

would not act again to prevent a sequester, and we will work to ensure these spending cuts are prevented." It is of paramount interest to our members, and other older Americans, that you act to prevent these spending cuts as soon as possible.

The sudden cut to Medicare provider funding in 2018 would have an immediate and lasting impact, including fewer providers participating in Medicare and reduced access to care for Medicare beneficiaries. Health care providers may choose to stop accepting Medicare patients at a time when the Medicare population is growing by 10,000 new beneficiaries each day. Cutting reimbursement in 2018, and possibly each year thereafter, would discourage health care providers from treating this growing population. We need to protect and strengthen the Medicare program and ensure there is a health care workforce able and willing to take on new patients. Furthermore, Medicare Advantage plans and Part D prescription drug plans may charge higher premiums or cost-sharing in future years to make up for the cuts now. These cuts also come at a critical time in the program when providers are adopting the new payment systems according to MACRA (P.L. 114-10) which overwhelmingly passed Congress in 2015. An across-the-board cut to provider reimbursement will leave health care providers fewer resources to invest in their practices, and make them less inclined to take on risk in new alternative payment models. The sudden payment cut will stifle the transition toward payment based on value, having implications for future Medicare cost growth. In any event, Medicare beneficiaries will pay the price for these sudden and significant cuts.

Our members and other older Americans are counting on you to preserve their access to Medicare services, including their doctors and hospitals. We urge you to act swiftly to prevent automatic cuts to Medicare. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me or contact Joyce Rogers, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs.

Sincerely,

JO ANN C. JENKINS,
Chief Executive Officer.

Ms. COLLINS. I yield the floor.
The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The majority leader.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY BLUE CAMPAIGN AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate the message to accompany H.R. 1370.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the House agree to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1370) entitled "An Act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to issue Department of Homeland Security-wide guidance and develop training programs as part of the Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign, and for other purposes.", with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 1370.

I ask unanimous consent that Senator PAUL be recognized for up to 2

minutes to make a budget point of order; that Senator COLLINS or her designee be recognized for up to 2 minutes to make a motion to waive the point of order; that Senator LEAHY be recognized for up to 5 minutes; that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote on the motion to waive; and that following the disposition of the motion to waive, the Senate vote on the motion to concur, with a 60 affirmative vote threshold, all without any other intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, the question is, Do deficits matter? We have had a lot of debate over deficits and people complaining that tax cuts add to deficits. Well, tonight we will have a vote on whether we should honor what are called pay-go budget caps. We have had these in place for about 6 years. Congress has disobeyed their own rules 30 times as of tonight. These budget caps would keep spending in order. Yet we are going to have them waived tonight.

My budget point of order would actually say that we should not waive these budget caps. We should honor them because deficits do matter.

We borrow \$1 million a minute. The deficit this year will be over \$700 billion. The overall debt is \$20 trillion. We have a spending problem. We have rules to keep spending in check, and we disobey our own rules.

With that, I make a point of order on the statutory pay-go scorecard that says we should spend within certain limits. This budget point of order is pursuant to section 306 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, we simply cannot allow these harmful, indiscriminate budget cuts to be triggered. It is so disturbing to see our seniors worried about the possibility of a \$25 billion cut in the Medicare Program. That is a 4-percent reduction. That would affect healthcare providers and healthcare services. There is no need for this indiscriminate cut to occur.

It is critical that Congress act tonight, act immediately, so that seniors and our disabled citizens do not have the anxiety of wondering whether the tax bill will somehow negatively affect their healthcare. By voting to waive the point of order, we can remove that anxiety and prevent the indiscriminate cuts in Medicare and other essential programs from occurring.

Pursuant to section 904 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 and the waiver provisions of applicable budget resolutions, I move to waive all applicable sections of that act and applicable budget resolutions for purposes of the House message to accompany H.R. 1370, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I yield back the time on this side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question now occurs on agreeing to the motion to waive.

The yeas and nays were previously ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The result was announced—yeas 91, nays 8, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 324 Leg.]

YEAS—91

Alexander	Franken	Nelson
Baldwin	Gardner	Perdue
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Peters
Bennet	Graham	Portman
Blumenthal	Grassley	Reed
Blunt	Harris	Roberts
Booker	Hassan	Rounds
Boozman	Hatch	Rubio
Brown	Heinrich	Sanders
Burr	Heitkamp	Schatz
Cantwell	Heller	Schumer
Capito	Hirono	Scott
Cardin	Hoeven	Shaheen
Carper	Inhofe	Shelby
Casey	Isakson	Stabenow
Cassidy	Johnson	Strange
Cochran	Kaine	Sullivan
Collins	King	Tester
Coons	Klobuchar	Thune
Corker	Lankford	Tillis
Cornyn	Leahy	Toomey
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Udall
Cotton	Markey	Van Hollen
Daines	McCaskill	Warner
Donnelly	McConnell	Warren
Duckworth	Menendez	Whitehouse
Durbin	Merkley	Wicker
Enzi	Moran	Wyden
Ernst	Murkowski	Young
Feinstein	Murphy	
Fischer	Murray	

NAYS—8

Crapo	Kennedy	Risch
Cruz	Lee	Sasse
Flake	Paul	

NOT VOTING—1

McCain

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 91, the nays are 8.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to and the point of order falls.

VOTE ON MOTION TO CONCUR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to concur.

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

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

The result was announced—yeas 66, nays 32, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 325 Leg.]

YEAS—66

Alexander	Gardner	Perdue
Barrasso	Graham	Peters
Blunt	Grassley	Portman
Boozman	Hassan	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Capito	Heinrich	Rounds
Carper	Heitkamp	Rubio
Cassidy	Heller	Sasse
Cochran	Hoeben	Scott
Collins	Inhofe	Shaheen
Coons	Johnson	Shelby
Corker	Kaine	Stabenow
Cornyn	Kennedy	Strange
Cotton	King	Sullivan
Crapo	Lankford	Tester
Cruz	Leahy	Thune
Daines	Manchin	Tillis
Donnelly	McCaskill	Toomey
Enzi	McConnell	Udall
Ernst	Moran	Warner
Fischer	Murkowski	Wicker
Flake	Nelson	Young

NAYS—32

Baldwin	Feinstein	Murray
Bennet	Franken	Paul
Blumenthal	Gillibrand	Reed
Booker	Harris	Sanders
Brown	Hirono	Schatz
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cardin	Lee	Van Hollen
Casey	Markey	Warren
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Merkley	Wyden
Durbin	Murphy	

NOT VOTING—2

Isakson McCain

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I will speak very briefly.

While I voted to keep the government going, this is not the way to govern. We should not be doing stopgap measures. We will be back here soon. We will have a relatively short time—a couple of weeks—to finally do our work, the work we should have done for the last 6 months. We will have to address sequestration on both sides of the ledger—on defense and non-defense—and raise the caps for both. We have to speak on one of the greatest issues in our country today, and that is the Dreamers, and we have to address that and have votes up or down on the Senate floor. I intend to vote to protect Dreamers. We have to vote on the Children's Health Insurance Program. There are so many others.

I want Senators on both sides of the aisle to know—and I have talked to both Republicans and Democrats—Senator COCHRAN and I and others have tried to keep the appropriations process going. We will continue to do that.

We will do that when we come back. There will not be another continuing resolution without a bipartisan budget agreement.

Mr. President, this is not how we should govern in the U.S. Senate. We have once again found ourselves on the edge of a manufactured, made-in-Washington crisis. Once again, we are forced into political games at the eleventh hour by the imminent threat of a Republican shutdown. This time that threat has fallen right before Christmas and the holidays.

There is no reason we should find ourselves in this situation. There has always been a proven path forward to avoid this crisis, and that path is to reach a bipartisan budget deal that is based on parity. Sequestration has had devastating consequences on our country that will impact a generation, and we must raise the budget caps on both sides of the ledger—defense and non-defense.

This is not an academic exercise. Our decisions are having real and devastating consequences. We are letting our infrastructure crumble. We are letting down our veterans. We are allowing our education programs to fall behind, and we are harming our military's readiness.

Regrettably, our Republican Colleagues took the path of delay, no compromise, government by crisis. Here we are, 3 months into the fiscal year without a budget. The continuing resolution that is before us provides a 1-month extension to fund the government, but we are no closer to a bipartisan budget deal. I intend to vote for this continuing resolution because a government shutdown helps no one, but I implore my fellow Senators to use the next month wisely. We owe it to the American people.

Those on the other side of the aisle need to come to the table to negotiate an agreement that will provide funding for healthcare to our veterans, build infrastructure for a growing economy, and make us more secure.

But this is not the only thing we must accomplish in the coming month. Our list of unfinished business is long. We also need to pass the Dream Act. President Trump's decision to end the DACA program was as cruel as it was senseless. Dreamers are American in every way except on paper, having been brought here as children through no fault of their own. By definition, Dreamers are law-abiding strivers, serving our communities as doctors and teachers and defending our homeland as brave men and women in uniform.

Instead of working with Congress to find a permanent legislative solution while keeping DACA protections in place, the President yielded to xenophobic nativists in his administration and terminated protections for our Nation's Dreamers.

I am greatly disappointed that Republicans would not consider including the Dream Act on this continuing reso-

lution. We simply cannot fail to pass the Dream Act, and we must do so, and we must do so soon. The future of Dreamers—and I believe the fate of the American Dream itself—lies in our hands.

We also need a permanent reauthorization for the Children's Health Insurance Program. It has been 3 months since Congress let funds expire for the Children's Health Insurance Program, CHIP, putting at risk the 9 million children nationwide who depend on the program for health insurance coverage.

Vermont's CHIP program, known as Dr. Dynasaur, covers over 5,000 children whose families are now worried whether their kids will be covered next year. Instead of moving forward with a bipartisan reauthorization for 5 years, as has been proposed in the Senate, this continuing resolution extends the program only temporarily.

What is worse, the majority is insisting on offsetting this extension by cutting funding for prevention and public health programs. This is robbing Peter to pay Paul. If we can pass a tax cut that benefits the wealthiest Americans and which will add, at a minimum, \$1.5 trillion to our deficit, we should be able to reauthorize CHIP—for longer than 3 months—without undermining public health. We should not have to make this choice, but here we are, being forced to choose between a misguided short-term patch or a wholesale government shutdown.

Again, I call on our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to use the next month to negotiate solutions to these real problems. That includes having a debate about American's privacy rights. Section 702 of the FISA Amendments Act was intended to be a powerful foreign intelligence surveillance tool, and it is, but it also sweeps up massive amounts of Americans' communications, which can then be accessed without a warrant. That has long been a concern of mine, and I have stated that we should reauthorize 702, but we should not do so at the expense of our own civil liberties.

A 1-month extension gives Congress an opportunity—and I believe, an obligation—to debate this program on the floor, just like we did in 2012. All Members deserve an opportunity to weigh in on this critical surveillance tool, and this short, clean reauthorization of Section 702 allows for just that.

To be clear, the Republicans are in charge of the House, the Senate, and the White House. It is clear that they bear the burden of bringing us to this crisis point, and they need to answer to the American people for the unfinished business before us. We should never have gotten to this point.

We can still reach a bipartisan budget deal. I remain ready to work with Chairman COCHRAN, the Appropriations Committee, and Members from both sides of the aisle to secure the funding agreements we need to complete our appropriations, keep the lights on, and resolve the other pressing matters before us.