument on their behalf, to give them the representation they were entitled to under our system of justice. I had my argument and the opposing party had their argument and their lawyers and their witnesses, and they came in and presented it before a jury of either 6 people or 12 people, depending on the court you were in, and we would ultimately settle that dispute between the parties, kind of like the difference of opinion we have here on how the Senate ought to operate and what business we ought to be conducting.

In court, when you have a dispute between opposing parties, the judge and the jury who are impartial will listen to the facts, and the judge will decide what the law is that applies in that kind of case, and then you will have a verdict. And that law, with the judgment the judge signs incorporating those findings of fact by the jury, is how the case is decided.

How does that work here in the Senate? What is the analogy? The best analogy I can think of is that we will indeed have a verdict, but it is going to be by the voters in the midterm elections come November.

My only conclusion is that the majority leader must be afraid of having this sort of robust debate because he knows it will expose some of his members to votes they may have a hard time explaining back home. There actually may be some accountability, Heaven forbid. So his answer is to shut down the Senate. It is very sad.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, with each passing week we are finding out more and more about institutional failures within the Department of Veterans Affairs. We recently learned that the Phoenix VA system had a secret waiting list designed to conceal a massive backlog of delayed appointments, and that some of the veterans who were put on this secret waiting list actually died while waiting to get the treatment they deserved.

Now we are learning that staffers at a VA outpatient clinic in Fort Collins, CO, were deliberately showing their clerks how to create fraudulent appointment records. In the meantime, there are still more than 589,000 VA pension and compensation claims pending nationwide, and a majority of them are backlogged according to the VA's own criteria, which is more than 4 months.

Every day it seems as though we learn of a new part of this scandal because whistleblowers stepped forward and said: Yes, that was happening where I worked too.

Yesterday, the Austin American-Statesman published a story entitled "VA employee: Wait list data was manipulated in Austin, San Antonio." The story says:

A Department of Veterans Affairs scheduling clerk has accused VA officials in Austin and San Antonio of manipulating medical appointment data in an attempt to hide long wait times to see doctors and psychiatrists, the American-Statesman has learned. . . . the 40-year-old VA employee said he and others were "verbally directed by lead clerks, supervisors, and during training" to ensure that wait times at the Austin VA Outpatient Clinic and the North Central Federal Clinic in San Antonio were "as close to zero days as possible."

The medical support assistant . . . said he and other clerks achieved that by falsely logging patients' desired appointment dates to sync with appointment openings. That made it appear there was little to no wait time, and ideally less than the department's goal of three months.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Austin American-Statesman, May 6, 2014]

VA EMPLOYEE: WAIT LIST DATA WAS MANIPULATED IN AUSTIN, SAN ANTONIO (By Jeremy Schwartz)

A Department of Veterans Affairs scheduling clerk has accused VA officials in Austin and San Antonio of manipulating medical appointment data in an attempt to hide long wait times to see doctors and psychiatrists, the American-Statesman has learned.

In communications with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, a federal investigative body that protects government whistleblowers, the 40-year-old VA employee said he and others were "verbally directed by lead clerks, supervisors, and during training" to ensure that wait times at the Austin VA Outpatient Clinic and the North Central Federal Clinic in San Antonio were "as close to zero days as possible."

The medical support assistant, who is seeking whistleblower protection and has been advised to remain anonymous by federal investigators, said he and other clerks achieved that by falsely logging patients' desired appointment dates to sync with appointment openings. That made it appear there was little to no wait time, and ideally less than the department's goal of 14 days. In reality, the clerk said, wait times for appointments could be as long as three months.

The claims echo recent allegations that VA officials in Arizona and Colorado similarly manipulated wait time data or maintained secret lists to obscure lengthy wait times for medical care. Three top administrators at the VA medical center in Phoenix have since been put on leave and the VA's inspector general is conducting an investigation into an alleged secret wait list at the facility. A retired doctor at the Phoenix facility told CNN that more than 40 veterans there died while waiting for an appointment.

This week, the American Legion, the nation's largest veterans service organization, called for the resignation of VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, citing several issues, including wait times for medical care.

When asked to respond to the allegations, local VA officials said in a statement they would review their scheduling practices, but didn't directly address the claims.

"In light of the charges recently made against the Phoenix VA, (director of the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System Sallie) Houser-Hanfelder has made it clear she does not endorse hidden lists of any kind," the statement reads. "To ensure the integrity of the health care system, she has directed each service chief to certify they have reviewed each of their sections and scheduling practices to ensure VA scheduling policies are being followed. All staff who schedule appointments have also been instructed to have refresher training to make sure policies are clear and being followed accurately."

U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, called for emergency hearings after learning of the Texas allegations.

"This is yet another deeply troubling account, and I'm afraid we have not heard the last of gross mismanagement within the VA and deception by VA bureaucrats," Cornyn said in a statement. "It is time for urgent steps to be taken that match the gravity of this situation."

He also called for Shinseki to step down.

"It is absolutely disgusting to think that another VA facility would be cooking the books like this, especially in our own community. The House of Representatives is digging into these allegations against the VA from every direction possible and we will get to the bottom of this," said U.S. Rep. John Carter, R-Round Rock.

The Texas clerk said he saw the scheduling manipulation when he worked at the Austin VA Outpatient Clinic from December 2012 to December 2013 and when he transferred to the San Antonio clinic, where he still works. He said he also saw similar maneuvers at the Waco medical center earlier in 2012.

"If you had any appointments showing over a 14-day waiting period you were given a report the next day to fix it immediately," said the clerk, a disabled veteran who served in the Army from 2002 to 2011. Fixing it

meant recording the requested appointment date closer to the available opening, he added.

The clerk said that scheduling clerks in Austin were also instructed specifically not to use a VA tool called the Electronic Waiting List, which is designed to help veterans waiting for appointments get slots created when other veterans cancel their appointments.

"The failure to use (the electronic waiting list) may also pose a substantial and specific danger to public health, because patients who should be included on the EWL are not receiving more timely appointments when they become available," according to the clerk's communications with the Office of Special Counsel.

While the VA's massive backlogs of disability benefits claims have garnered much attention in recent years, investigators have also increasingly discovered problems with access to VA medical care.

In 2012, the VA inspector general found that the department had vastly overcounted how many veterans were waiting 14 days or less for a mental health evaluation. While the VA claimed a 95 percent rate in meeting the two-week target, investigators found that the real number was 49 percent, with the remaining 51 percent of patients waiting about 50 days for an evaluation.

That same year, a scheduling clerk at a VA medical center in New Hampshire told a Senate committee that staffers there were instructed to obscure wait times for mental health help by using a method similar to that described by the Texas clerk.

"The overriding objective at our facility from top management on down was to meet our numbers," Nick Tolentino told the committee. "Performance measures are well intended, but are linked to executive pay and bonuses and as a result create incentive to find loopholes that allow facilities to meet its numbers without actually providing services."

Last week, the House voted to ban bonuses for VA executives, a move opposed by VA leadership. Shinseki has defended the bonus system, saying it is necessary to "attract and retain the best leaders."

Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, which is also investigating delays in VA medical care, blasted the VA on Tuesday for not taking better advantage of its authority to send patients who are waiting months for appointments to private medical providers.

"Whether we're talking about allegations of secret lists, data manipulation or actual lists of interminable waits, the question VA leaders must answer is 'Why isn't the department using the tools it has been given—fee-based care being one of them—to ensure veterans receive timely medical care?'" he said.

Mr. CORNYN. Scandals such as these confirm the VA lacks safeguards against official abuses, and it also lacks accountability—the kind of accountability that would ensure American veterans get the care and support they need in a timely fashion.

In the wake of the Phoenix revelations—and now, more urgently after what happened at Fort Collins and now reports of abuses at San Antonio and Austin, perhaps—I have called on the majority leader to hold hearings on these scandals, and I reiterate that call today.

I also reiterate my call for VA Secretary Eric Shinseki to resign his position and to let someone else take on the reforms necessary to get the VA back on track.

As I said yesterday, and as the American Legion noted, Secretary Shinseki is an American patriot who did multiple combat tours in Vietnam and has devoted his life to serving his Nation. He deserves nothing but our respect for that service. But, unfortunately, the VA scandals on his watch have been so numerous and so outrageous that they demand immediate accountability, and it has become clear to me that Secretary Shinseki is not the right person for the job.

He has been in charge of the Department more than 5 years. Under his watch, many of the VA's problems have gotten worse, not better. These problems call for new leadership and a new direction.

As Dan Dellinger of the American Legion said on Monday:

There needs to be a change, and that change needs to occur at the top.

I emphasize again the urgency of the situation.

I know the President yesterday was talking about the urgency of dealing with climate change. I hope the President and Congress would act with at least the same kind of urgency the President was arguing for when it comes to climate change, when it comes to our veterans—some of whom are dying, waiting to get the treatment they are entitled to.

What the VA needs is full-scale institutional reforms which introduce much stronger safeguards against administrative abuses and much greater accountability for senior officials. Because, let's face it, the VA's problems go well beyond a few rogue health care personnel and administrators in Phoenix and Fort Collins, CO.

At a time when American veterans are facing enormous physical and psychological and financial challenges, the Federal Government is letting them down. Don't take my word for it. According to a recent survey of war vets from Afghanistan and Iraq:

Nearly 1.5 million of those who served in the wars believe the needs of their fellow vets are not being met by the government.

One Iraq veteran—a former Army staff sergeant named Christopher Steavens—told the survey group he had been trying to get health care and financial relief for more than a half year, and had yet to hear back from the VA. They hadn't even gotten back to him and responded. He said:

When I raised my right hand and said, "I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America," when I gave them everything I could, I expect the same in return. . . . It's ridiculous that I've been waiting seven months just to be examined by a doctor—absolutely ridiculous.

Sergeant Steavens is right. It is ridiculous. But it is more than that. It is disgraceful, and it dishonors the brave service our men and women in uniform have given on our behalf. It is past time for us to get serious about fixing the problem.

Again, to underscore the urgency of these issues, the survey I mentioned a

moment ago found that one out of every two Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans says they know a fellow servicemember who has attempted or committed suicide. One out of two knows somebody who has tried or has successfully committed suicide, and our message to the veterans is: Just wait. Be quiet. Sit down. Shut up.

It is unacceptable. As I said earlier, Secretary Shinseki is an American patriot. But after 5 years as head of the Veterans' Administration, it is time for him to step down and make way for new leadership.

More important, it is past time for the Veterans' Administration to start honoring its promise to America's heroes. The status quo is unacceptable and no one disputes that. The only question is: Are we going to do something about it? Appointing a new Secretary would be a good start.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

TALWANI NOMINATION

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I rise today in support of the nomination of Indira Talwani to the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts. Ms. Talwani is a brilliant and accomplished attorney who will make an outstanding addition to our district court.

She is an American success story. Her parents were immigrants from India and Germany. If confirmed, she will be the first Asian-American district court judge in Massachusetts.

She has received honors throughout her career, and her background and experience unquestionably qualify her for the bench. She will be someone the people of Massachusetts, of New England, and our whole country can be proud of.

I believe she will be an objective, unbiased decisionmaker, and that is exactly what we need for our district court judges. I recommend her wholeheartedly to the Members of this body.

The Shaheen-Portman energy efficiency bill is going to be considered here today, and I recommend it to all of the Members of this body because it is a bill that has been developed across parties in a bipartisan way—across industries, across labor, across consumer groups.

This is a bill which on a bipartisan basis is going to lead to improvement in the building codes of the United States to reduce energy consumption, increases in the efficiency of industrial equipment to reduce energy consumption, to increase the energy efficiency of Federal buildings in our country to reduce energy consumption. None of it is being done on a mandatory basis. It is all done on a voluntary basis. That is why we have a consensus here today.

The consensus includes an understanding that this is going to create 190,000 new jobs in our country—from the Shaheen-Portman bill. It will save consumers \$16 billion per year. And it will cut carbon dioxide going into the

atmosphere, polluting our country and our world by the equivalent of 22 million automobiles per year by the year 2030.

These are benefits that are going to be maximized because we are going to start working smarter, not harder, just reducing the amount of energy we consume, reducing the amount of CO₂ we send into the atmosphere, and doing it on a voluntary basis—voluntary.

So let's have a vote here on the Senate floor. Let's just get it done. Let's agree on what it is that we know is going to help our country. We know it is going to create more jobs. But the Republicans say: No, we need a vote on the Keystone Pipeline. We need a vote on something that is highly controversial, and we demand that vote.

Majority Leader REID agrees to have a vote on the Keystone Pipeline—agrees to have a vote on the Keystone Pipeline. How controversial is that? Well, you are going to take the dirtiest oil in the world, coming down from Canada, build a pipeline through the United States, bring it down to Port Arthur, TX, which is a tax-free export zone, and then that oil is going to be exported out of the United States. Where are the benefits for the United States in this scenario? We take the environmental risk, the Canadians get the benefit of having the dirtiest oil in the world come through that pipeline, and then it is going to be exported out of the United States.

How do I know it is going to be exported out of the United States? Because I, as a member of the House of Representatives, had this amendment over and over brought to the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, and every time the American Petroleum Institute opposed it. Even though they say it is all about North American energy independence—ha-ha—when you have a vote, every Republican votes to keep that provision out of the bill so the oil can go out of the United States. So just stop this about "energy independence for North America" if you don't, as a part of the Keystone Pipeline, accept a provision where the oil has to stay here. Otherwise, what is the point? I will tell you what the point is. It is maximizing profit for the oil industry because they make more money when they sell the oil outside the United States. American consumers don't get the benefit of it, no. The world is going to get the benefit of it; the oil industry is; the Canadians are.

Majority Leader REID said: We will have a vote on that. We will have a vote on it.

And then what happens? We come back this week, and the Republicans say that is not enough. This nice energy efficiency bill is going to be the vehicle for even more highly controversial issues, which at the end of the day is all meant to do what? To kill the energy efficiency bill because it reduces the amount of CO₂ that goes into the atmosphere on a voluntary basis.

How do we know that? Well, we know it because their amendments go right

to the heart of what it is that we should all now finally accept. They want to have a vote and a big debate here that would prevent the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States of America from regulating greenhouse gases, from regulating global warming. That is the debate they want to have. They are saying: No energy efficiency bill—which everyone agrees on—unless we have a debate on whether our Environmental Protection Agency can regulate greenhouse gases.

It is 2014. It is 100 degrees in Kansas today. There are hurricanes, cyclones, the tides are rising, the water is warmer, and the storms are more intense. It is not just here, it is all across the planet. The scientists agree that there is global warming. Their amendment would prohibit the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating global warming pollution. That is what they call something that is reasonable.

We have a bill everyone agrees should pass, but after getting an agreement that the Keystone Pipeline would be debated, they just continue on down the pathway.

Yesterday the Obama administration released a third U.S. National Climate Assessment. From droughts in the West to deluges in the East, this new report shows that we are becoming the United States of climate change and that we must act in order to keep our Nation safe and strong.

Second, they want to attach a provision to massively expand our exports of natural gas. They want to take the natural gas that is being drilled for here in the United States and put it on ships and send it out of our country. The more natural gas we export out of our country, the higher the prices are going to be for natural gas in our country. It will be more expensive to generate electricity. It will be more expensive for manufacturers to make their products in our country. It will be more expensive for those who want to build natural gas buses and natural gas trucks to be able to do so.

That is something they want to do—export the natural gas of the United States to other countries. Does that make any sense? Is that the kind of noncontroversial discussion we should have at the time we have an energy efficiency bill that should go through? No, not at all. This is meant to dynamite the energy efficiency bill. That is what that amendment is all about.

Then they want to add a rider to the bill as well that will prohibit the EPA from even considering at any time in the future a price on carbon—or, for that matter, prohibiting anyone.

These are loaded, highly controversial amendments, all at their heart denying the reality of how much harm they will do to the United States. Meanwhile, the Koch brothers smile. They smile because they know it is all going to accomplish their principal goal: making sure no energy efficiency bill passes in the Senate this year, no

reduction in the amount of greenhouse gasses we are sending up. That is the agenda. It is going to be the agenda into the future for the Republican Party. It has been the agenda.

I look out and I see Republicans who have worked hard to put together this energy efficiency bill. I praise them for their willingness to come together on commonsense, reasonable provisions that reduce the amount of carbon going into the atmosphere on a voluntary basis by encouraging the creation of 190,000 new jobs in our country that Democrats and Republicans agree on. And I see this whole process getting hijacked by the Koch brothers, by the oil industry, by the natural gas industry that wants us to devolve into a big debate over science that is now completely and totally consensus not only here but around the planet.

The planet is running a fever. There are no emergency rooms for planets. We have to engage in preventive care to avoid the worst, most catastrophic impact of climate change on this watch we have here in the Senate. But, no, the process is being hijacked. You can see it here. They want to torpedo this process so that more oil, more coal, and more profits for the coal and oil companies become the agenda.

So all I can say, ladies and gentlemen, is that we are at a historic turning point. The headlines in the newspapers across this country and across this planet tell the story today: Climate risk growing. That is the consensus. That is the reality. That is what this energy efficiency bill is meant to deal with. And what will happen—and we are going to see it over and over—is we are going to have Member after Member on the Republican side get up and demand that we have a debate on something unrelated to this energy efficiency bill where there is a consensus. They want to take climate science that is a consensus around the planet and have another huge debate here on it. That is the tragedy of this.

The green generation, the young people in our country, they know this is the challenge of this generation. We as a nation have to stand up. A high percentage of that CO₂ in the atmosphere is red, white, and blue. We cannot preach temperance from a barstool. We cannot tell the rest of the world “you must do something” if we are not doing something. That is what the bill we should be debating here today would do on a bipartisan basis: reduce greenhouse gases, create 190,000 jobs, and do it all on a voluntary basis—too simple, too good, too clearly consistent with these two objectives of job creation and greenhouse gas reduction.

So I think what we are seeing is that the conserve in conservative no longer exists—not with the Koch brothers around. So this is now just going to be something that short-circuits the legislative process. It ensures that the energy efficiency bill is collateral damage because of their insistence on these amendments, when instead we have a

chance this week to say that we are going to move forward on a smart energy policy; that we will work smarter, not harder; that we should come together to pass this bill without these giveaways to the oil industry and to the coal industry so that we can create jobs and save energy. And I would recommend to my colleagues that is the correct historical position this Chamber should be in right now.

At this point, Madam President, I yield the back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

(The remarks of Mr. HATCH pertaining to the introduction of [S. 2301] are printed in today's RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, it is my understanding that the Senator from Missouri Mr. BLUNT will be recognized next for 10 minutes or so.

I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks by Senator BLUNT, I be recognized for up to 15 minutes.

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

Mr. INHOFE. I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I thank my good friend from Oklahoma for ensuring that I have the time to talk for a few minutes about an issue he and I feel very strongly about; that is, the best use of American energy and what American energy means to American families.

It seems to me the request our side of the aisle is making is not at all unreasonable. It has been 7 years since the Senate had a real debate on energy. The Shaheen-Portman bill creates that opportunity, but suddenly we were told: This bill is so good already. Why do you want to continue to talk about ways to make it even better? There are very few things beyond energy and health care which I can talk about for a substantial period of time—and I hope to talk about health care sometime between now and the end of the week. Energy has the same kind of impact on families that health care has.

The majority leader wants to control every debate every week in the Senate,

which means nothing happens. That is not the way the Senate works. Traditionally, any Member of the Senate can introduce any amendment they want on any bill at any time. However, that is not the way the House works. I served in the House. The majority runs the House, and the Rules Committee in the House is nine in the majority and four in the minority. It is pretty hard to lose a vote in a 9-to-4 committee. I think that is why the committee was established that way.

The Senate has never been run that way. Now we have a one-man rules committee that wants to decide on every bill and every rule which comes up. This gag rule where Senators can't talk about the topics they want to discuss is something that didn't used to happen in the Senate, but it is now a daily and weekly part of the Senate.

We are now at the point where we go to the majority leader and ask: On the energy bill, could we have five amendments that deal with energy? That is so far from how the Senate and the Constitution was designed to be or the Senate practice has been. It is pretty hard to believe that Senators on the minority are reduced to the point that we have to go to the majority leader and ask: Mr. Leader, could we have five amendments that deal with energy?

When the Energy bill was on the floor of the Senate 7 years ago—the last time the Senate dealt with energy—every Senator could have every amendment they wanted on anything they wanted to talk about because that was the Senate. One of the prices we paid for that 6-year term was we might have to vote on some things we would rather not vote on. Now we have the 6-year term, but the majority leader doesn't want us to vote on things that the majority may not want to vote on, and there are probably people in the minority who don't want to vote either. Not voting is a pretty safe route apparently politically, but it is not the best route for the country.

I would like to see a real debate on energy, and one of the issues I would like to see debated is the amendment I offered to this bill to have a point of order to be sure that at least 60 Senators would have to approve a carbon tax.

I offered a similar amendment to the budget last year, in 2013, and 52 of my colleagues agreed with me, and we had a majority vote of 53 who said we don't want to have a carbon tax, but if we do have a carbon tax, it needs to be extraordinary because it affects everybody's utility bill. It affects everybody's ability to pay that bill. It affects whether a person has a job with a paycheck that allows them to pay that bill. Fifty-three of my colleagues, including myself, said we don't want to do that.

Several people who voted against that amendment in 2013 have had a hard time explaining why they were against it, so I thought maybe we would vote on it again. I think we

would have more than 53 votes this time. If we don't vote this time, we are more likely to have a lot more than 53 votes next time because the American people get it.

For the vast majority of the country, half of the utilities come from coal. Rules that create a carbon tax—the simple focus of that is coal, and the focus is fossil fuels generally. The Germans are buying resources from us because they are abandoning their nuclear facilities and converting to coal-fired powerplants.

We have a lot of coal and, more importantly, we have a lot of coal-powered plants. If we could say, let's not use coal, but our utility facilities work just like they work without having to take millions of dollars for new investments, that would have a different kind of impact on families than saying, let's not only not use coal, let's build a new powerplant everywhere they have a coal powerplant because otherwise the utility bills will double when we build a new powerplant. When we build a new powerplant, the utility bill is going to double.

Also, why would we want to have even the access to a policy that would allow people's utility bills to double? Middle-income families, low-income families are the hardest impacted by that, especially in States such as my State, where 80 percent of the utilities come from coal; but, again, a majority of the utilities come from coal in a majority of the landmass of the country. Our rates would rise 19 percent in the first year with a carbon tax or the kinds of rules the regulators are trying to put in place that would have a carbon tax-like impact, and in the decade after that first year they would double.

One doesn't have to be very smart to multiply a utility bill by two. If the boss showed someone the utility bill at work, they wouldn't have to be a genius to multiply that by two, and they wouldn't have to be a genius to figure out that if the utility bill doubles, the job that helps them pay their utility bill at home might go away as well.

It would cause significant job loss. It would cause households to pay more for all of the energy they have. They already pay a lot for energy. For the 40 million American households that earn less than \$30,000 a year, they already spend more than 20 percent of their income on energy. Do we want those families to continue to see that bill go up and every month wonder what they could have less of so they can pay more for the same utilities, and not because it had to be that way but because the government decided it wanted it to be that way? The households that will be the last households to get the new energy-efficient appliances, the last families to get the new windows and the better doors and more insulation in the ceiling, those are the families impacted in a dramatic way. Those are the families who live in houses where they have to think: Which room can we no longer afford to heat or no longer afford to

cool in the heating and cooling months of the year, when we will have to close that door and roll up the throw rug and put it at the base of the door so the heat and cooling no longer impacts that room? Do we want families to do that so we can have a carbon tax, so we can have bad energy policies?

We can do a better job by making American energy more affordable and more accessible, not making it less so.

What is wrong with having that? I heard my friend from Massachusetts say earlier that we are insisting on a controversial amendment on the Keystone Pipeline. So what. What is controversial about it? A majority of us say we are for it. Controversy would mean people must feel strongly the other way, so they can vote against it.

Let's let the American people know where we stand on these issues. Are we going to do smart things about more American energy or not? The energy future of the country is so good that in spite of everything the government has done to slow it down, it still has been a major economic driver.

I would like to see us vote on the Keystone Pipeline. I would like to see us vote on the carbon tax, whether that is a good idea or not. I would like to see us vote on what kinds of facilities we need to secure our energy position in the world economy.

There shouldn't be anything wrong with these amendments. Senators shouldn't be stopped with a gag rule from the majority leader's office of what we can and cannot talk about. The idea that we can't have energy amendments on an energy bill should embarrass every single Senator here and concern everybody we work for. Hopefully, we will be able to move forward with debate on an energy bill that is actually about energy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, let me first say to my good friend from Missouri, I plan to talk about energy, the very thing he is talking about. If we go back and look logically, if we are dependent upon fossil fuels for 75 percent of our ability to run this machine called America, and we extract that, what is going to happen? I think we all know what is going to happen and I think people need to be forewarned.

I am going to tee this up by talking a little bit about President Obama's climate assessment meeting he had yesterday. All of these people were talking about the world coming to an end, the report he came out with—let me, first of all, ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of my remarks, the Senator from Delaware be recognized.

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

Mr. INHOFE. The whole idea in this report by design is to spark fear in the American people so they will go along with the administration in implementing their policies that will kill

fossil fuels and leave us with nothing but a broken economy. When I say broken economy, if, in fact—and no one would refute this—we are dependent upon fossil fuels—coal, oil, and gas—for 75 percent of the energy to run America, then what is going to happen to our economy if we extract 75 percent? I think we all know logically what is going to happen.

In the words of White House counselor John Podesta this morning: “The American public doesn’t feel that sense of urgency about the impacts of climate change and I think this report will help influence that.” That is nothing but an admission. The whole reason for this report is to try to resurrect the issue of global warming. We heard my good friend from Massachusetts talking about that. He is very knowledgeable, and I will refer to some of his activities in a minute.

But keep in mind, this is John Podesta. It is the same John Podesta who is representing some of the terrorist regime from Sri Lanka that is no longer in effect. He is the same one who ran the White House during the Clinton years. So he comes from a very partisan perspective. But nonetheless, I appreciate the fact that he is admitting this is the reason for the climate assessment President Obama did yesterday, because he wants to try to bring this up again.

I can remember back when the polling showed that global warming was either the No. 1 or No. 2 of the environmental issues in America. Do we know where it is now? It is No. 10, according to the last Gallup poll. So people have forgotten about it. People have caught on. They have seen the scientists come in and refute all this IPCC stuff that the United Nations has been putting forth for a long period of time. I think it is a recognition that people have caught on to this and it is no longer the issue they want it to be.

Whether it is a drought or a flood, high temperatures, low temperatures, you can’t find a job, you are finding more allergic reactions, then the White House blames it on global warming. Fear has always been a tactic the administration and other global warming alarmists have used to spur people into action. Time and time again, when the American people learn the details and the costs of the solutions to global warming that they contend exist, they don’t want anything to do with it—and the costs are enormous.

Congress last debated global warming when my good friend, now Senator MARKEY, was in the House of Representatives. It was the Waxman-Markey cap-and-trade bill. This bill would have cost, according to Charles River Associates—and I think people recognize them as authentic—between \$300 billion and \$400 billion a year. That is the cost. I would contend this would be the largest tax increase in the history of this country. That is consistent with other analyses. One was the Wharton Group and many of the scientists there

who were making evaluations came out with the same thing: between \$300 billion and \$400 billion a year. MIT came out with about the same amount of between \$300 billion to \$400 billion a year. The cost estimate has been the same over the last 15 years since we first started debating this issue. I don’t think anyone is challenging that.

But what is important—and this is kind of in the weeds, but we have to talk about this: I applaud Senator MARKEY for at least the levels of pollution—of emissions, I should say—that come from different sources that he was wanting to regulate, and that was those with 25,000 tons of CO₂ emissions or more. That would be, quite frankly, the major emitters, the refineries and all of that. Here is the problem we have today. It is far worse than the Waxman-Markey bill would have been, because it wouldn’t call for the regulation of just those entities that emit 25,000 tons or more, but the same as the Clean Air Act.

The Clean Air Act has a threshold of 250 tons of greenhouse gases a year. Stop and think about that: If it costs between \$300 billion to \$400 billion to regulate the emitters who emit 25,000 tons of CO₂ a year, how much more if we regulate everyone with 250 tons? It has never been calculated. It would be very difficult. But we are talking about billions and billions of dollars more. So the regulations are far worse.

The first of these regulations now being developed is the New Source Performance Standards for newly constructed powerplants. The rule would essentially make it illegal to build new coal-fired powerplants. That is what it was designed to do.

The next step would be to take the existing powerplants—those that are employing hundreds of thousands of people in America today—and they would be out of a job. So that would go to the refining industry, and so forth, and establish new regulations for each and every industry. These greenhouse gas regulations mark the latest attempt by the EPA to destroy affordable and reliable electricity and energy supplies that have been the hallmark of our economy for a long period of time. They are already doing it in other areas too. It is not just regulating the greenhouse gas emissions or CO₂ emissions; it is other regulations that are unbearable.

This one right here—they are talking about changing the ocean regulation. This chart is an interesting one because this shows that virtually every county in America would be out of attainment with their new goals. In my State of Oklahoma, we have 77 counties. All 77 counties would be out of attainment if they are able to do that.

In 2011, the EPA finalized its utility MACT. By the way, that stands for maximum achievable control technology. That is what we are talking about. So they passed this. Now it is passed. It is history now. They finalized utility MACT with a rule that

costs over \$100 million and would result in 1.65 million lost jobs.

The EPA put this rule out without even considering the cost of it, saying it wasn’t required to do so. In other words, the law does not say they are required to say what it costs. I take issue with that. They estimated the rule would result in the retirement of less than 10,000 megawatts of electricity generation, but today we know the power companies around the country have announced the retirements totaling more than 50,000. So they are off by 500 percent. Fifty thousand megawatts in direct response to the EPA regulation.

By the way, when we had the utility MACT, I filed a CRA, and this is something I want to make sure people are aware of, and certainly my colleagues and friends on the other side of the aisle. On all of these regulations, when they reach the point where the regulation is final—and we know for a fact it is going to cost dollars and it is going to cost jobs—I am going to file a CRA. A CRA is a Congressional Review Act. A CRA provides that if there is a regulation—and I hear so often my colleagues in the Senate will say to their constituents, Don’t blame me for these regulations because that is the regulatory—that is the EPA and other regulators doing it. But a CRA forces them to take an issue. So all one has to do is find 30 people in the Senate, have them sign a CRA, file the CRA, and then it is simply a simple majority—51. In the case of this utility MACT, I only lacked three votes for stopping that rule. So we anticipate that we are going to be able to stop a lot of these rules.

In about 10 days, the EPA is poised to propose another new rule, the 316(b) cooling water intake rule. This rule is designed to protect fish from being caught and killed in nets designed to prevent them from entering powerplant systems. While the rule doesn’t have any human health benefits, it is expected to cost industry over \$100 billion in compliance costs, which, of course, will be passed on to everyone in America who ends up paying these bills.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation, which is called NERC, has warned that this rule will have a far worse impact on electricity affordability and reliability than the utility MACT did. We know it will.

In fact, the FERC Commissioner recently said that because of EPA’s rules, the United States is likely to see rolling electricity blackouts over the summer months in the next few years as demand for electricity outstrips the supply remaining after all of the powerplant shutdowns that are slated to occur in response to EPA’s rules.

The EPA has been systematically distorting the true cost of its regulations for years, and I have been raising this as an issue for some time now, but it has been very difficult to air them out before the entire Senate simply because at this point the sole goal of the

Democrats seems to be to protect their majority.

If we look at this chart, this was prior to the 2012 election. What we found they were doing, prior to the 2012 election, was postponing many of these very onerous regulations because they knew we would be doing a CRA and the public would know who is responsible for these. They had postponed this. This is a report I put out in October 2012, and that was to try to force the administration to not wait until after the election to come out with their rules. That is what they did.

They are doing it again. Last week I released documents revealing that the EPA intentionally delayed the release of its greenhouse gas new source performance standards—that is the NSPS—by 66 days in order to avoid it being finalized before the midterm elections—the same thing as 2012.

I also sent a letter to Gina McCarthy, who is the Director of the Environmental Protection Agency, asking why the rule was delayed, especially when she had previously told me it was the result of a backlog in the Federal Register. In other words, she was saying: The Federal Register did not post this rule until 66 days after we gave it to them. We checked with the Federal Register, and they said that is absolutely false. They have an immediate turnaround for these rules.

So now I am waiting for a response to that letter. I do not want to use the “L” word. I know there is a lot of pressure put on the employees and certainly the Director of the EPA to try to minimize what the public feels is going to be the cost of these regulations.

Had the EPA stuck with its original timeline of finalizing this rule by September 20 of this year, then I would have been able to work with my colleagues to force a Congressional Review Act vote to overturn the rule just weeks before the election. Then people would know the cost of these things.

But what we could do right now is vote on a few of the amendments. Our Senator from Missouri was talking about these amendments. We have a bill that is coming up. We have amendments that should be considered—all having to do with energy, so they are all appropriate amendments to offer, as he articulated for about 10 minutes a few minutes ago.

I have some amendments that would do this. He mentioned one of them that he and I are together on. But one of my amendments is amendment No. 2977, entitled the “Energy Tax Prevention Act of 2014.” It simply prohibits the EPA from promulgating any greenhouse gas emissions regulations to combat climate change because they are denying this is the reason they are doing it. Of course we know what has happened to the science they are relying on through the United Nations that has now been refuted.

The second amendment I have is amendment No. 2979. It would prevent

the EPA from issuing any new Clean Air Act regulations—such as those on climate change—until it complies with section 321(a) of the Clean Air Act. Let’s keep in mind, this is the Clean Air Act, as shown on this chart. We are talking about decades ago. This is what the Environmental Protection Agency is supposed to do:

The Administrator shall conduct continuing evaluations of potential loss or shifts of employment which may result from the administration or enforcement of the provision of this chapter. . . .

It is saying they are supposed to already tell the public what the cost is in terms of jobs and money. That is the law, but they are not obeying the law. So I have an amendment that puts teeth in it and says you cannot have any new rules until you comply with section 321(a) of the Clean Air Act. Very reasonable, and it is the law today.

Unfortunately, the EPA is not interested in doing this. With the Utility MACT rule, it completely dismissed the rule’s cost and did not consider it when putting out the rule.

The EPA acted in contradiction to Supreme Court precedents that decisionmakers are required to “weigh advantages against disadvantages, and disadvantages can be seen in terms of costs.” That is the U.S. Supreme Court.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has consumed 15 minutes.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be given 5 more minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. INHOFE. I have to get to the last part. Rather than to face these issues head-on, I am going to share something that happened last year and then again this year. There is a very wealthy person named Tom Steyer. Tom Steyer has a mansion that overlooks the Golden Gate Bridge. He had a fundraiser for Barack Obama last year, raising a lot of money, but the one I am more concerned about is the fundraiser he had when he announced—this is just within the last month—Tom Steyer, a very wealthy person, said he was going to personally donate \$50 million and raise an additional \$50 million to try to do two things. One is to resurrect this whole idea on global warming since the people do not care about it anymore. As a result of that, we had an all-night vigil. Remember that? That was right after Tom Steyer made his announcement.

The second thing he is mandating is to kill the Keystone Pipeline. There is a lot of money out there. The regulatory burdens already being placed on this country are enormous, and the cost of regulations are, perhaps arguably, the worst problem facing this country.

Last week the Competitive Enterprise Institute published a major report calculating the cost of the Presi-

dent’s regulations at \$1.86 trillion. To put that in perspective, Canada’s entire GDP is \$1.82 trillion. India’s is the same amount. So that is what the cost would be, according to the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

People know what has happened to the military with this administration, they know what has happened to energy, but the cost of these regulations is something that is going to have to be addressed.

Lastly, I would say this. I know there are people out there who legitimately believe greenhouse gas is causing global warming and the world is going to come to an end, but I would suggest this: Lisa Jackson was the Administrator—chosen by Barack Obama—the first Administrator we had for the EPA. I asked her this question, on the record, live on TV. I said: Madam Administrator, if we were to pass bills like the Markey-Waxman bill or regulate by regulation the CO₂ in the United States of America, would this have the effect of lowering the CO₂ emissions worldwide? She said: No, because that is not where the problem is. It is in China. It is in India. It is in Mexico.

In other words, if you believe—as I do not believe—but if you believe CO₂ is going to bring about the end of the world, then even if we do something in this country, it is not going to solve the problem. Arguably, it would make the problem worse because as we lose our manufacturing base, they are out seeking electricity and energy from countries where they do not have any of these regulations, and that would have the effect of increasing, not decreasing, emissions of CO₂.

With that, I yield the floor and thank my friend for not objecting to my additional time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

BULLETPROOF VEST PARTNERSHIP

Mr. COONS. Madam President, our Nation’s police officers work fearlessly and tirelessly every day to protect our families and to keep our communities safe. As we get ready to honor their service during National Police Week, the least we can do is stand by them and ensure, as they are doing their job, they are able to do it as safely as possible.

Every day more than 1 million law enforcement officers across this country accept risks to their personal safety. As they leave their families at dawn and head off to their jobs, they know and their families know they accept, as a part of their mission of public safety service, the risk that they may not come home that night.

We owe it to them to do what we can to make that service just a little bit safer, to ensure that more of them come home safely, week in and week out, year in and year out. Providing officers with bulletproof vests is one of the most effective ways we can contribute to that desired outcome.

I have come to the floor because I share the deep frustration of my good

friend Chairman PATRICK LEAHY over the continued inability of this body to overcome the objection of one Senator and move forward to renew, on a bipartisan basis, the Federal Bulletproof Vest Partnership.

Yesterday, Chairman LEAHY gave the Senate another opportunity to take up and reauthorize this partnership through a unanimous consent request. He is trying to move forward a bill we have already voted out of the Senate Judiciary Committee on a bipartisan basis. Yet it was blocked again by objections raised by a colleague, the Senator from Oklahoma.

For 14 years the Federal Bulletproof Vest Partnership has been an important way for our Nation to equip local police departments with one of the most effective ways to keep our officers safe, but this needs to be a lasting commitment. This needs to be an enduring partnership. As new officers join, they need to be fitted for new vests. Because vests wear out and do not last forever, we need to ensure they can be replaced.

We know bulletproof vests work. Since 1987 bulletproof vests have saved the lives of more than 3,000 police officers across this country. I am proud to continue in the tradition of my predecessor, now-Vice President JOE BIDEN, in supporting local law enforcement and in supporting this initiative.

In my home State of Delaware, this partnership has provided our officers with thousands of vests over the last 14 years, including more than 3,800 over just the last 5 years.

The Delaware community has, unfortunately, seen up close why these vests are so important. It was 13 years ago that Dover Police Sergeant David Spicer was trying to make an arrest—an arrest he successfully completed—when the suspect with whom he was wrestling pulled out a gun from a hidden pocket and shot him at close range four times.

As Sergeant Spicer bled out—he lost nearly half the blood in his body before effecting the arrest—because he was wearing a vest provided to him through the Federal Bulletproof Vest Partnership his life was saved.

I was honored to welcome Dover Police Sergeant David Spicer here 2 years ago on a previous effort at reauthorizing this long bipartisan bill.

More recently—just last February of 2013—at the New Castle County Courthouse, in my hometown of Wilmington, a gunman unleashed a stream of bullets into the courthouse lobby, tragically killing two. On what was a devastating morning in the courthouse lobby, two lives were also saved—those of Sergeant Michael Manley and Corporal Steve Rinehart—Capitol Police officers who were wearing bulletproof vests funded in part through this Federal Bulletproof Vest Partnership.

The very real results of this Federal-State partnership, of this investment in keeping the men and women of law enforcement safe in the line of duty, are hard to ignore.

With many police departments at the local level facing shrinking budgets, this bulletproof vest partnership makes vests, which cost more than \$500 apiece, more affordable, ensuring officers are outfitted with the most current and effective and appropriate protection possible.

In fact, the program specifically prioritizes smaller departments that often struggle to afford vests and do not provide vests or require vests for their officers. It is exactly in these smaller and more rural agencies and departments where line-of-duty deaths due to gunfire had historically been high.

This is critical. As a county executive in my previous role in local government in Delaware, I saw firsthand how officers in smaller agencies often struggle to have current, up-to-date, and effective bulletproof vests.

In addition, this is a program that is a 50-50 match with Federal and local money. How could anyone oppose this program that saves thousands of police officers' lives, that extends the reach of the Federal-State partnership in keeping our communities safer, and that is such a wise investment in saving lives that matters so much to our communities?

A colleague objected yesterday, has objected before, and will object again. I am reminded of so many times when a bipartisan bill comes to this floor and dies due to objection after objection after objection, and at times I struggle to understand the rationale. In his objection yesterday, my colleague raised an argument that somehow this program, which promotes public safety, does not fit within the authority granted to Congress under the Constitution, that it is not part of the enumerated powers of Congress.

I disagree. Whether you ascribe to the narrow Madisonian view of the general welfare clause in the Constitution or follow an expansive or Hamiltonian view—as our Supreme Court has done since 1937, when they affirmed the constitutionality of the Social Security Act in *Helvering v. Davis*—this is not a close call.

If providing Federal-State partnership money for bulletproof vests goes beyond the enumerated powers of this Congress, what does that mean for public health, for investments in partnerships with State public health agencies to prevent pandemics and flus? What does this mean for the Interstate Highway System? What does this mean for hundreds of different partnerships where, in a cost-effective way, we work together with communities and States all over this country to extend and improve the general welfare of the people of the United States?

To my colleague's argument today on this floor that this is solely a State or local responsibility, the reality is that the Bulletproof Vest Partnership does not replace local action with Federal action. It ensures a Federal partnership, an investment, to help police de-

partments struggling to meet the safety needs, the equipment needs of their officers, to act when they otherwise cannot.

In my view, the partnership is even more important because it is about more than just handing out dollars and vests. It ensures all vests are compliant with National Institute of Justice safety standards. Only the Federal Government has the resources to do that level of analytical work. It is no more reasonable for us to expect every State to have their own National Institutes of Health to do cancer research or for every State to have a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Having one coordinated national program to ensure that these bulletproof vests are as effective as possible at saving the lives of the men and women of law enforcement just makes sense. In my view, the denial of the Federal role where it is necessary and efficient would take us back to the Articles of Confederation, a very cramped and narrow view of the appropriate role of our national government, one which our forefathers found unworkable two centuries ago.

The truth is plain. Without this program, we leave police officers without lifesaving vests in the line of fire, in the line of duty. For us to fail to stand up for them, when they stand up for us each and every day, I find outrageous. This is the way the world looked before Chairman LEAHY and Republican Senator Campbell created this program jointly back in 1999.

In that world, before there was a Federal Bulletproof Vest Partnership, there would today be two more Delaware families without a hero at their dinner table tonight. Not on my watch. That will not happen as long as I am here to stand for the men and women of law enforcement and to promote the Federal role, an appropriate Federal role, in standing side by side with State and local governments to provide the equipment the men and women of law enforcement need.

This partnership expired back in 2012. Fortunately, we have been able to fund it through short-term appropriations. This is a tiny program in the scope of this Federal Government: \$22 million a year. The entire Federal investment in local law enforcement is less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the entire Federal Government. Yet it enables standards and leveraging of the type I described that extends the reach of law enforcement and improves the safety of the men and women who put their lives on the line for us. Without authorization, this program becomes unsustainable short term and does not allow us to improve the program year in and year out. The reauthorization bill that was passed by the Judiciary Committee this Congress extends the program another 5 years, ensures its consistency, but makes important reforms to save money, as well.

It prevents localities from using other Federal grants as their matching

funds. It takes action to eliminate the Justice Department's backlogs. The bill would require agencies using the program to have mandatory wear policies, and would, for the first time, ensure these lifesaving vests are fitted appropriately for women, at a time when there are more and more women in law enforcement and more often at the very front line of protecting our communities.

This bill is fiscally responsible. Enacting this bill is a moral responsibility. Police officers work to keep us safe every day. Congress can and should do the same for them. Congress should be standing with our law enforcement officers, not standing in their way. I applaud the persistent leadership of Chairman LEAHY and will stand with him as long as it takes to get this program back on track and ensure its long-term survival.

While this program had a long history of bipartisan support and passed out of the Judiciary Committee with a number of Republicans voting for it, a few of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle now do not seem to think this investment in officer safety is an appropriate one for this body and this government to make.

Last year our Nation lost 33 police officers in the line of duty killed by gunshots. According to the National Law Enforcement Officer's Memorial Fund, there is some reason to be cheered because this is the smallest number lost in a year since the 1800s. Those 33 deaths—line-of-duty deaths of men and women shot to death while protecting their communities—is 33 too many. We have an opportunity to continue to provide to State and local law enforcement vests that can save these and other lives.

We should continue working tirelessly until those numbers come down to zero. In recent months, I have been proud as this body has come together across the partisan divide, has passed a budget bill, an appropriations bill, a farm bill, has begun to deal with some of our Nation's most urgent needs. But I am distressed by this particular action, to block even consideration of so small a program with such important consequences, and it is to me profoundly disheartening. I call on my colleagues to stop blocking this bill and to allow this body to debate and to pass this reauthorization that will save lives in law enforcement this year and every year going forward. We owe them no less.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BARRASSO. I ask unanimous consent to be able to speak as in morning business.

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor to talk once more about the negative side effects of the President's health care law.

President Obama has been spiking the football over the number of people who he says have actually signed up for insurance through his exchanges. He also said that Democrats should forcefully defend and be proud of the health care law.

He has had nothing to say to the Americans who are seeing their premiums increase.

This Washington mandate insurance is loaded up with so many specific mandates that unless you get a massive taxpayer subsidy, it is just not affordable for many families across this country.

For some people the insurance gets even more expensive, even less affordable, depending specifically on where you live.

Insurance companies used to base your premiums on a lot of different factors, like how likely you were to use insurance, and different things specific to how you would use medical services.

The Obama health care law took away some of that and replaced it with what they call a community rating. Now there are only a few factors that can be used to set people's premiums, and where you actually live is one of those. Your premiums used to be based on you, but now they are based on your neighbors and how likely your neighbors are to use their own health insurance. What we are seeing is all across the country people are paying more specifically because of where they live.

The Associated Press ran a story on this last month. The headline was "Rural residents confront higher health care costs."

The Associated Press quoted a rancher in Colorado whose premiums had jumped 50 percent—to about \$1,800 a month. The rancher said:

We've gone from letting the insurance companies use a pre-existing medical condition to jack up rates, to having a pre-existing ZIP code being the reason health insurance is unaffordable.

As this rancher said, "It's just wrong."

I agree, so I looked into this, and here is what I found. Some of the lines are drawn so that people just down the road or even people on different sides of the street can pay wildly different premiums. These are people of exactly the same age, and these are people who are buying the lowest-cost silver plan.

The President likes to talk about income inequality, but the President has created a new kind of insurance inequality. It is not only rural areas like where that rancher lives in Colorado.

In Louisiana in one community the premium for the lowest-cost silver plan in the ObamaCare exchange for a 40-year-old person who doesn't get a subsidy would be \$255 a month. But if you

live right across the street—right across the street—the premium for that same person, same age, same lowest-cost silver plan, would be \$311 a month—22 percent higher, \$56 more a month, just because you live on one side of the street instead of the other side of the street, under the President's health care law. That is \$672 a year. That was Louisiana.

Now let's take a look at North Carolina, with the same situation. If you live on that side of the line, if your ranch house or farm house is over there, it is \$263 a month. Just down the road, the other side of the line, it is \$319 a month. Again, it is \$56 more a month or \$672 more a year for the same individual. All they would have to do is move from that side to this side and they would either save or pay that much more. It is 21 percent more expensive on one side than the other.

Is this fair? The Democrats talk about fairness all the time. Democratic Senators have come to the floor to talk about giving everybody a fair shot. Do those Democrats who passed this health care law, who voted for the law, think that in that county in North Carolina they are getting a fair shot depending on which side of the line they live? Does the Senator from Louisiana believe that they get this fair shot on either side of the line? Does President Obama believe that these people in North Carolina or Louisiana are getting a fair shot?

Why did the Democrats in Washington create a law that penalizes people based on on which side of the street they live?

Here is another example—Arkansas. Here we have an area, one side of the line or the other. On this side of the line it is \$263 per month and on this side \$294 a month—same age, same situation, no matter which of side of the line you live on—\$31 a month more expensive.

Are those people in Arkansas getting a fair shot from the President's health care law? For too many people in places such as Colorado, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Arkansas, the costs of the President's health care law are unfair and are too high. Sure, there are some people who are being helped, but there are a lot of people who are being hurt by the President's health care law, people who are feeling the negative side effects of the law.

Why don't Democrats admit this? Why don't they admit that the health care law is not giving people a fair shot?

The President says: Forcefully defend and be proud. Why aren't the Democrats in this Senate who passed this law coming to the floor to defend the fact that for millions of people in Arkansas, Louisiana, North Carolina, Colorado, and all across America, the premiums are too high. The health care law is too expensive for families, and it is also too expensive for a lot of employers.

There was an article in the Denver Post last week entitled: "Health law

presents options, challenges for Colorado's small businesses." The article tells the story of a small business in Denver that sells cardboard boxes.

According to the article, the owner of this business has offered insurance to his workers for three decades. To get a policy that meets the new mandates of the President's health care law was going to cost 50 percent more than they had been paying in the past.

The article says, "About half of small businesses in Colorado are seeing double-digit premium increases" because of the law.

Double-digit premium increases are not what Democrats promised from their health care law, and it is not what the American people wanted. People wanted something very simple from health care reform. They wanted better access to quality, affordable care.

Instead, Democrats gave Americans higher costs and unequal treatment. It is not a fair shot. It is not what American people wanted, what they needed, and it isn't working.

Americans don't need a law that Democrats voted for without ever reading it, and it is a law that raises their premiums, a law that NANCY PELOSI said: Hey, first you have to pass it before you get to find out what is in it.

Republicans have offered a patient-centered approach that would solve the biggest problems facing families: the cost of care, access to care, and ownership of their policies. That means allowing small businesses to pool resources in order to buy health insurance for their employees. It means letting people shop for health insurance in other States and buy what is actually best for them and their families. It means reforming our medical liability system to give patients fair compensation for tragic mistakes, while ending junk lawsuits that drive up health care costs for everyone. It means adequately funding State high-risk pools that help sick people get insurance without raising costs for healthier individuals.

These are just a few solutions Republicans have offered, just a few of the things that we will do to give Americans real health care reform and a real fair shot—health care reform that gives people the care they need from a doctor they choose at a lower cost without all the negative side effects.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. VITTER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 3521

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I come to the floor to speak about an issue we should all be concerned about, the State of veterans health care in our VA hospitals, our VA clinics, our VA system, and around the country.

I have been concerned about this for some time, working very hard on get-

ting outpatient clinics built in Louisiana—new ones, expanded ones, in particular, in Lafayette and Lake Charles.

I am a member of a bipartisan working group on VA backlog issues, and we have made substantial progress through that bipartisan group. We have also introduced legislation to deal specifically with that VA backlog crisis.

As we work on those things, unfortunately, the news out of the VA gets worse and worse, and the need for real progress on these fronts—including the community-based clinics I am going to talk about in Louisiana and elsewhere—that need gets more and more dire.

Think about the recent reports. CNN and others have reported that in Arizona at least 40 U.S. veterans died—died—waiting for appointments at the Phoenix VA health care system. Many of these were placed on a secret waiting list. The secret list was part of an elaborate scheme designed by the VA managers in Phoenix who were trying to hide the fact that 1,400 to 1,600 sick veterans were forced to wait months to see a doctor.

There is an official list that is shared with officials in Washington. That official list shows that the VA has been providing timely appointments. The problem is, you don't get on that official list, in some cases, until you have waited months and months and months on the secret list that is hidden from Washington, that was hidden from the world, and that was hidden from outsiders until the news media broke the story. So 40 of those veterans died waiting for appointments through this abuse.

In Colorado, USA Today and others reported that clerks at the Department of Veterans Affairs clinic in Fort Collins were instructed last year about how to falsify appointment records so it appeared the small staff of doctors was seeing patients within the agency's goal of 14 days—the exact same abuse, the exact same type of scheme, but different details. Many of the 6,300 veterans treated at the outpatient clinic waited months to be seen, but that was hidden through this scheme.

If the clerical staff had allowed records to reflect that veterans waited longer than 14 days, they were punished by being placed on the bad boy list, the report shows. So, again, it is exactly the same fraud and abuse, the same scheme, designed to hide the real waits that veterans in these places and in many other places around the country are subjected to.

We see these horrible abuses. We see these examples with increasing frequency. It has gotten so bad that the head of the American Legion and the head of the Concerned Veterans for America on Monday called for Secretary Shinseki to resign and called for members of his top leadership to resign with him.

The calls for his resignation came after months of reporting that I have

been talking about—U.S. veterans who have actually died waiting for care at VA facilities across the country. It came after these reports about Phoenix. It came after these reports about Colorado.

The heads of these organizations did not rush into a public call for his resignation. They did not take that lightly. That is virtually and perhaps completely unprecedented, but they did that on Monday. They called for the Secretary's resignation. They called for it publicly, and they called for several of his leadership team to resign with him. That is how bad it has gotten.

Yet in the midst of this, rather than responding to this crisis in any way we can, as quickly as we can, we have important matters hung up on pure politics on the Senate floor. Specifically, I am talking about my proposal to move forward with 27 community-based clinics around the country, including the two vital new and expanded community-based clinics that we need to move on, approve, and build in Louisiana, in Lafayette and Lake Charles.

These clinics around the country—and particularly the two in Louisiana, in Lafayette and Lake Charles—have been hung up through one bureaucratic screw up after another. These should have been built by now.

First, in terms of our two Louisiana clinics, the VA messed up how they let out the contract, and that caused them to pull back. It was their mistake, pure and simple. They have admitted that freely, and it cost us 1 year in terms of moving forward with those clinics.

After that mistake was corrected—after the loss of 1 year of waiting—then the CBO decided that they were going to score these clinics in a completely new way, something they had never done before, and that caused a "scoring" or "fiscal issue" with regard to all 27 of the community-based VA clinics around the country that I am talking about. That further delayed progress.

Finally, after these two major delays, leaders in the House got together on a bipartisan basis—and I want to commend my Louisiana colleagues in the House, in particular led by Congressman BOUSTANY and others—to fix this scoring issue. They put together a reform bill and they got it approved by the House overwhelmingly, with one dissenting vote. In today's environment, resolutions to honor Mother Teresa don't pass the House of Representatives with only one dissenting vote, but they did that.

So it came over here, and I worked to address some small issues and objections that existed on the Senate side through a perfecting amendment which I have at the desk. I worked very hard for weeks to clear up those objections so we could move forward with this noncontroversial measure. Because of that, we have the unanimous support of the Senate—not one single objection to moving forward with these 27 community-based VA clinics around the

country. There is not one single objection related to the substance of that proposal—not one.

The only objection now has been from the distinguished Senator from Vermont who objects to moving forward with this focused proposal because the Senate does not agree unanimously or near unanimously with his much larger bill that encompasses dozens of VA issues. Again, I have pledged to and I will work with the Senator on those broader issues. I have been working hard on those issues, including these clinics, including being an active member of the bipartisan working group on the VA backlog issue. I will continue to work on that. But the fact remains his larger bill has substantial opposition. There are around 46 Senators—excuse me, around 44 Senators who oppose that larger bill.

In the meantime, I think we should agree on what we can agree on. We should make progress on what we can make progress on, starting with these 27 clinics. Veterans have been dying around the country because of these ridiculous waits and the fraud and abuse involved in hiding these waits. These 27 community-based clinics will directly help address veterans who are waiting for months and months in some cases, waiting for medical treatment. It will directly alleviate that issue in the communities in 18 States where these clinics will be located. There is a significant number of communities in a significant number of States. So let's agree on what we can agree on. Let's make that significant progress. Let's keep talking and working on the rest.

Last November Senator SANDERS seemed to agree with that principle and that way of moving forward. In talking about another Veterans' Affairs piece of legislation, he said, on November 19 of last year, "I'm happy to tell you that I think that was a concern of his."—talking about another of our colleagues—"We got that UC'ed last night."—unanimous consent—"So we moved that pretty quickly, and I want to try to do those things. Where we have agreement, let's move it."

To repeat from that quote: "... I want to try to do those things. Where we have agreement, let's move it."

That is all I am asking for. We are not going to agree on everything immediately, but we can agree on important things right today, right this hour, right this minute. We do agree on 27 important community-based clinics in 18 States around the country, including 2 in Louisiana—Lafayette and Lake Charles, LA—that Senator LANDRIEU and I represent.

I want to try to do those things where we have agreement. Let's move it. And that can start right this minute in a productive, positive way with these 27 community-based clinics around the country. So let's agree on what we can agree on. Let's move on this important clinic issue.

Leaders of national groups—American Legion, American Vets, DAV, Par-

alyzed Veterans of America, and others—think the same. That is why they wrote a letter on June 10 of last year—June 10 of 2013—saying these community-based clinics are important. Let's come together, work together, and move specifically on these community-based clinics. They are important.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the letter of June 10 to which I just referred.

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

JUNE 10, 2013.

Hon. HARRY REID,
Senate Majority Leader, Washington, DC.
Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House, Washington, DC.
Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Senate Minority Leader, Washington, DC
Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
House Minority Leader, Washington, DC.

DEAR LEADERS OF CONGRESS: We write you, as leaders of Congress, to urge you to work together to prevent a looming problem that over the next several years may harm the health of more than 340,000 wounded, injured and ill veterans in 22 states who will be in need of care provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Without your intervention, these veterans are in jeopardy of losing that important health resource.

Since the 1990s, Congress has helped improve VA health care access and patient satisfaction by authorizing and funding nearly 900 VA community-based outpatient clinics. These are important facilities for local, convenient, and cost-effective primary care for millions of veterans. Unfortunately, a policy shift by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO); in 2012 has effectively halted Congressional authorization of leases for such new clinics. Also, as old leases expire and need reauthorization in future years, this CBO decision jeopardizes existing VA-leased health, research and other facilities.

Last year, CBO announced it would redefine 15 VA-proposed leases as "capital" leases and would treat them as current-year mandatory obligations, costing more than \$1 billion altogether over a 20-year period. In order to advance these leases to approval, House budget rules would have forced an offset to equal the cost of these leases with an unrealistic Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 reduction in mandatory veterans' programs. Since no such accommodation could be made in a single year, and VA had not addressed such an offset in its FY 2013 budget, the proposed lease authorizations were dropped from the authorizing bill. These 15 proposed community facilities are now in limbo, and veterans are not being served.

This unexpected challenge will not resolve itself absent action by House and Senate leadership to ensure Congress continues to authorize leases of local VA community-based outpatient clinics and other VA facilities when such approvals are needed. Also the VA warns that over time numerous existing leases will be expiring. Lack of reauthorization could result in closures of current clinics. Newly proposed clinics without lease authorization cannot be activated. Costs of veterans' VA care will be rising while they face longer travel and more waiting for needed treatment, or they may be forced to go without treatment.

Committee leaders with jurisdiction over the VA have pledged to solve this problem, but no resolution has emerged since CBO's determination, made nine months ago. Without leadership intervention, these promised clinics and more in the future cannot be activated or will be shut down, and wounded,

injured and ill veterans in need will be denied VA health care.

The CBO's policy must be reversed or otherwise addressed in consultation with VA and the Office of Management and Budget. We ask that you take action that results in Congressional authorization of the 15 clinics still in limbo since 2012, the additional ones proposed earlier this year in VA's budget for FY 2014, and in general to find the means to allow VA's leased facilities to continue to provide flexible, low-cost VA care to wounded, injured and ill veterans. The current situation is unacceptable and must be remedied.

We appreciate your support for America's veterans and look forward to your response. Sincerely,

PETER S. GAYTAN,
*Executive Director,
The American Legion.*

BARRY A. JESINOSKI,
*Executive Director,
Washington Headquarters Disabled
American Veterans.*

ROBERT E. WALLACE,
*Executive Director,
Veterans of Foreign
Wars of the United
States.*

STEWART M. HICKEY,
*National Executive Director,
AMVETS.*

HOMER S. TOWNSEND, Jr.,
*Executive Director,
Paralyzed Veterans
of America.*

Mr. VITTER. These groups agree with what Senator SANDERS said last year and they agree with what I am saying today: Let us come together and move on those things we can agree on, and they specifically wrote the Senate leadership about these community-based clinics.

That leads to my unanimous consent request, which is to adopt this spirit of agreeing where we agree, getting things accomplished whenever and wherever we can, and continuing to work on the rest.

I ask unanimous consent the Veterans' Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 3521 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that my amendment, which is at the desk, be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SANDERS. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, let me touch on a few of the points of my distinguished colleague from Louisiana.

First of all, regarding the allegations against the VA in Phoenix, as we know, these are very serious allegations, and it is absolutely appropriate the inspector general do a thorough and independent investigation of those allegations. As I am sure my colleague from Louisiana knows, the leadership at Phoenix has rejected those allegations, saying those are not true. The Secretary of VA has done what I believe,

and I would hope my friend from Louisiana believes, is the right thing to do, which is to do an independent investigation.

I am not a lawyer, but I did learn enough in school to know you don't find somebody guilty without assessing the evidence. And frankly, just because CNN says something doesn't always make it the case. So what we need is a serious independent investigation into the very serious allegations about Phoenix and any other facility within the VA. I have said I will hold hearings immediately—more than one hearing, if necessary—to get to the truth of the matter regarding the VA situation in Phoenix.

I would also tell my friend that when we talk about the VA, when we talk about health care in general—and I am sure he would agree with me—as a nation we have a whole lot of serious problems, don't we? We have about 30 million people today who have no health insurance at all. Harvard University estimates about 45,000 people die each year because they do not get to a doctor when they should, because we are the only country in the industrialized world that doesn't guarantee health care to all people.

There was a study that came out recently that indicates that some 200,000 to 400,000 patients a year die in hospitals in America because of medical errors, in ways that could have been prevented—200,000 to 400,000 people a year. So, yes, as chairman of the Senate Veterans Committee, I am going to do everything we can do, along with my colleagues, in a bipartisan way to make sure the veterans of this country get all of the health care they need, and get the best quality they can.

This is a very serious issue, and with an independent investigation taking place in Phoenix now, we are going to get to the truth of that.

When we talk about the VA, as I am sure my colleague from Louisiana knows, in fiscal year 2013, the VA provided 89.7 million outpatient visits, and the VA has 236,000 health care appointments every single day. Today, over 200,000 veterans in 151 medical centers in 900 community-based outreach clinics all over this country are walking into the VA to get health care. I assure my colleague from Louisiana that every single day there are problems within the VA. When there are over 200,000 people walking in, there are going to be problems. But I also assure my friend there are problems in every other medical facility in America today as well.

I just mentioned the very frightening situation that, according to a very significant study, we are experiencing between 200,000 and 400,000 patients dying from what are preventable deaths because of hospital errors all over America. My point about saying that is to say, let's put the VA within a broader context. If you want to criticize the VA, fine, I am there with you. You got problems, I will work with you. But let's not paint a broad brush.

The VA has 151 medical centers, they have 300,000-plus employees—many of them veterans themselves—and in my view, and in the view of the veterans community—the veterans associations—the Veterans' Administration is providing high quality care to the veterans across this country.

It is not just me. My colleague from Louisiana may have recently read that an independent customer service survey, done by the American Customer Satisfaction Index—these are people who assess how people feel about medical facilities around the country—found that in 2013 an overall satisfaction rating for the VA was 84 percent for inpatient care and 82 percent for outpatient care, which in some respects was higher than for the hospital industry in general.

For the past 10 years, the American Consumer Satisfaction Index has found a high degree of loyalty to VA among veterans of over 90 percent. I would suspect my colleague from Louisiana finds—as I have found when I talk to veterans in Vermont—and he asks them, as I am sure he does, what do you think about VA health care, veterans will say: You know what. It is pretty good health care. Is it perfect? No. Are there problems? Yes. In general, they think it is pretty good health care.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, parliamentary inquiry.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will state his inquiry.

Mr. VITTER. I have a pending unanimous consent request and I would like to inquire how I proceed to have a ruling on that and, hopefully, have it passed through the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the request of the Senator from Louisiana?

Mr. SANDERS. What I am going to do, Madam President, is I am going to object, and I am going to ask for a unanimous consent request on legislation that I have offered, and I want to say a word about that.

I want to ask a question of my friend from Louisiana. My colleague from Louisiana has indicated he wants to work with us. I think I heard that in his statement today, and I applaud that. I am not quite sure he has done that yet, but I look forward to working with him and his staff. I would invite my colleague from Louisiana to come to my office at a mutually convenient time to see how in fact we can work together.

Will my colleague from Louisiana take me up on that offer, I ask through the Chair?

Mr. VITTER. Reclaiming my time, or reclaiming the floor, since my unanimous consent request—

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I just asked a brief question of my friend from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, a point of parliamentary inquiry.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I had a unanimous consent request. It has been objected to. May I reclaim the floor and reclaim my time? In doing so, I will be happy to respond to the Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The request has not yet formally been objected to.

Mr. VITTER. I would again ask unanimous consent that the Veterans' Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 3521 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that my amendment, which is at the desk, be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SANDERS. I do object. And I am going to—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VITTER. If I may reclaim the floor and reclaim my time, I would like to respond.

I think it is really unfortunate. As we all agreed to today and in previous appearances on the floor, there is absolutely no objection on the merits of this proposal. The only objection from the distinguished Senator from Vermont is that a far larger bill, which does have significant opposition—around 44 Members, almost half of the Senate—people have concerns about that. So if he can't play the game exactly his way, he is going to take his ball and go home, and he is going to block 27 community-based clinics on which there is no substantive objection, on which the leaders of national veterans organizations have pleaded with leaders of the Senate and House to act in a bipartisan way.

I am particularly concerned that today what I hear is an even higher bar that we are going to have to meet to act on these clinics that are not objected to on their merits.

Previously the Senator from Vermont talked about his far broader bill. Today he talked about all of health care. Apparently I am going to have to agree with Senator SANDERS about all of health care reform before we can move forward on these 27 community-based clinics on which there is no substantive objection.

The Senator from Vermont said he will do everything he can to deal with these issues. Well, we can do something right here, right now, to deal with these issues. It is not solving every problem in the world. It is not solving every problem in health care. It is not solving every problem in the VA. But it is doing something real and meaningful and substantial in 27 communities and 18 States. We can move forward with these community-based clinics. We can try to do those things on which we have agreement. Let's move it. We can do that. That is all I am asking. And I think it is really counterproductive to

take the view that until we agree about all of the VA or about all of health care or whatever, we are not going to do any of that. I think that is really sad and counterproductive.

I will keep coming to the floor. I will keep working on this vital issue. I will keep working on other vital issues. I will keep talking to the Senator from Vermont about his broader bill. But I have to say that these scandals in Phoenix and elsewhere don't alleviate my concerns; they only heighten my concerns about a broader bill that is going to push many more patients, overnight, into a system that is obviously broken.

So I will continue working and talking about it all. I will continue working in the bipartisan working group on the VA backlog. But let's do what we can do now. Let's start with one step and then two and then five, and then maybe we can start to jog and then we can start to run. I think that is the productive path forward.

I urge my colleague to reconsider and let us move forward with these important clinics.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, unfortunately, I didn't quite hear that the Senator from Louisiana wanted to work with us. So I will have my office call his office and see if we can sit down with our staffs and find out what the Senator's concerns are about the legislation.

It is not BERNIE SANDERS' legislation. It is not the Veterans' Committee's legislation. This is legislation supported by the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Vietnam Veterans of America, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and virtually every other veterans organization in America.

In preparation for the discussion I look forward to having with my colleague from Louisiana, this is not changing the world. This is not legislation that is going to solve every problem in the world. But it does do a whole lot to improve the lives of millions of veterans and their families who are hurting, and I think it is appropriate that we do that. I want my colleague from Louisiana to be thinking about these issues and to come into the office and tell me: No, Senator SANDERS. I disagree.

Does he disagree with restoration of full COLA for military retirees? As he knows, for current people in the military and new people who are coming in, they are going to get less of a COLA than longstanding members of the military. Maybe he disagrees; maybe he doesn't. Let's talk about it.

Does he believe the veterans community—people who go into the VA—should be entitled to dental care? I don't know about Louisiana, but in Vermont that is a very serious issue. All over this country veterans are dealing with rotting teeth, and they can't

get that care in VA facilities right now.

There is widespread support for advanced appropriations for the VA. I think virtually all the veterans organizations understand that the VA could do a better job if they had advanced appropriations. I support it. Many people support it. I don't know if my colleague from Louisiana supports it. Let's work together, and I will find out.

The next time we come down to the floor and go through this exercise, we can tell the people what we agree with and what we don't agree with.

On ending the benefits backlog, the truth is that the current VA Administration—General Shinseki and others—inherited a paper system. Can you believe that? In the year 2009 the VA benefits system was on paper—maybe the last remaining system of its size in the world to still be on paper and not digital. What people at the VA have done—General Shinseki and others—is they transformed that system from paper to electronic records. Guess what. The backlog is going down. But that is not good enough for me. We have language in this bill which will make sure the backlog continues to go down.

There is an issue I am sure my colleague from Louisiana is very familiar with: in-state tuition. There are veterans from Louisiana who may want to go to school in Vermont or veterans from Vermont who may want to go to school in Louisiana, but they can't get in-state tuition. It is a serious problem, and we address it. What does my colleague from Louisiana feel about that issue?

Then there is extending health care access for recently separated veterans. As he knows, we have legislation now that extends free health care to all those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan for 5 years. I think it should be extended for 10 years. Does he agree or does he not agree? The veterans community feels very strongly about that issue.

We have high unemployment rates for returning veterans. We want to do something to expand employment opportunities.

We have the issue of sexual assault—a very serious issue, as we all know—and we want to make sure the VA is providing excellent-quality care to those victims of sexual assault.

We have, in my mind, a really tragic problem. The good news is that a few years ago Congress did the right thing and said to the post-9/11 veterans, those men and women who came home seriously injured: We are going to pass a caregivers act to give support to your wives or your sisters or your brothers who are providing often 24/7 care for you—every single day, long hours—at great stress. We are going to help you.

But what we didn't do is reach back to the Vietnam-era veterans, the Korean war veterans, even World War II veterans. There are families today in

which a 70-year-old woman is taking care of her husband who lost his legs in Vietnam, and day after day, year after year she is getting virtually no support from the government.

This legislation has the strong support of the Paralyzed Veterans of America and many other organizations that say we can't ignore those people. I don't know what my friend from Louisiana feels about this. Let's talk about it.

Here is the bottom line. The bottom line is, as I have said many times, I do support the provision the Senator from Louisiana speaks about. We do need these facilities. But we need a lot more. We need cooperation and people coming together.

I believe the Senator from Louisiana said there were 44 people who voted in opposition. He is right. He forgot to mention that there were 56 who voted for this bill, with the support of every veterans organization in America. One person was absent who would have voted for it, so 57 voted for it and 44 voted against it. Unfortunately, in the rules of the Senate, when we have a Republican filibuster, we do need 60 votes. I am looking for three more Republican votes. One of those votes I would very much appreciate receiving is from the Senator from Louisiana. That would make me two votes shy. And we think we are making some progress with some other Republicans who understand that we must address the serious needs facing the veterans community.

I again extend my request to the Senator from Louisiana to work with me. But pending that, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to Calendar No. 297, S. 1950, with the Sanders amendment, which is at the desk and is the text of S. 1982, the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I object on behalf of myself and 43 other Senators.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. VITTER. If not for any other reason but because of the substantive concerns with the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I hear what my colleague from Louisiana says. I hear that he objects to passing legislation which has the support of virtually every veterans organization in the country that represents many millions of veterans. I hear him objecting to legislation which has the support of 57 Members of the U.S. Senate. I hear him objecting to what I believe is legislation which has the support of the vast majority of the American people, who do believe we should do right by our veterans. It is very easy to send people off to war; it is a lot harder to take care of them when they come home.

I would simply say that I look forward to sitting down with my colleague from Louisiana and other Republican colleagues—and we are doing that right now but specifically with my colleague from Louisiana, Senator VITTER—and seeing where we can agree and how we can create some significant legislation to address the very serious problems facing the veterans community.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, just to briefly repeat, I did object on behalf of myself and 43 other Senators about major provisions in this bill. I am happy to talk about it. I am happy to work on it. I am happy to work with Senator BURR, who is the ranking member on the committee, who has been communicating all these concerns to Senator SANDERS and his staff. But I think that is very different from objecting to a focused community-based clinic bill that has no objection on the merits.

I just think it is a shame not to try to do those things where we have agreement—let's move forward—not to move forward. That would be moving forward in a substantial way. That would quickly improve the lives of veterans in 27 communities and in 18 States, including Lafayette and Lake Charles—communities that certainly Senator LANDRIEU and I very much care about and very much want to have their VA issues addressed in this way.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I simply reiterate my hope that Senator VITTER would sit down with me, his staff would sit down with my staff, and we can work out our differences. I have always been willing to compromise and make changes in the legislation.

But for the veterans of this country who have suffered so much and who have been hurt so much, we owe them so much, and we have to do right by them.

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

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

**PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK
HONORING HEIDI KING, CHUCK BOLEN, AND BRIAN
STOUT**

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, this week we celebrate Public Service Recognition Week to honor public servants at all levels of government for their admirable patriotism and contributions to our country.

We often forget that these public servants at all levels of government go to work every day with the sole mission to make this country a better and

safer place to live. Day by day, they go about their work, often receiving little recognition for the great work they do.

Since 2010, I have come to the Senate floor on occasions to honor exemplary Federal employees—a tradition that was begun by my friend Senator Ted Kaufman.

Amongst the list of Federal employees we have honored across the country are some who serve here on this Senate floor.

Today I want to celebrate Public Service Recognition Week by taking this opportunity to recognize three federally employed Virginians who are doing exemplary work behind the scenes to make our government more effective and keep our fellow citizens safe.

Normally, we would have their photos here in the Chamber, but since we have three, we are going to recognize them all with this single poster. Again, these are exemplary Federal employees.

The first is Heidi King, who served as the Director of the Patient Safety Program Office at the Department of Defense and currently leads the DOD's Partnership for Patients.

While at DOD, she helped develop a patient safety program which helps medical professionals eliminate preventable medical errors.

Breakdowns in communication between doctors, nurses, and special care providers are historically the cause of many tragic medical events such as surgical errors, prescription mistakes, and hospital-acquired infections.

To combat this, Heidi coordinated with the Department of Health and Human Services to bring together more than 100 independent experts in the medical field. These experts developed a comprehensive training program for medical professionals to learn about the factors within their control that commonly contribute to errors.

In 2008, DOD implemented Heidi's program in combat support units in Iraq. As a result, communication errors decreased 65 percent, medication and transfusion errors decreased 85 percent, and the rate of bloodstream infections from catheters also dropped dramatically. Heidi should be proud of her work, which is directly responsible for the health of many brave soldiers.

In an effort to spread these best practices, the safety program has established 11 training centers across the country, where more than 6,200 medical professionals have participated to become master trainers and instructors. They then return to their health care systems to lead implementation of the program.

This is the kind of commonsense, cost-effective, yet also lifesaving program that does not get much recognition but is an example of a Federal employee going above and beyond the call of duty to help her fellow Americans and actually help the bottom line.

I would also like to recognize two TSA employees for their heroic actions that helped save a passenger's life.

While posted at Washington National Airport last month, TSA employee Chuck Bolen was told that a passenger was in need of immediate assistance.

As soon as Bolen saw the passenger slumped in the chair, he knew he did not have a lot of time and was prepared to do whatever was necessary to keep the passenger alive.

As the man's condition declined rapidly, Bolen sprinted to grab the nearest AED machine. With help from his colleague Brian Stout, a marine infantry sergeant who did three combat tours in Iraq and now works for TSA, they worked together to apply the AED machine. After a single attempt, the machine advised to begin CPR. Bolen initiated chest compressions and continued administering the lifesaving action, even after first responders arrived on the scene.

Thankfully, their quick collaborative actions paid off. While in the ambulance on the way to the hospital, the man's heart started and stopped several times, but today he is alive and recovering from triple bypass surgery.

I hope my colleagues will join me in honoring Heidi King, Chuck Bolen, and Brian Stout—truly great Virginians but also great civil servants—and all those who serve at the Department of Defense and the TSA for their hard work and dedication to our Nation.

While today we have highlighted three, as I mentioned at the outset, over the last 5 years I have come many times and have highlighted folks from across Virginia and across the country. As I mentioned, as well, there are people serving right now on this Senate floor who have received this kind of attention for their quiet dedication to duty and making the Senate a more functioning institution.

As we constantly come to the floor and debate the challenges of our budget and other issues, I think it is very important—while we may differ about which programs we support and what functions our government should take on—we never underestimate the enormous value our Federal employees contribute on a regular basis to the safety, security, and, quite honestly, the function of our national government.

I hope all my colleagues will join me in recognizing the efforts of public servants across the country during Public Service Recognition Week and thank them for the very important work they do every day.

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

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

STUDENT DEBT

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise to talk about an issue that impacts tens of millions of people across

the country and hangs over our entire economy, and that is student debt.

Borrowers have accumulated over \$1.2 trillion in student debt. Think about that for a minute. That is more than people owe on their credit cards. Talk about a drag for not only the individual, for their family, but for the entire economy.

Students in my home State of Michigan are among the most heavily indebted in the country when they graduate. Frankly, we want them to get degrees, not debt, when they graduate.

Nearly two-thirds of students in Michigan who graduated in 2012 had student loan debt, with each student averaging nearly \$29,000. So they walk outside the door—congratulations—take off the cap and gown and get a \$29,000 bill.

This growing mountain of debt represents a threat to our economy and to the dreams of millions of Americans.

Today too many people are saddled with decades of debt just because they want a fair shot to go to college and to get ahead in life.

Instead of saving for a house, buying a car or just buying gas or groceries, millions of people are simply paying student loan payments month after month, year after year, decade after decade.

I hear from many of my constituents about how they are being crushed by the burden of student debt. I have seen it in my own extended family. They write about having \$50,000 or \$100,000 of debt. If you are going to medical school, if you are in specialty areas as a grad student, they have \$200,000 or more in debt.

Some of the reforms we have already put in place help some borrowers by limiting the payments on their Federal loans relative to their incomes. That is a good thing, but this is not enough, and it doesn't do anything to help people who have private loans—oftentimes on top of the loans through the Federal Government. Some of these private loans carry interest rates like credit cards and are literally driving people into bankruptcy.

I have constituents who use words such as “crippling” or “catastrophic.” They talk about anxiety attacks.

One person wrote that because of the high interest rates on his private loans, “it is getting to the point where [he] cannot eat because of [his] student loan payments.”

Another constituent, Thomas, wrote to me that each of his three children has a combination of Federal and private loans totaling \$75,000 to \$110,000—each.

What Thomas wrote to me really sums up the student debt crisis we are facing and that families across the country are facing:

Loans are designed to give students a chance to go to college and to obtain high-income jobs. Somehow the interest they pay has become just another wound for college grads that have a tough time finding jobs. . . . It will leave grads with a high risk of de-

fault, not being able to pay for their dreams and not being able to fund their retirement accounts for many years.

That is crazy. That is just not right, and that is not how it should work in our country. That is certainly not what we think of when we think of striving for the American dream. Whether it is the Federal Government or the big banks, we should not be making a profit off the backs of students, and that is exactly what is happening.

That is why I am so proud to be fighting alongside Senator WARREN and my other colleagues to address this very urgent and growing problem.

Senator WARREN and I fought last year to stop students from getting stuck with a raw deal. Now we are back at it again this year, and we are going to keep fighting until we can solve this problem.

Horace Mann once called education “the great equalizer” in our society. Everyone who wants to work hard and go to college in order to simply have a fair shot in life should not be denied that opportunity.

It shouldn't be the great equalizer on debt. It has to be the great equalizer on opportunity.

These folks are willing to play by the rules, work hard, and pay back their loans on time. We have to make sure that the system isn't rigged against them.

The legislation we have introduced will not only help millions of Americans, it will also boost our economy by allowing borrowers to spend their money on a home, a car or just the needs of their families instead of interest payments. Nobody should have to put off getting married or starting a family just because of student loans.

We are not just talking only about young people, this bill helps students of all ages: students in their twenties, thirties, and beyond—young professionals and parents who have stepped up to help their children. In fact, the student loan debt has gotten so out of hand that senior citizens in the country owe tens of billions of dollars on student loans.

Our bill will help millions of responsible borrowers of all ages in every State across the country. The Bank On Students Emergency Loan Refinancing Act is a reasonable commonsense and fiscally responsible way to address the student loan crisis.

This is simply about giving those who want to go to college a fair shot to get ahead, making sure that those who already borrowed to get an education are not being unfairly weighed down by debt just so the government or the big banks can turn a profit.

I thank Senator WARREN for her leadership on this vital issue. This is about allowing all of those who currently have student loan debt to be able to refinance—to be able to refinance at a rate actually that was voted on, 3.68 percent, by colleagues on both sides 1 year ago. It is not a number that is picked out of the a hat. It will allow

people to exchange an 11 percent or 12 percent on a private loan or a 6 percent, 7 percent or 8 percent interest rate on a public loan for something that is affordable, that will allow them to take those extra precious dollars, invest in their future, and the country's future.

That is what this is about. It is very simple, and it is paid for by what has been commonly called the Buffett rule, which basically says those who have benefited by the blessings of this country and those who are the wealthiest among us would contribute a little bit more to make sure that everybody has a fair shot at getting ahead.

We can't afford for America to be a big-shot economy. We have to make sure that everyone has a fair shot to make it. Nobody is asking for a hand-out; they are asking to work hard. They are asking to know that the system is not rigged against them.

They are asking to know that they are going to be able to go to college, get out of college, pay back their student loans at a reasonable, fair rate, buy a house, get married, have a career, have children, and go on to have the American dream. That is what this is about. This needs to get passed as quickly as possible so people know they are going to have the opportunity to get ahead in America.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. 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. REID. Mr. President, more than a year ago Senators SHAHEEN and PORTMAN worked on an energy efficiency bill—a good bill. That was more than a year ago. That bill was, as I have indicated, good, but during the past many months, through the energy committee and the work of RON WYDEN and others, that bill was improved greatly. RON WYDEN was chairman of that committee at the time, and they did so many good things with that piece of legislation. We had six cosponsors—three Democrats and three Republicans.

This bill would create 200,000 jobs, and it would help our Nation's energy proficiency significantly.

So I moved to proceed to the bill in September, this past September—and we have been through this a number of times, but I will repeat it very quickly. We were held up from doing that for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the junior Senator from Louisiana wanting to take away the health care for our staffs. That threw a few roadblocks in the way. So without going into detail, we never got that done.

But Senators SHAHEEN and PORTMAN, as I have indicated, did not give up. They worked hard to incorporate 10

separate bipartisan amendments into this bill. So the bill was good last September, but it is terrific now.

As a result of that, we improved the number of people who were willing to support this legislation. We went from 3 and 3 to 7 and 7—14 cosponsors of this bill. On the Republican side are Senators PORTMAN, AYOTTE, COLLINS, HOEVEN, ISAKSON, MURKOWSKI, and WICKER. On the Democratic side are Senators SHAHEEN, BENNET, COONS, FRANKEN, LANDRIEU, MANCHIN, and WARREN. There is a good mix of Senators on both sides. So we worked very hard to finalize a more bipartisan bill. I worked with them. I didn't give up. We continued to try to move forward. We did that, as we did with childcare recently. It was in March, actually. I have looked for every bipartisan bill we could come to the floor on. We did it with the childcare bill, as I said, and we should do it on this bill. That was my anticipation. And we were able to do it, I thought.

So this Shaheen-Portman bill is a very fine bill. I reached out to Republican Senators. To be honest, I didn't reach out to them; they reached out to me. They wanted to work to get this passed. Originally, the arrangement was, let's just pass this bill as it is.

Right before the Easter recess, I was asked: How about a sense-of-the-Senate resolution on Keystone?

I said: I don't want to do that. We already have an agreement.

Anyway, we relented and said OK. So I came back after the Easter recess, and that agreement we had, well, they said: Let's change it. We no longer want a sense-of-the-Senate resolution; we want a vote on a freestanding piece of legislation.

I said: We have an agreement.

Anyway, I relented and we had that proposal. So we had that all worked out. Then we were told there needs to be five more amendments.

So, as I have said before, this has been very hard to do, this shell game. It can be described in other ways, but it has been very difficult to pin down the Republicans for anything more than a day or two because they keep changing their minds.

So here we are, and my offer is this: If Shaheen-Portman passes, with the seven Republican cosponsors, we will have a freestanding vote forthwith on Keystone, with whatever time is fair. I have put 3 hours in the proposal I will make in just a minute, but it doesn't matter—whatever time they want for a freestanding vote on Keystone, which they have been wanting to have for a long time.

You get the picture, Mr. President. That is what I think should happen. It is a good bill, but it is so much better than it was a year ago. It is a great bill now, not a good bill.

So, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by me after consulting with Senator McCONNELL, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 368,

S. 2262; that there be no amendments, points of order, or motions in order to the bill other than budget points of order and applicable motions to waive; that there be up to 3 hours of debate on the bill equally divided between the two leaders or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on passage of the bill; that the bill be subject to a 60 affirmative-vote threshold; that if the bill is passed, the Senate proceed to Calendar No. 371, S. 2280, at a time to be determined by me after consultation with the Republican leader but no later than Thursday, May 22, 2014—and I will just enter the comment here that if they want it earlier, they can have it, but that is the date I have suggested—that there be no amendments, points of order or motions in order to the bill other than budget points of order and the applicable motions to waive; that there be up to, again, 3 hours of debate on the bill equally divided between the two leaders or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on passage of the bill; that the bill be subject to a 60 affirmative-vote threshold.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, it has been my position since late last week that it would be appropriate for the minority—not having had but eight rollcall votes since July—to have five amendments of our choosing on this bill, and therefore I am going to propose a counter consent request at this time.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 368, S. 2262; that the only amendments in order be five amendments to be offered by myself or my designee related to energy policy, with the first amendment being my amendment No. 2982 on saving coal jobs, and with a 60-vote threshold on adoption of each amendment; that following the disposition of these amendments, the bill be read a third time and the Senate proceed to a vote on passage of the bill, as amended, if amended.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President, I incorporate by reference the statement I made earlier today on this bill and reluctantly object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard to the request of the Republican leader.

Is there objection to the original request?

Mr. McCONNELL. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Republican leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, earlier this morning I noted that the majority leader has refused for 7 years to allow a serious debate on energy in this Chamber. I said he has tried to stifle the voice of the American people again

this current week as well, at a time when so many middle-class Americans are suffering from high energy costs, lost jobs, and stagnant wages in the Obama economy; at a time when global crises clarify not just the need but the opportunity for America to establish a greater energy presence overseas that would grow more jobs here at home; at a time when eastern Kentuckians are suffering a depression, made so much worse by this administration's elitist war on coal.

Well, Republicans are going to keep fighting. Even if Senate Democrats would rather pander to the far left and shut down debate, Republicans are going to keep fighting for the middle class. That is why we had hoped to offer forward-leaning amendments today which aim not just to increase energy security but also to improve national security and economic security for our middle class.

One amendment I had hoped to be able to offer would approve construction of the Keystone Pipeline, which everyone knows will create thousands of jobs right away.

One amendment would expedite the export of American energy to our global allies, which would create more of the jobs we need right here in the United States.

One amendment would have prevented the administration from moving forward with its plans to impose a national carbon tax through the back door, even though Congress already rejected the idea several years ago and even though we know it would devastate an already suffering middle class.

There is another amendment too, one I had planned to offer personally, along with the junior Senator from Louisiana and the senior Senator from North Dakota. It would halt the administration from moving forward with new regulations on coal-fired powerplants until the technology required to comply with the regulations is commercially viable, which it currently is not.

The Obama administration's extreme regulations would hammer existing coal facilities too, taking the ax to even more American coal jobs in the midst of an awful economy. These coal regulations are especially unfair to the people of my State. We know they would hit Kentuckians who are already suffering—constituents of mine who just want to put food on the table and feed their families. Congress needs to do something to help. That is why I would have offered that amendment today.

I remind my colleagues that the amendment we had hoped to offer is almost identical to legislation offered by the Democratic senior Senator from West Virginia that already passed the House of Representatives on a bipartisan basis. So there is no excuse not to pass it here. We hope the Senator from West Virginia and his Democratic colleagues will stand with us to do just that.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I will be very brief.

My friend talks about the left-leaning Senators. Three of the Democratic Senators who sponsored this legislation could be called anything but leaning left: LANDRIEU, MANCHIN, and WARNER. That brings a smile to anyone's face.

It is a fiction that we haven't had votes to debate energy policy. We have had trouble having bills because of the obstruction of the Republicans. But we voted on the Keystone matter before we did the budget debate where we had over 100 votes. That was last year. So we debated Keystone last year, we had a vote on it, and we are willing to have another vote on it.

It is my understanding we are now going to enter into debate on whatever people want to talk about for the next hour, and I understand we are going to have a series of votes at 3:45 p.m.

I ask unanimous consent that all remaining time postcloture on the motion to proceed be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

ENERGY SAVINGS AND INDUSTRIAL COMPETITIVENESS ACT OF 2014

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2262) to promote energy savings in residential buildings and industry, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3012

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on behalf of Senators SHAHEEN and PORTMAN, I call up substitute amendment No. 3012.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID], for Mrs. SHAHEEN and Mr. PORTMAN, proposes an amendment numbered 3012 to S. 2262.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays on the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3023 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3012

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a first-degree amendment at the desk I ask to be reported.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 3023 to amendment No. 3012.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end, add the following:

This Act shall become effective 1 day after enactment.

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays on that amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3024 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3023

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a second-degree amendment which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 3024 to amendment No. 3023.

The amendment is as follows:

In the amendment, strike "1 day" and insert "2 days".

AMENDMENT NO. 3025

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a first-degree amendment which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 3025 to S. 2262.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end, add the following:

This Act shall become effective 3 days after enactment.

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays on that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3026 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3025

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a second-degree amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 3026 to amendment No. 3025.

The amendment is as follows:

In the amendment, strike "3 days" and insert "4 days".

MOTION TO COMMIT WITH AMENDMENT NO. 3027

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a motion to commit S. 2262, with instructions, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] moves to commit the bill (S. 2262) to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment numbered 3027.

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays on that motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end, add the following:

This Act shall become effective 5 days after enactment.

AMENDMENT NO. 3028 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3027

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have an amendment to the instructions at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 3028 to the instructions of the motion to commit.

The amendment is as follows:

In the amendment, strike "5 days" and insert "6 days".

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays on that motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 3029 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3028

Mr. REID. I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 3029 to amendment No. 3028.

The amendment is as follows:

In the amendment, strike "6 days" and insert "7 days".

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a cloture motion at the desk.

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

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on S. 2262, a bill to promote energy savings in residential buildings and industry, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Jeanne Shaheen, Edward J. Markey, Christopher A. Coons, Tammy Baldwin, Patty Murray, Richard J. Durbin, Barbara Boxer, Maria Cantwell, Ron Wyden, Robert Menendez, Jon Tester, Debbie Stabenow, Bill Nelson, Thomas R. Carper, Patrick J. Leahy, Mark R. Warner.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum required under rule XXII be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXPIRE ACT OF 2014—Motion To Proceed

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 366, S. 2260.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 366, S. 2260, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend certain expiring provisions, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time until 3:45