Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 488, S. 2648, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2014, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Barbara A. Mikulski, Benjamin L. Cardin, Barbara Boxer, Patrick J. Leahy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Jack Reed, Christopher A. Coons, Jeff Merkley, Debbie Stabenow, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Bill Nelson, John D. Rockefeller IV, Mazie K. Hirono, Tom Harkin, Bernard Sanders, Richard Blumenthal.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 2648, a bill making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2014, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rules.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote or to change their vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 63, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 250 Leg.]

YEAS—63

Ayotte	Gillibrand	Murkowski
Baldwin	Grassley	Murphy
Begich	Harkin	Murray
Bennet	Hatch	Nelson
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Pryor
Booker	Heitkamp	Reed
Boxer	Heller	Reid
Brown	Hirono	Rockefeller
Cantwell	Isakson	Rubio
Cardin	Johnson (SD)	Sanders
Carper	Kaine	Schumer
Casey	King	Shaheen
Chambliss	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Collins	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Levin	Udall (CO)
Corker	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Cornyn	Markey	Walsh
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Durbin	Menendez	Warren
Feinstein	Merkley	Whitehouse
Franken	Mikulski	Wyden

NAYS—33

Alexander	Flake	Moran
Barrasso	Graham	Paul
Blunt	Hagan	Portman
Boozman	Hoeven	Risch
Burr	Inhofe	Scott
Coats	Johanns	Sessions
Coburn	Johnson (WI)	Shelby
Crapo	Kirk	Thune
Cruz	Landrieu	Toomey
Enzi	Lee	Vitter
Fischer	McConnell	Wicker

NOT VOTING—4

Cochran	Roberts
McCain	Schatz

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 63 and the nays are 33. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CYNTHIA H. AKUETTEH, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE GABONESE REPUBLIC, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

NOMINATION OF ERIKA LIZABETH MORITSUGU TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

NOMINATION OF RICHARD A. KENNEDY TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AIRPORTS AUTHORITY

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations, which the clerk will report.

The assistant bill clerk read the nominations of Cynthia H. Akuetteh, of the District of Columbia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Gabonese Republic, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United State of America to the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe; Erika Lizabeth Moritsugu, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; and Richard A. Kennedy, of Pennsylvania, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority for a term expiring May 30, 2016.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that all available debate time with respect to the nominations in this series be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON AKUETTEH NOMINATION

Hearing no further debate, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Cynthia H. Akuetteh, of the District of Columbia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Gabonese Republic, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON MORITSUGU NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Erika Lizabeth Moritsugu, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON KENNEDY NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Richard A. Kennedy, of Pennsylvania, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority for a term expiring May 30, 2016?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Maryland.

MAKING EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I rise to speak on the pending business before the Senate.

The Senate just achieved cloture on the motion to proceed to the emergency supplemental funding bill. Let me explain to the people who are watching this either in the gallery or on C–SPAN.

The Senate has creaky rules, and these creaky rules are to make sure we can cool the passions that may be raging in the Nation at any given time so we can duly give consideration, that

debate can be diligent and we won't be gripped by the fire of the moment or the passion of the motion. I appreciate that. However, now these rules require us to take a lot of time to get to the meat of the matter.

We are now debating a motion to proceed to legislation related to supplementing existing funding to meet new emerging crises. The Senate votes on a motion to proceed not to the bill itself but on whether we should even go to the bill. So what we are debating now is whether we should proceed to the emergency supplemental funding bill. I want to say yes. Yes, vote on the motion to proceed. Let's get on with it. Let's have a real debate on real issues. Thirty hours has been set aside to debate whether we should proceed. I am here to say let's proceed, let's yield back our time, and let's get on the bill. We have a lot of things we need to get done in the next 48 hours. I want to see this emergency supplemental funding bill debated and voted on.

We have three elements in this bill that meet compelling needs—need for our neighbors in our country; need for our treasured ally, the State of Israel; as well as need for a crisis at the border where children literally are marching across Central America in search of refugee status. We need to deal with all three of these issues.

This emergency funding bill is about neighbor helping neighbor.

First of all, it is about our own country. Wildfires are raging in the West. Over the last year 39 States have faced wildfires. Right this very minute eight Western States are coping with unbelievable wildfires, some of the largest fires in their history. What happens? Vast amounts of territory are going up in smoke. We are losing towns, businesses, homes. Our firefighters are worn out, as well as our first responders, and they need help. This legislation will provide $615 million to the States facing this horrific Armageddon-like emergency.

In addition, this legislation includes $225 million to replenish the rockets that are being used by Israel, deploying technology called the Iron Dome. The Iron Dome is a missile defense system that is destroying the rockets being sent into Israel by Hamas. The technology is working, but they are using up the rockets and they need to be replenished.

Then there is the humanitarian crisis at our border. We have $2.7 billion to meet the needs of children seeking refuge, in order to be able to deal with placing them while we determine their legal status but also being able to fight the crime of the narcotraffickers and the human traffickers who are creating this surge of children.

This is a total emergency funding level of $3.57 billion. Why do we call it an emergency? Well, because under the law we can't just say this is an emergency. In order to get emergency funding, we have to meet the criteria of the Budget Control Act of 2011. The need has to be urgent. It has to be temporary. It has to be unforeseen. It is either to prevent the loss of life or in the interests of our national security. All three of these areas of funding meet this need.

Under emergency funding, there are no offsets. That means we don't take from another important program being funded by the U.S. Government to meet that need. So in order to meet the needs of Iron Dome, we don't take from other national defense money. It will replenish that. When we help with wildfires, we don't take from other important areas, such as agriculture or interior or from other bills. This will help to not only meet the need but also not place an additional burden on other communities.

Now I wish to speak about the urgency. This firefighting help is really needed now. We listened to the Senators from Western States. We see the photographs literally showing parts of our country going up in smoke. The Forest Service—the agency that actually is in charge of dealing with this—will run out of money in August. As I said, last year these wildfires burned in 39 States.

Then we look at Iron Dome. Hamas—this violent terrorist organization that actually rejects Israel's right to even exist—from its tunnels is showering Israel with rockets. Iron Dome, Arrow Head, and David's Sling are missile defense systems designed to help them. The up-close missile defense system is Iron Dome. This bill will make sure we replace the interceptor rockets that are being used to protect them against this showering of rockets. The Israeli Embassy spoke to my staff yesterday. There have been over 2,000 Hamas rockets fired in the last week. Israel needs to replenish these rockets.

Then there is the issue of the surge of unaccompanied children presenting themselves at our border, asking for refugee status. In order to really be able to meet this crisis—and they are coming in by the thousands; 59,000 kids have come this year. We know the immigration and customs service, if we don't meet this emergency funding, will run out of money in August. Border Patrol will run out of money in early September. That doesn't mean the Border Patrol agents or the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents will stop working; it means the Department of Homeland Security—22 agencies—will take money out of existing funds to fund this. So it means they could take money out of Federal emergency management just as we are going into hurricane season, just as we are in high tornado season. We could be taking money out of FEMA to put it in Border Patrol unless we do this emergency funding. We have to do it.

Health and Human Services runs out of money in August. They are the ones in charge when the children present themselves while their legal status is being determined. The children must be taken care of in a humane way, the American way. We don't treat children in an abusive manner. It means we will feed them, we will clothe them, we will shelter them, we will meet any emergency health needs they have, and we need to do that while we determine their legal status.

My bill—the supplemental I am presenting—helps accelerate the determination of their legal status. My legislation and this supplemental spending actually provide more immigration judges and legal representation for the children. That is so we can quickly determine if they have a right to asylum while we are also taking care of them. We need to be able to do that.

I hope others will get the briefings that I had and visit the border the way I did to find this out. The reason we have a crisis at the border is because we have a crisis in Central America. This legislation provides the money to do this. People say root causes such as poverty have been going on for years. This doesn't only deal with poverty. We want to work with the governments of Central America to really go after the narcotraffickers, the human traffickers, and the coyotes engaged in smuggling.

Why do we want to do that? If we ask these children where are the home towns they are from, they will give us the names of little cities and little towns, and when we look at their poverty rate, we find the poverty rate in these communities has been consistent for a number of years. That is a sad circumstance. But when we look at the crime rate, the murder rate, the recruitment into violent gangs, the recruitment into human trafficking, with the threat of death or torture—that is where these kids are coming from.

We have to go after the criminals in Central America and not treat these children as though they are criminals. We cannot treat children in this country as though they are the criminals. We need to go after the real criminals in Central America using our assets and working with the assets in Central America. They have programs and they have plans. Honduras is a great example of what they are trying to do. They need our help. If we don't want the crisis at our border, we need to deal with the crisis in Central America.

That also deals with our insatiable, unending, vociferous appetite for drugs. The drugs have created the narcoterrorists. Once people start selling drugs, they are willing to sell women and children like commodities, and if they are willing to sell women and children like commodities, then that is where the vial, repugnant practice of human trafficking and human smuggling and even a new form of slavery—sexual slavery—begins.

These children are on the march. And when we talk to these children, we learn they are terrific children. They are brave and gutsy. When we talk to the boys, we learn they don't want to be part of the gangs. They want to get

out. They want to get out, so they start this long march from their home country to Mexico to make it on the Rio Grande on rafts and by swimming and so on so they can make it to our border. When we talk to the girls, we learn the girls want to go to school and get an education. They don't want to be recruited into these vial circumstances. These are earnest, hard-working children who want to have safety, who want to have a future, and we want to be able to see, by interviewing them, if they qualify for refugee status. If they don't, they will have to go back home, but if they do, they get to stay here. So they deserve the protection under law. We need to pass this legislation.

This bill is a funding bill. It does not include immigration legislation. We say those kinds of things can either be brought up in another way or another method, but this is a clean funding bill. When I say ''clean,'' it means it has no legislative language on it related to immigration. So I hope we can pass this legislation.

Now, I have listened to my own constituents, and many of them are saying to me: Hey, BARB, we are not against these kids. In fact, recent polling says 69 percent of the American people say if they are refugees, we should take care of them and they have a right to determine their legal status. But many of my constituents say: Hey, BARB, what about us? What does this mean? You are going to spend more money? What about my schools? When do we get help? My kids need help. They need schools; they need health care. You talk to families now. They are getting ready to go back to school. Many parents cannot wait for sales-tax-free day in Maryland, where you can get your backpack and your school supplies and your little clothes and shoes. My God, the cost of kids' shoes now is a small fortune, and they will outgrow them by the time they get to Thanksgiving. Parents are looking for bargains, for deals, to be able to do this. They are not hostile, but they wonder about them.

I want to say to them, I hear you. I was touched by a very poignant story over the weekend about how we have a food bank at Steelworkers Hall in Baltimore. Bethlehem Steel closed. It will never, ever, ever come back. The steelworkers of America, who contributed to the United Way, were always the first in line if a blood bank was necessary. Now many of those who lost their job are using the very food bank that they once donated to.

That story was so moving because we have lost our manufacturing. We have just lost a bill earlier today on bringing jobs back home—something I know the Presiding Officer is for, I sure am for, and so on. So I know American families are hurting. Yes, they are. But I want to bring out that the cost of this bill is the same amount of money as we are going to spend on training the Afghan National Security Forces. Did you know that? So we are going to spend $4 billion—that is ''billion'' as in ''Barb,'' not ''million'' as in ''Mikulski''—$4 billion to train the Afghan National Security Forces. I am not going to debate the merits of that. But we can spend money all over like that and we cannot spend money at our border and also for threats to our border because of narco terrorism that breeds other vile, repugnant, heinous behavior? I think we have to get real here.

The reason I want a supplemental—that is urgent and meets that criteria—is that we do not have to take the money from other important programs that do help America's families in education, in health, in job retraining in order to bring our jobs back home.

So I really do hope we pass this bill. Not spending money will not save money. It means we will just take out of existing programs and the American people will pay for it doubly. They will pay for it through inaction, which will ultimately cost more. They will pay for it because they will lose programs they thought they were going to have access to or there will be limited availability.

We have a chance here now to help our neighbors in our Western States. I know Wisconsin has been hit by it terribly, and we are so sorry for the loss of property and the danger to that community. It will help a treasured ally, Israel, which we must. Also, we will help our own country. The way to protect our border is two ways: fight it in Central America and also show what we stand for. If children are applying for refugee status, they should have their day in court and under the law proceed.

So, Madam President, we are now on this motion to proceed. Let's get on with it. Let's yield back our time. Let's get to the bill. Let's get the job done. I hope at the end of the day the vote will be ''yes.''

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I want to talk principally in the next few minutes about a bill that Senator BOXER and I have introduced this week on Israel and talk about what is going on in Israel, but on the work that is the bill before us right now, I am always hesitant to disagree with the chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee, my chairwoman, my good friend, Senator MIKULSKI. I just think we are headed in the wrong direction here.

Providing money, and not trying to solve this problem, not sending the right message, I think is a mistake. People are leaving these dangerous countries—if they are dangerous to be in, they are also dangerous to travel through, they are dangerous to leave.

One of the concerns I have had during this whole debate is how many kids leave their home country and never get to the American border? What happens to those kids? We have heard stories in briefings that were not classified about kids who never get here because they get sold into some sort of terrible situation, even kids whose organs are harvested and sold that way. This cannot be something we need to continue to encourage.

In fact, if you do qualify for asylum in the United States, there is a way to do that. That is why we have embassies. That is why we have consulates. Surely, it is safer for someone in Guatemala City to go to the American Embassy in Guatemala City than it is to leave Guatemala City and try to come through their country, through other countries, through Mexico to get here, under the control of people who have tried to make the most of the President's announcement that if you get here, you can stay here.

This is not the Red Cross bringing kids here. This is not some altruistic group bringing kids here. These are people who are taking advantage of misinformation in their country about what happens if you get here. And some of these kids do not get here. Doing this in this way—money without policy; acting like somehow it does not cost anything if it is an emergency, and so we can continue to do everything the chairwoman mentioned that needs to be done in the United States, but we can also do this because it is a supplemental, it is an emergency, and it is more money we borrow from somebody else—life is full of choices, and for our government we have choices.

There are things that need to be done right now to send a message: Do not leave your home country. The door is not wide open, no matter what the President's announcement in 2011 led people to believe.

The law needs to be changed so that immigrants from all countries coming to our borders are treated just like immigrants from Mexico and Canada coming to our borders. They have an immediate hearing within 7 days or so. Almost all of them are told: You have to go back. Once that happens, almost all of them stop coming.

It would be a mistake to do this in this way, and I believe this bill never winds up on the President's desk. The House of Representatives does not share this view, even if a majority of the Senate does.

We need to send a message to Guatemala, to El Salvador, to every other country that the door is not open. Just getting here is not enough. This is not a safe ''Disneyland-type'' ride to the United States of America. This is a very, very dangerous thing for you to try to do, and you should not try to do it. When you get here, it is not going to be successful.

Again, let me say, if you have a case that you should have asylum in this country, there is a way you do that which is much safer than showing up at the border. We should not encourage the danger that these kids go through. I think the case is very dramatic on the side that cares for the lives of these

kids. We should send the message strongly and now: Do not come the way you are coming now. The kids who get to the border—we are concerned about what happens to them as a country because of who we are. We should be equally concerned about the kids who never get to the border because of this false message we have sent.

U.S.-ISRAEL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP ACT

But, Madam President, let me spend a few minutes talking about a bill that Senator BOXER and I introduced this week, the U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014. This is an updated version of legislation we first introduced in March 2013.

This bill that was introduced this week is already backed by more than three-quarters of the Senate. I am hoping we figure out how to get this done and get this done this week. There has never been a more important time to send a message to the world and to Israel about this relationship, about what it means to us, about how committed we are to it.

This legislation reaffirms our unwavering commitment to Israel's security and the strong relationship that goes back to the founding of Israel. It supports deepened U.S.-Israel cooperation on defense, including continued U.S. assistance for the Iron Dome. By the way, the Iron Dome assistance in the Defense appropriations bill that the Appropriations Committee approved, that is the way to fund the Iron Dome. Do the work for the fiscal year that begins October 1. We are 2 months and a couple days from the time this fiscal year is over. We should be having bills on the floor that talk about the Iron Dome, but it should be the Defense bill. It should not be some bill that we are talking about because we are unwilling to go through the regular process.

But we do in this bill talk about the Iron Dome. We reiterate our support to negotiating a settlement, a political settlement that the Government of Israel is for where you would have two states, but both of those states have to recognize each other. You cannot have two states where Hamas and others that are significant parts apparently now of the coalition on the other side deny that Israel has a right to exist. But we do support the Israeli concept that we want to have two states peacefully coexisting. That is reiterated here. But it is also clearly understood that you cannot have one of those states say the other one does not have a right to exist.

We have a longstanding relationship here. Really it dates back to the very moment that Israel was founded. My fellow Missourian, President Truman, in great leadership, decided we would immediately recognize Israel, and that moment, that decision, that commitment from the United States continues today through security, through energy, through trade. We would like to make that clear and make that clear this week.

What does the U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act do?

First of all, it authorizes an increase of $200 million in the value of U.S. weapons held in Israel, to a total of $1.8 billion. What does that mean? Does that mean we are spending $200 million more? No. It means we are putting more of our equipment in Israel, with the clear understanding that it is there for us to use in the time of a crisis. It is also there for Israel to have access to when they need it. And when they use it, they pay us back and replenish that stockpile that we have strategically placed in Israel for our future use and for an immediate challenge to Israel where they may need to look at that stockpile of our weapons there.

It requires the administration to take steps to include Israel in the top-tier category for license-free exports. The top-tier category of looking at the technologies we share with any other country we would suggest you should also be able to share with Israel. If they are uniquely held in our country, technologies that we do not want to share with anybody, they are not considered in that category.

It authorizes the President to carry out cooperation between the United States and Israel on a range of policy issues. They include defense; water, things like the water salinization efforts that Israel is, frankly, ahead of us in and we need to understand, as we look forward to water needs; homeland security, alternative fuel technologies, more cooperation in cyber security. All those things are authorized in this bill.

There is new language that encourages the administration to work with Israel to help the country gain entry status in the Visa Waiver Program, which would make it easier for Israeli citizens to travel to the United States without first having to get a waiver, but it would also make it easier for people in our country to go there.

It requires the administration to provide more frequent and more detailed assessments of the status of a qualitative military advantage that we have committed that Israel would always have. This bill that Senator BOXER and I have introduced just says we are going to check that even more often and in more detail to be absolutely sure in that troubled part of the world that Israel's adversaries look at Israel and can clearly understand that Israel has an advantage that makes up for the difference in its size.

It strengthens the collaboration between the United States and Israel on energy development. It encourages increased cooperation in academic, business, and governmental sectors.

This legislation amends previous legislation related to how people can travel between our two countries. We do have a unique situation. In the recent fighting in Israel, two American citizens, members of the Israeli Defense Forces with dual citizenship in this country and in Israel, were killed in that fighting. This is one of the unique relationships we have in the world where people actually leave our communities, go to another country they also care about, fight in the uniform of that country, because this country is our ally. We need to look for ways to continue to emphasize that.

It authorizes but does not require the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to waive the nonimmigration refusal rate requirement for Israel, but only if Israel meets all of the other program requirements, and then it is still authorized but not required.

This is a particularly important time to send this message. This is an important time to send this message of continued support between our two countries. Israel—we see, looking at the Gaza situation today, during recent months uncertainty in Egypt, support from terrorist groups all over the world, weaponry, missiles taken into Gaza, money that could have been spent on concrete that could have been used to build houses, schools, hospitals, and places for jobs, was used to build tunnels so that people could come into Israel and attack Israel.

Certainly the Government of Israel and the citizens of Israel look at this moment and think: No time to quit now with this job partially done. Some of the messages that have been sent from our country have not been helpful and encouraging in regard to what has to happen in the middle of this conflict.

But this kind of legislation sends a message, the message we should send. I hope we can get to it this week. I am pleased that three-quarters of our colleagues—I think that number is right at 80—have cosponsored this legislation. The legislation was just introduced this week. So if there is any question to our friends in Israel, and maybe more importantly others around the world, where the Senate, and hopefully by the end of the week the Congress, stands, this action sends that message. I cannot think of a more critical time to send that message. I hope we see this bill on the floor and send that message this week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam President, I rise today to speak in favor of a critical issue for Coloradans; that is, fighting, mitigating, and recovering from wildfire. Recent history has shown my State that there is no greater threat to our communities, water supplies, and our special way of life than wildfire. Successive megafires over the past few years have broken records faster than they can be written down.

Even today's flash floods in recently burned areas are a reminder that after the embers of wildfires have cooled, their destruction lingers for months and years. I used to joke that Coloradans were strong and prepared for anything, come hell or high water. But I had no idea that the past several years would bring both, with modern

megafires and floods devastating thousands of households and businesses. We have endured these tests, and we have communities all over the State, such as Black Forest, that are rebuilding. But these recent disasters and the fires burning today in Colorado, California, Washington, and across the West show that the status quo is unacceptable. The cost of inaction for homeowners and first responders alike is too high to not act. That is why I have come to the floor today to speak in favor of a few smart, bipartisan, and fiscally responsible bills that are in front of our Congress right now.

These bills, taken together, address wildfires in a comprehensive way by attacking the problem before, during, and after a fire. So if I might, I want to share some of the elements in these important pieces of legislation.

First, I want to focus on what we can do before a wildfire at the individual and community level to reduce risk. There are many studies, numerous studies, that single out the most important factor in protecting homes. That is, if you do mitigation work. You involve yourself with ignition-resistant construction techniques. You reduce hazardous fuels around your home.

That is one of the reasons I introduced the commonsense legislation that is entitled the Wildfire Prevention Act of 2013. It will help homeowners in communities better reduce the risk of wildfire damages upfront. I am very pleased that the bill is moving forward in a bipartisan fashion. I am working with Senator INHOFE as my Republican partner. In the House, two Members of our delegation from Colorado, Congressmen POLIS and TIPTON, have joined with their California colleagues to lead this bill through the House. That is what Coloradans expect from their elected representatives, collaboration for the good of our State and country.

This bill is a game changer, not just in my State but across fire-prone communities in the West and increasingly in other parts of our country, the upper Midwest, the Northeast, Florida. You name it, wildfire has continued to be a threat more broadly across our country.

What this act will do, the Wildfire Prevention Act, is it will allow the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, to provide hazard mitigation grants to States and localities to implement these mitigation projects. These mitigation projects will help put Colorado communities and public lands managers on the offensive. We put our communities and our public lands managers in front of the threat of megafires. We can head them off before they even start. It is an idea that came from Colorado. It is more than just a commonsense idea; it is a fiscally responsible approach to dealing with the threat of wildfire.

Why do I say that? Well, studies show that for every dollar you put on hazard mitigation upfront, it saves an average of $4 down the line if you have to fight a fire. For that reason, and the other ones I mentioned, I am going to keep doing everything I possibly can to move this bipartisan bill to the President's desk this year.

The second point I want to make and discuss with colleagues is that we must fundamentally change and modernize how the Federal Government funds wildfire-suppression operations. That is another way of saying fighting fires, wildfire-suppression operations. The rising severity of modern fires has caused land management agencies to divert resources away from the critical fire prevention efforts I just described to fight fires that are already burning. This is a vicious self-perpetuating cycle that is called ''fire borrowing,'' which then only increases the risk of catastrophic fires later.

It is a backwards way of budgeting. It is classic robbing Peter to pay Paul and leaves us all to bear much larger costs, most notably our communities in Colorado. That is why I joined Senators Wyden and Crapo on their bipartisan bill that would finally separate wildfires like other natural disasters and help make sure that we are not fighting fires that could have been prevented. This is a sensible approach for many reasons. It has been cosponsored by 120 Members of Congress in the House and the Senate. It has been endorsed by over 150 groups, ranging from the timber industry, to the environmental community. That speaks volumes about the utility of this and the broad support, obviously.

My hometown State newspaper, the Denver Post, put it this way earlier this month, ''Using disaster fund money for wildfires could solve a lot of problems long-term, and we hope Congress sees it that way.'' I also hope my colleagues see it that way. If we are serious here about helping prevent future wildfires and reducing the threats to lives and property, we all join together and pass this legislation.

Proper wildfire budgeting and the use of disaster relief funds would help break this vicious cycle of fire borrowing and allow our natural resource agencies to manage healthy forests, instead of fighting megafires. I have the great privilege of chairing on the energy committee, which the Presiding Officer serves on, the National Parks Subcommittee. I know all too well the problems this bill could solve. If we adopted this measure, this new way of wildfire budgeting, we could ensure that the resources are available for our national forest supervisors to reduce hazardous fuels, provide quality recreation experiences, and provide the timber supply to sustain a diverse forest products industry. It would be there for the uses we need them to be there for.

We could do this also while upgrading our safe, modern air tanker fleet in such a way that would keep our communities and firefighters safe. So this legislation I just described is in the emergency supplemental appropriations measure before the Senate here today. We really need to pass it. It is crucial. It is an opportunity we have to grab. In the supplemental appropriations act before this body, there is $615 million to prevent fire borrowing this year, get resources on the ground fighting these blazes, and help our resource agencies plan unto the future.

I know House Appropriations Chairman ROGERS. The Presiding Officer and I both know Chairman ROGERS. He did say that he did not include wildfire funding in their supplemental because, in his words, ''there is no urgency for such money.'' I have to respectfully disagree with my friend Chairman ROGERS. I know Coloradans, as well as people in Washington State, California, and many States across the West would not only disagree, they would strenuously disagree. I would invite Chairman ROGERS to come out to the West and see firsthand how urgent the situation is for our communities.

Let me finish with a couple of remarks about other elements in this supplemental.

My colleague Senator BLUNT from Missouri, just spoke of the Iron Dome system. The supplemental includes emergency funding for Israel's Iron Dome system. It has intercepted hundreds of Hamas rockets targeting civilian areas over the last several weeks. It has literally been a lifesaver for our Israeli allies many times over.

I chair the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, which has responsibility for the Iron Dome and working with Israel and the Israeli Defense Forces. I heard today from an Israeli who said the system is miraculous. As Hamas continues to rain rockets down, we need to ensure that this system continues to protect our friends and allies in Israel.

Finally, this supplemental includes critical resources to help address the root causes that have led to the humanitarian crisis at our southern border. So, in summary, I am glad we have moved forward on debating this crucial supplemental appropriations bill. Let's move to an up-or-down vote as soon as we possibly can. This is a timely debate. Passage of this bill is too important to allow partisan gridlock to interfere. So let's come together, let's show the American people we can meet our obligations and rise above partisanship.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

POLICIES FOCUS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I rise today to talk about the disturbing leadership failure we are seeing out of the White House. Over the past year the President and his administration have seemed increasingly out of touch with the many challenges facing our country at home and abroad. Two weeks ago the President's spokesman told reporters, ''I think that there have

been a number of situations in which you have seen this administration intervene in a meaningful way that substantially furthered American interests and substantially improved the tranquility of the global community.'' Let my repeat that. ''Substantially improved the tranquility of the global community.''

Well, fighting is going on right now in Israel and the Gaza Strip. Russia is actively involved in a war in Ukraine and recently played a role in bringing down a Malaysian airliner with 298 people onboard.

Iraq is virtually in chaos. Much of the country is under the control of a terrorist organization considered by al Qaeda to be too extreme.

Those are just some of the most serious trouble spots that we face right now. Yet the President's spokesman claims that ''there have been a number of situations in which you have seen this administration intervene in a meaningful way that have substantially improved the tranquility of the global community.''

Not only can I not think of a number of situations in which the President's action has substantially improved tranquility, I find it hard to think of one. We are actually looking at more points of serious instability than we have seen in decades.

Writing in the Washington Post over the weekend, the paper's editorial page noted that during the President's administration: ''we have witnessed as close to a laboratory experiment on the effects of U.S. disengagement as the real world is ever likely to provide.''

Disengagement is a good description of the President's attitude because right now the President doesn't even seem to be paying attention. Obviously America can't fix all of the world problems, but strong American leadership can help, as we have seen many times over the past century.

Strong American leadership, however, requires a President who is fully engaged and this President is anything but.

Tens of thousands of children are arriving at our southern border. The President is playing pool. When a plane is shot down in Ukraine, the President keeps right on with his campaign schedule.

Earlier this month, as thousands of unaccompanied children were making their dangerous trip across the southern border—because of the President's statement if they got here they could stay—the President traveled to Texas, but he didn't go to assess the situation himself. He was, as the Associated Press reported, ''primarily in Texas to raise money for Democrats.''

Weeks later, despite taking multiple trips to fundraise for Democrats, the President still hasn't visited the border, despite calls to visit from members of his own party. Indeed, the President has largely stopped even discussing the crisis. This is the same President whose spokesman described him as having substantially improved the tranquility of the global community.

Our world is facing a number of very serious crises now, and the President seems completely unaware of it. Unfortunately, when it comes to domestic issues, the President seems equally out of touch.

The President has recently taken to telling his audience that ''by almost every economic measure, we're doing a whole lot better now than we were when I came into office.''

Try telling that to the American families who are doing worse. Average household income has dropped by nearly $3,000 on the President's watch. Meanwhile, prices have risen. Food prices are higher. The price of gasoline has almost doubled. College costs continue to soar.

Health care premiums which the President promised would fall by $2,500 have increased by almost $3,000, and they are still climbing.

Combine high prices with declining income and we get a whole lot of families who were once comfortably in the middle class are now struggling to make ends meet. The Obama administration's economy provides few opportunities for these families to improve their situation.

In 2009 the President's advisers predicted that the unemployment rate would fall below 6 percent in 2012. Two years later unemployment still hasn't fallen below 6 percent. The only reason the unemployment rate is as low as it is is because so many Americans have given up looking for work and dropped out of the labor force altogether. If the labor force participation rate were as high today as it was when the President took office, our unemployment rate would be about 10 percent.

Even when jobs do become available, too often they are low-paying jobs, not the kinds of jobs that help middle-class families achieve financial security or move low-income families into the middle class.

Take the most recent jobs report. Under the President's policies, the economy lost 523,000 full-time jobs and gained 799,000 part-time jobs last month, which is the largest 1-month jump in part-time employment in 20 years.

I will give the President this, he does talk. He talks about helping middle-class families, but he has steadily opposed measures to help them.

Republicans have proposed numerous measures to create good-paying jobs and increase opportunity. We have urged the President to approve the Keystone Pipeline and the tens of thousands of jobs it would support. In fact, Democrats have urged the President to approve it too. The President said no.

Republicans have proposed fixing the 30-hour workweek provision in ObamaCare, which is cutting workers' hours and wages. The President has said no.

Republicans have proposed repealing the medical device tax, which has already eliminated thousands of jobs in the medical device industry and will eliminate many more if it isn't repealed. A lot of Democrats agree with that position. The President said no.

The President hasn't just said no to measures that would help the middle class, he has implemented policies that have hit the middle class with tremendous financial burdens. Chief among the President's burdensome policies of course is ObamaCare. The President told an audience in Wilmington, DE, the other day that thanks to his administration, millions more now have the peace of mind of having quality, affordable health care if they need it.

Try telling that to the Americans who lost their health care plans as a result of the President's law and were forced to replace them with plans that cost more and offered less. Try telling that to the Americans who obtained health care plans under the Affordable Care Act only to discover their plan didn't cover the doctor they wanted it to cover. Tell it to the families paying thousands of dollars more each year in premiums, deductibles, and copays thanks to the President's health care law. That does not even mention the drag the health care law is having on the economy.

Part of the reason there are so few opportunities for American families to get ahead is because the President's health care law is making it more difficult for businesses to afford to hire new workers.

Now the President is piling up his budget-busting health care law with a national energy tax that will drive up energy bills for American families and put hundreds of thousands of Americans out of work.

Nero may have fiddled while Rome burned, the President fundraises.

The Washington Post reports:

> In his two presidential terms combined, Bush hosted 318 fundraisers. Obama has already smashed that number with 393 events to date.

And he still has 2½ years to go in his administration.

Instead of urging the President to focus on crises at home and abroad, Democrats have taken a leaf from the President's book and spent the past several months focused on elections. Rather than taking up legislation to provide real help for struggling middle-class families, Senate Democrats have spent months—months—on political show votes and designed-to-fail legislation they hope will win them a few votes in November.

Our country is facing challenges at home and abroad. Campaigning has its place, but in Washington Members of Congress and the President should be focused on solving the problems facing our country, supporting middle-class families, and restoring America's economic vitality.

It is time for Democrats and the President to stop focusing on politics and start focusing on the policies we need to create jobs, to grow the economy, and support freedom and opportunity at home and around the world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

Mr. CARDIN. Next week, between August 4 and August 6, the United States will welcome leaders from across the African Continent to Washington, DC.

I first wish to acknowledge the work of our colleague Senator COONS, the chairman of the Subcommittee on African Affairs, Foreign Relations Committee, for the work he has done on behalf of the Senate to make this opportunity a real chance to strengthen the economic ties, to strengthen the strategic ties between the countries of Africa and the United States.

We expect there will be robust discussions that will be encouraging economic growth, unlocking opportunities, and fostering greater ties between our country and Africa.

One of the areas that I hope will get some debate and discussion during next week's meetings will be a key government trade initiative that makes these ties possible; that is, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, AGOA.

AGOA provides qualifying sub-Saharan countries duty-free access to the U.S. market for a wide variety of products. It was first signed into law in 2000 by President Clinton and has been strengthened and extended by Congress and both President Bush and President Obama.

AGOA enjoyed broad bipartisan support throughout the years because its advocates recognize the crucial role Africa plays in the global economy.

The African Continent is one of the world's fastest growing regions. For instance, by 2035, it is estimated that Africa will have a larger working-age population than China. I mention that because it is certainly in our interest to have stable partners who develop their economy and can work in strategic partnership with the United States, but it also means we are going to have stronger markets for U.S.-produced goods and products. As we have a growing middle class in Africa, it represents a market for U.S. manufacturers, producers, and farmers, which creates more jobs in the United States.

AGOA allows the United States and Africa to both take advantage of this dynamism. Since the act was fully implemented in 2001, U.S. imports under AGOA have tripled. Nonoil AGOA trade has increased fourfold.

Some of the sectors that AGOA has helped open are apparel, textiles, jewelry, handicrafts, and electronics. AGOA has created hundreds of thousands of jobs in those sectors, most of those in the apparel sector, where women comprise 75 to 90 percent of the industry.

In sub-Saharan Africa women are at the highest risk of being poor. AGOA has tackled barriers to poverty reduction by eliminating tariffs on goods that come from many sectors in which women are employed.

Modern trade agreements and initiatives are much more than just lowering tariffs. It also involves dealing with good governance practices.

In an increasing global economy, we can no longer consider issues such as labor rights, human rights, and good governance as issues that are separate from trade.

Trade with our country is a benefit with deserving nations that share our values. Strong commitments to the rule of law and human rights are an essential part of those values and level the playing field between the United States and our partners in the global marketplace.

AGOA is no exception. The Act has been encouraging these commitments since it was first enacted. In other words, this is not only an opportunity by lowering barriers to our markets, it is also about expectations and enforcement that the African countries will improve their good governance and their labor rights so we have a more level playing field.

To qualify for AGOA benefits, countries must establish or make continual progress on measures that promote good governance and a fair economic system. These include fundamental rights, the rule of law, a system that combats corruption, and policies that increase access to health care, education, and expand physical infrastructure. In other words, the African countries involved that take advantage of AGOA must have continuing progress on the good governance key issues.

For example, as part of the annual AGOA review process, the U.S. Department of Labor examines AGOA countries' efforts to implement and enforce workers' rights, including the right of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively, prohibitions on forced or compulsory labor, a minimum age for the employment of children, and acceptable conditions of work.

These are the International Labour Organization standards. The ILO standards are very much a part of the progress we made under AGOA in the African countries. Improvements in these areas have been shown to foster the kind of inclusive economic growth and opportunities that raise families and nations out of poverty.

We understand that by developing stronger economies in African countries, we are building more stable African countries, countries that are more reliable to be partners with the United States in dealing with global issues.

We understand that by doing that we are going to have a stronger partner sharing U.S. values. This is just one of the tools we use. We also use our transparency initiatives. We included in the Dodd-Frank legislation transparency on extractive industries that operate globally but also in Africa so we could find and make sure the wealth of a country is actually going to its people. That requires good governance. AGOA is one of our tools to accomplish that good governance.

So these countries that have mineral wealth, the wealth is not a curse but truly benefits the people of that country.

AGOA helps, the transparency initiatives that we passed help, but this is the issue: The current authorization of AGOA expires on September 30, 2015. Once again, Madam President, as you know, as you worked so hard, we need predictability in our law. Short-term extensions don't do much good. What we need is a long-term economic commitment with the continent of Africa.

A bipartisan effort in Congress to extend and improve this important legislation is already underway. The U.S. Trade Representative has been reviewing AGOA's successes as well as the areas that can be improved. Later today in the Senate Finance Committee we will be holding a hearing on AGOA, and Ambassador Froman will be one of the witnesses at that hearing. So we will have a chance to work together, bipartisan members of Congress with the administration.

One of the areas we are looking at is strengthening the eligibility criteria to further incentivize improvements in human rights, and I will be talking about that in the Finance Committee. Another area is providing coordinated technical assistance and capacity building. This is very important. Too often trade and development policies operate on separate tracks. Granting trade preference means little without providing countries with the ability to take advantage of those benefits. We have development assistance that we provide to countries. We have trade that we do. Let's combine it and recognize that these trade opportunities can only be taken advantage of if the country has the capacity to deal with the issues we are talking about.

Capacity building is already underway in Africa. For instance, the Department of Labor provides capacity-building assistance to AGOA countries to improve workers' rights through partnerships with a broad range of organizations, from NGOs, to health organizations, to social and economic researchers. By providing this aid in a more efficient and clearly measurable fashion and seeking more input from local cooperatives and groups, we can help foster more sustainable growth in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The time to develop consensus on AGOA improvements is now. I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting and strengthening the AGOA Act so we can maintain this important tool to increase the trade relations between the United States and Africa and fight global poverty. I look forward to seeing the results of next week's meetings with the African leaders. It is my sincere expectation that these meetings will produce concrete ways we can improve the ties between Africa and the United States, and I certainly expect it will help us lead to the improvement and reauthorization of AGOA.

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

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

USA FREEDOM Act

Mr. FRANKEN. Madam President, I rise today to talk about the transparency provisions in the USA FREEDOM Act. I am a proud cosponsor of Chairman LEAHY's bill, and I am particularly proud to have written its key transparency provisions with my friend Senator DEAN HELLER of Nevada. As I said yesterday, both of us are indebted to Senator LEAHY for his leadership on this issue.

For over a year now there has been a steady stream of news stories about the National Security Agency's surveillance programs. Yet right now, by law, Americans still cannot get very basic information about these programs.

Americans understand that we need to give due weight to privacy on the one hand and national security on the other. But when they lack an even rough sense of the scope of the government's surveillance programs, they have no way to know if the government is getting that balance right. There needs to be more transparency.

The controversy unleashed by Edward Snowden's disclosures has been going on for over a year. Yet Americans still don't know the actual number of people whose information has been collected under these programs. They don't even know how many of these people are Americans, and they have no way of knowing how many of these Americans had their information actually looked at by government officials as opposed to just being held in a database. This lack of transparency is pretty breathtaking.

I believe the provisions Senator HELLER and I wrote will go a long way toward addressing and fixing this. It will give Americans the information they need to judge the government's surveillance programs for themselves.

Three programs are at the center of this debate: the telephone call records program, the collection, through 2011, on Americans' Internet communications records, and the so-called PRISM Program that targets the communications of foreigners abroad.

Our provisions would require detailed annual reports for each program. The government will have to tell the public how many people have had their information collected and how many of those people are likely American. For the call records program and the PRISM Program, the government will also have to say how many times it has run a specific search for an American's data.

By creating these reporting requirements, the government will have an incentive to also disclose the number of Americans who have actually had their information reviewed by government officials, and we give the government authority to do that too.

We don't just require the government to issue more detailed transparency reports. We are also helping American Internet and phone companies tell their customers about the government requests for customer information they are receiving. For years those companies have been under gag orders. As a result, people around the world think the American Internet companies are giving up far more information to the government than they likely are. Those companies are losing billions of dollars because people think they are handing over all of their customers' data to the NSA.

Our provisions expand the options that companies have to issue their own transparency reports, and they let companies issue those reports more quickly. Our provisions give the public two ways to check on the government—government transparency reports and company reports as well.

Like all major bills, this bill is a compromise, and we didn't get everything we wanted, but our provisions will go a long way toward giving the American people the information they need to evaluate the government's surveillance program.

After 9/11, our Nation faced a security crisis. Most Americans had never lived through anything like that. We are now experiencing a crisis of trust where a big part of the American public now thinks our intelligence agencies are out to spy on them, not on foreign countries.

The administration has committed to end the bulk collection of Americans' data, and Congress has written a bill to ban the bulk collection of Americans' data. But unless we pass these transparency provisions, Americans have no way to know if the government is making good on those promises. Our transparency provisions will force the government to prove annually and publicly that bulk collection is over. This is an unprecedented level of transparency and accountability which will allow the American people to decide for themselves whether the government is striking the right balance between privacy and security.

We should take up this bill as soon as possible so that Americans are not in the dark a single day longer. We should take it up so that American companies stop losing business because of misperceptions about their role in domestic surveillance. We should take this bill up so that Americans can get the information they need to hold their government to account.

TRIBUTE TO ALVARO BEDOYA

Before I yield the floor, I wish to take a moment to recognize and thank Alvaro Bedoya, my chief counsel, who is to my left. This is Alvaro's last week on my staff. Alvaro has been a member of my team since my very first day in office, and I have relied on and trusted his counsel on so many things in the 5 years since.

He has been instrumental in helping me launch and set the agenda for the Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology and the Law that I chair, and we would not have reached this point in working to make the NSA more transparent and accountable to the American people if it were not for Alvaro.

Alvaro's counsel has also been crucial as we have sought to improve our Nation's broken immigration system, as we fought for marriage equality and LGBT rights, including the right of all children to be free from bullying in schools, and as we work to ban apps that allow domestic abusers to stalk their victims.

Alvaro was even at my side during my very first week in office when the Judiciary Committee held confirmation hearings for Sonia Sotomayor to serve on the Supreme Court. That was my fifth day in the Senate, and I remember pulling some late nights preparing for that.

Alvaro's departure is bittersweet for me. I am, of course, sad to see Alvaro leave, but I am very excited for him as well. He will soon become the founding executive director of Georgetown Law School's new Center for Privacy and Technology. I have no doubt the folks at Georgetown soon will learn what I already know—that Alvaro is one of the most talented, intelligent, hardest working, decent, good-guy lawyers I know.

Thanks, Alvaro.

And I thank the Presiding Officer.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CORPORATE INVERSIONS

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, our Tax Code is tilted toward the rich and the powerful. Huge corporations hire armies of lobbyists and lawyers to create, expand, and protect every last corporate loophole. That is how we end up with a tax code that makes small businesses and restaurants and construction companies pay, that makes teachers and truckdrivers and nurses pay, but that allows huge American corporations to make billions of dollars in profits and not pay a single dime in taxes.

The Tax Code is rigged. Apparently, even this rigged game does not go far enough for some corporations. Those companies are taking advantage of a new move—a loophole that allows them to maintain all their operations in America but claim foreign citizenship so they can cut their U.S. taxes even further.

Here is how the loophole works. An American company merges with a