

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### REMEMBERING THE VICTIMS OF THE I-75 COLLISION NEAR GAINESVILLE, FL

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to take a few minutes to join my colleague, Senator CASSIDY, to talk about the unspeakable tragedy that happened last Thursday near Gainesville, FL, when a large tractor-trailer crashed into a car, crossed into oncoming traffic, and struck a church van that was bound for Disney World.

I wish I understood why bad things happen to good people. There were five kids—five youngsters—from Marksville, LA, who lost their lives in that terrible collision. They were Joel Cloud and Jeremiah Warren, both 14 years old; Cara Descant, aged 13; Brianna Descant, aged 10; and Cierra Bordelon, aged 9. These five youngsters were members of the United Pentecostal Church in Marksville, LA. They were five beautiful lives, full of potential, who were gone before their time. It is heartbreaking, and there are, simply, no words.

I will say it again. I wish I understood why bad things happen to good people. I can't imagine any greater suffering than a parent's being asked to bury a child. The love of a child is not like the love for a parent or a spouse or a sibling. That is deep love. Yet, as my late father used to tell me, "Son, you will never, ever understand love until you have a child." I can't think of any greater suffering than to ask a parent to bury his or her child.

I want to tell each of these kids' families, the United Pentecostal Church in Marksville, the whole community in Marksville, and the Avoyelles Parish that the entire State of Louisiana grieves with you and that you are in our prayers.

The Marksville van was carrying some very precious cargo. In total, there were 12 passengers: 3 women—one of whom is pregnant—and 9 children. There were survivors—thank you, Lord—but many of the survivors were gravely injured, and I pray that they all have a swift and full recovery.

I want to express my sympathies to the families of the two drivers who died in that accident. I also thank the first responders who put themselves at risk every day to try to save lives during these catastrophes.

There are no words to describe this tragic accident. It happened far too close to the holidays, but there is never

a good time. I am going to say it again. If I make it to Heaven, the first question I am going to ask is, Why do bad things happen to good people? For now, I just pray that these families will find the strength they need to go on and that all the injured are healed quickly.

Thank you.

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

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

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise, together with a number of colleagues who will follow me tonight, to talk about the need to end the Trump shutdown and to reopen the government of the greatest Nation on Earth. I am glad to have so many colleagues here who each will share the stories that have been experienced by folks living in our States regarding a shutdown that has now gone on for 18 days and will soon become the longest shutdown in the history of the U.S. Government.

The shutdown is unnecessary, the shutdown is embarrassing, and the shutdown is painful. It is unnecessary. Why punish American workers? Why punish American citizens? No patriotic leader in their right mind would want to do that.

The thing that is so troubling about this shutdown is that the overwhelming majority of people who are affected are not connected to the dispute between Congress and the President over immigration reform and border security. Why should that dispute lead to farmers not being able to reach their extension agents? Why should that dispute lead to small businesses not getting their small business loan applications processed? Why should a dispute about immigration block the courts of DC from issuing marriage licenses to people?

The President praying for, urging, and then being proud of a shutdown is hurting all kinds of people who are completely unconnected with the issue in dispute between Congress and the President. In that sense, it is unnecessary.

Second, it is unnecessary because there are bills on the floor right now that would solve this—bills that are bipartisan, bills that were supported by the Presiding Officer and other Republican colleagues in the Chamber just a few weeks ago. If we took action right now, we could stop the punishment. We could end the pain—the gratuitous pain—that is affecting American families and workers.

The shutdown is unnecessary. The shutdown is embarrassing. This is the United States of America. This is the greatest Nation on Earth. The fact that we are in an 18-day shutdown of critical components of our government,

where people are not getting paychecks and citizens are not being served, is beneath what we should aspire to as Americans and certainly as U.S. Senators.

Finally, before I yield to my colleague from New Hampshire, the shutdown is painful. There are statistics about the numbers affected during the shutdown. Others may get into the statistics; I just want to share stories because Virginians are reaching out to Senator WARNER and me and sharing their stories with us.

Allen is a veteran and a Federal civil servant in Yorktown, VA. He has been working without pay since the shutdown began. He wrote to our office saying that his emergency savings are exhausted, he is behind on his bills, and the situation will not get any better as long as his Agency is unfunded. I will repeat that. Allen is a veteran who voluntarily served the military, this country, and this is how this President is treating him.

Joanna is from Woodbridge, VA. She wrote to me saying that she doesn't know what she will do if she doesn't get paid by the end of the month, as her family "can't afford to miss a single paycheck." She writes that "even a slight decrease" in her pay means her family cannot afford their rent.

A family from Culpeper wrote to me wondering how they will feed their children and pay their mortgage without being paid for their service to our government. They say that if this shutdown goes on for a month or more, they will have to worry about losing their home.

Michael and Chris, two Federal employees in Annandale, have three kids, two in college. They are going to have to miss their kids' tuition payments that are due for the semester this month. If the shutdown continues, they are not sure whether they will be able to make their mortgage payment.

James is a furloughed Federal employee from Fredericksburg. He says he is the "sole breadwinner" for his family. He tells me a shutdown that goes into months would spell financial ruin for his family and others.

A Virginian from Haymarket wrote me and told me that her loved one is a Federal employee who is working without pay. She had to postpone a necessary medical procedure because their family could no longer cover the costs of copays for testing and surgery.

Teresa is a Federal employee from Springfield. She is worried about paying her mortgage, utilities, food and more, but most of all, she is worried about the health of her son, Tommy. Tommy has a disability. She writes: Because of his medical fragility, Tommy must have numerous prescription medications; therefore, there are copays to pay. Missing a single dose could land him in the ICU. President Trump needs to stop holding Federal employees hostage. When I start missing paychecks, Tommy is possibly jeopardized in his own life.

Finally, John—a NASA contractor from Virginia—and his wife, who also works for the same Agency, have lost 100 percent of their household income since President Trump's shutdown started. Get this: Their daughter, who lives at home, is a schoolteacher, and it is their schoolteacher daughter who is helping pay for the parents' expenses during this shutdown.

The shutdown is unnecessary. The shutdown is embarrassing. The shutdown is painful. We need to end the Trump shutdown and reopen the government.

With that, I yield the floor to my colleague from New Hampshire.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleague Senator KAINE and so many others who are here on the floor today to talk about the hardship that has been created for so many Americans by this government shutdown—a government shutdown that is wasteful, unnecessary, and totally about politics.

Today is the 17th day since this partisan brinkmanship shut down 9 out of 15 Departments and dozens of government Agencies that we depend on to protect our health and safety.

We could reopen the government's doors today if Senate Republicans take up the bills that were passed by the House—bills that were written and overwhelmingly approved by the Republican-controlled Senate just a few weeks ago.

If there is bipartisan and bicameral agreement on the appropriations bills, then why has the government shut down? Sadly, it is because the President wants to force American taxpayers to foot the bill for an ineffective and costly wall on the southern border—a wall which the President promised Mexico would pay for and which is opposed by the majority of Americans.

Meanwhile, the men and women who work in Agencies that protect the American people and who protect our borders are either not working or on the job but not getting paid. In total, more than 380,000 Federal employees have been furloughed, and more than 450,000 are working without pay.

This shutdown affects the entire country, including New Hampshire. It is not just the thousands of Federal workers who are affected by the shutdown; it is also harming millions of Americans who depend on essential services provided by the affected Agencies, people like those Senator KAINE described.

Last Friday, I had a chance to meet with farmers in New Hampshire who are affected by the ongoing closure of the Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency. They are not receiving the essential services and loans they need to prepare for spring planting.

Many dairy farmers, who have been under extreme hardship anyway because of the tariffs with China and falling dairy prices, talked about the im-

pact on them. Last year, New Hampshire dairy farmers lost \$1 million because of the tariffs, and our farmers tell me they are in danger of losing several million more this coming year. So they can't afford to have another hit.

The fact that this new dairy safety net program, which was passed in the farm bill—and congratulations to Senator STABENOW, the ranking member of the Agriculture Committee. She and Senator ROBERTS did a great job providing help for the first time for so many dairy farmers. Even though they are hurting because of the tariffs, those farmers can't benefit from that right now because the program's implementation has been delayed. They don't know how long they will be able to hold on before they are able to get help.

Furloughs have also slowed work at the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the programs it oversees that are integral to New Hampshire's effort to fight the deadly opioid epidemic. Everybody who is getting ready to speak has seen the effects in their States because of the delays in these programs. Last year, New Hampshire had the second highest rate of deaths due to opioid-related drug overdoses. Continued delays from the Agency will pull the rug out from under our first responders, who rely on ONDCP resources and critical Federal opioid response efforts. Just as we are beginning to see some progress in fighting the opioid epidemic because of the work of Congress, we are seeing steps taken that move us backward.

Of course, there are the air traffic controllers. Last Friday, I visited with New Hampshire's air traffic controllers to discuss how the shutdown is affecting their operations and safety at our airports. I have received 38 handwritten letters from New Hampshire air traffic controllers who are opposed to the shutdown.

(Mr. DAINES assumed the Chair.)

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that these letters be printed in the RECORD.

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

DEAR SENATOR SHAHEEN, My name is Dara and I have been an air traffic controller with the FAA for close to 19 years. I am writing this letter to express my concern about our current government shutdown.

On Christmas Eve, my dear mother passed away. Ever since I was a child I have been taking care of her since she was permanently disabled from Multiple Sclerosis. The day before Thanksgiving she was diagnosed with metastatic cancer and was given 3-6 months to live. When she passed I was devastated! I had to call people on Christmas Day to tell them the news. That was so hard. I had to contact the funeral parlor down in NJ (that's where we're from) to coordinate a burial. I had to take 3 days off to make it work. But I still worked during this difficult time on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day and the 26th. I also ended up having to pay thousands of dollars for her funeral.

Honestly, this government shutdown has been the last thing on my mind. But now the

realization of not being able to pay my mortgage, credit cards from Christmastime, and now this funeral is too much to bear.

Air traffic control is a very stressful profession, but I am proud to be able to do it and work with such a group of professionals who come to work and are dedicated to safety in the National Airspace System. My colleagues and I deserve better.

Please end the government shutdown immediately!

DORA (Bedford, NH).

DEAR SENATOR SHAHEEN, As an Air Traffic Controller and constituent, I want you to know how the partial government shutdown is affecting me. For the last two weeks, air traffic controllers have remained on the job, dedicated to the safety of every flight. But we don't know when we will receive our next paycheck. My colleagues and I have suffered the sudden loss of our income due to the government shutdown. My husband is a firefighter/EMT in Londonderry. We both have very important and stressful jobs and take our responsibility for public safety very seriously. We have a home, a mortgage and are trying to start a family and the stress of not knowing when I will receive my paycheck is a heavy burden to bear. Many of my colleagues had to cancel vacation time over the holidays and miss out on time with their family out of concern that they would not be reimbursed for time off that they worked hard to earn.

It is not too much to ask to get paid for the time we are required to show up and work our hardest five days a week.

Many air traffic facilities are already critically staffed with many having scheduled 6 day work weeks. In our building, we currently have 6 employees whose training is at a standstill because their trainers are non-essential contractors.

Senator Shaheen, I truly appreciate your time and beg you to do all you can to end this shutdown immediately.

Sincerely,

SARAH (Deerfield, NH).

DEAR SENATOR SHAHEEN, As an Air Traffic Controller, I want you to know how the government shutdown is affecting my family and I. My husband and I are both Air Traffic Controllers and are extremely proud of what we do. However, not knowing when we will get paid puts a log of stress on us in addition to an already stressful environment that we work in. I myself am in training at A90 and this shutdown has the possibility of delaying my final rating, which means a pay raise. Bills do not stop and we are both out of a paycheck. This puts a huge burden on my family and I. Please end the government shutdown.

Sincerely,

MICHELLE (Pelham, NH).

DEAR SENATOR SHAHEEN, Thank you so much for all the hard work you are doing on my behalf to end this harmful government shutdown.

It was a pleasure to meet with you yesterday and discuss my concerns with the shutdown. As an Air Traffic Controller and President of Boston TRACON NATCA, located in Merrimack, NH, I was able to discuss with you firsthand how the shutdown is harmful to my coworkers and the FAA as a whole.

Please keep up the fight to end the shutdown.

Sincerely,

CURT (Merrimack, NH).

DEAR SENATOR SHAHEEN, I am writing to you today to share with you the effect the government shutdown has had on my family. I'm married to someone who is older and retired, so his income is considerably less than

mine. We have two small children and own a home in Merrimack, NH. We not only have a mortgage to pay, but other bills for heat and utilities and my car. This shutdown has been extremely stressful, more than the others I have worked through. The current administration has been so unpredictable as well as volatile, it's an actual thought that this could drag out for months and that non-essential friends and family that are currently furloughed will not receive pay. This shutdown is unfair to the dedicated and professional government employees, not just myself and the other air traffic controllers.

I am asking you to please end the shutdown. Please re-open the government and allow us to work knowing we will earn our paychecks again.

Sincerely,

LISA (Merrimack, NH).

DEAR SENATOR SHAHEEN, I am writing you today to share the impact the government shutdown is having on me and more importantly my family. First, I would like to tell you a little about my wife and I. We were high school sweethearts and have been married almost 15 years. While Kelly is not perfect, she is perfect for me. Kelly struggles with and is receiving treatment for anxiety and depression. Due to childhood trauma, she struggles with uncertainty. In previous shutdowns the not knowing causes stress and strife. Even the anticipation of a possible shutdown raises her anxiety so I have started to keep them to myself and not tell her until the last possible moment to save her the anguish. It has been over two weeks with no end in sight and this wreaking havoc on our relationship.

Next I would like to tell you about my two daughters. My oldest Kaley is 13, a bright honor roll student athlete. Kaley has been having gastrointestinal issues for a few years and just had her second endoscopy last month. Even with FEHB coverage the procedures are not free. We have a follow up with her G.I. tomorrow. I find myself hoping she won't need major medical treatments as money is starting to get tight.

Next would be my other daughter Savanna. She is 10 and like her mom suffers from anxiety. Like her mother, I have also tried to shield her from this so she won't worry because no 10-year-old should have to. Unfortunately, the time where I can protect her from this is drawing to a close as this week I will have to inform her dance studio that I won't be able to afford February's tuition. I know dance classes can seem frivolous in the grand scheme of things, but they are her outlet, her freedom, and her happiness. I hope and pray for accommodation and understanding from a N.H. small business owner to allow her to continue without payment. Another Savanna story for you, she has sensory issues and through therapy is finally learning how to voice them. About a week before Christmas while tucking her into bed, I jokingly asked her why she had 9, yes 9 blankets on her bed. Her response was a big break through for us. "Dad, I like the weight of it. It helps me calm down." That Saturday we were finishing up our Christmas shopping for mom and I took her into Yogibo at the Pheasantland mall. They have weighted blankets and I let her try it out. "Oooh dad, this is nice." Well, those N.H.-made blankets are \$80. Normally, a purchase would have been made that day. Unfortunately, that was the eve of the shutdown, and Savanna is still waiting patiently for dad's next check.

Lastly, how has this affected me? I put myself last as I normally do with the girls. It pains me to watch them go through this. Furthermore, I was faced with a thought that would never have come up normally. Thursday night my 64-year-old mother was rushed to the emergency room in Brockton, MA, about an hour away from Nashua. For a

brief fleeting moment I actually thought about fuel for my truck. I had fuel and have resources for more for now, but I need to keep driving to work without pay. I did go down to check up on her and she came home last night thankfully. I do despise the fact however that the thought of not going even crossed my mind. Starting next week I have to start looking for a second job to offset some of the losses. I will have 16 years of government service at 3 different air traffic facilities in March.

I humbly request your assistance in ending the government shutdown and returning some normality to our house hold.

Sincerely,

JAMES (Nashua, NH).

DEAR SENATOR SHAHEEN, First and foremost, I want to thank you for taking the time to read my letter. During times of a government shutdown, federal employees (either furloughed or working without pay) feel like no one is actively listening to their stories. With that in mind, thank you for hearing what I have to say.

I am a single mother of three, and I thank God every day for the job that I have. My career as an air traffic controller has enabled me to take care of my children and afford to give them opportunities that many families cannot afford. I have two girls attending out of state colleges. One is at Purdue University studying Airport management, the other at University of South Carolina studying Political Science. My son, 14, is in middle school and actively engaged in sports.

Some days, when I feel the stress of bills piling on, I feel guilty because I have a great job, make a really good salary, and have great benefits. However in the end, no matter how much any of us make, we all have bills and responsibilities. I work for the sole purpose of earning a wage to support my family. This government shutdown has left me worried. I called one of my creditors and they were not sympathetic at all. I'm worried about using credit cards and being charged a high interest rate and yet, life still happens. Food needs to be put on the table, cars need to run, and my daughter's rent at college still needs to be paid. Unfortunately, everything goes on except my paycheck.

Holding federal employees paychecks 'hostage' should never be an option in the midst of Congressional funding arguments. The ironic thing about it is that I am "paying the price" and I am not even receiving a paycheck! I understand that everyone has an opinion on border security. I would hope that 100% of Congress (and the President) agree that employees of the federal government should not be a pawn in this matter.

I hope that you and your fellow members of Congress can come to an agreement to let federal employees go back to work, get paid, and feel safe knowing that their family needs are being met.

Sincerely,

SHERRI (Hollis, NH).

DEAR SENATOR SHAHEEN, As an air traffic controller and a constituent, I want you to know how the partial government shutdown is affecting me and my colleagues.

The lack of paid leave means missing time with the family. It means coming to work at a stressful job when you might not feel at your best. It means not being able to plan time off to get my car fixed or get that new furniture delivered during the week.

The world of air traffic is constantly evolving. New and revised rules and procedures are a constant. The lack of support personnel means that eventually those changes could be missed and safety compromised.

The lack of training in classrooms and simulators means an already short-staffed controller workforce will continue to shrink and controllers will not be able to progress in their careers. Eventually the lack of pay

may convince eligible controllers to retire or make others decide to seek other employment. The number of fully certified air traffic controllers is now at a 30-year low.

Please end the shutdown immediately.

Sincerely,

TODD (Manchester, NH).

DEAR SENATOR SHAHEEN, As an Air Traffic Controller and constituent, I want you to know how the partial government shutdown is affecting me.

In the past year my in-laws have moved in with my family. My father-in-law lost his job and him and his wife were no longer able to afford living on their own. The extra financial burden with the combination of the government shutdown is going to make it hard for me to meet my financial obligations.

Please end the shutdown immediately!

SHANE (Bedford, NH).

DEAR SENATOR SHAHEEN, I appreciate your efforts for our state and country. At this time I feel it is vital that you understand the impact that Washington politics is having on my family and friends. The inability for our elected officials to find common ground and demonstrate leadership is disheartening to say the least. It is time for our elected officials to put politics aside and put people as their priority. Our federal workforce has good men and women with a strong desire to place the needs of this country first, yet our elected officials are preventing this. Please end this shutdown now and allow us to do our jobs.

GERALD (Brookline, NH).

HON. SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN, I would like to first thank you for reaching out and meeting with our NATCA legislative leadership team yesterday. They do so much work, on their own time, to help support all the air traffic controllers throughout New England. As a constituent directly impacted by this government shutdown, I would like you to stress to all colleagues, Democrat or Republican, that this has and will continue to put an undo stress upon me and my family. As an air traffic controller, with one of the most stressful jobs in the world, the last thing that I need is to worry about when I'm going to receive my next check for work. I've been performing at a professional and safe level that is expected.

In the weeks leading up to the shutdown, and knowing that it was almost certain it would happen, my federal coworkers and I raised over \$12,000 in donations in the Southern New Hampshire area. This included 200 gifts and gift cards, totaling over \$18,000 to the Nashua Children's Home and \$4,020 donated to Family Promise of Greater Nashua at Anne Marie House. We will continue to contribute to our communities but please bring an end to this shutdown immediately.

Thank you for your time,

EVERETT (Bedford, NH).

THE HON. SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN, As an air traffic controller and constituent, I want you to know how the partial government shutdown is affecting me. For the last two weeks, air traffic controllers have remained on the job, dedicated to the safety of every flight. But, we don't know when we will receive our next paycheck. My colleagues and I have suffered the sudden loss of our income due to the government shutdown. It's going to be hard for me to meet all of my financial obligations.

Please end the shutdown immediately!

ANDRE (Derry, NH).

THE HON. SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN, I am currently working at Boston TRACON for

the FAA. For the past thirty years I have been providing air traffic services for the United States. For the first nine and half years I was serving the country in the Air Force during Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield.

I am a one income family that relies on my federal paycheck. I have two children, one that is planning on going to college in the upcoming year. That being said, I should be financially planning to pay for her college, not my mortgage! While the Congress is celebrating, high fiving each other, I'm wondering, How will I meet my financial obligations. Please help end this nonsense soon.

Sincerely,

DOUGLASS (New Boston, NH).

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Air traffic controllers keep our airways safe, but, as we all know, they are being asked to work long shifts without being sure they are going to get paid for that work. One air traffic controller I heard from was recently transferred to the Boston area, which is covered in New Hampshire. She is the sole provider to her mother. Now she is paying not only her mortgage but her mother's mortgage.

In a letter she addressed to my office, she wrote:

As a sole source of income to my household, the foreseeable future of this shutdown is detrimental. . . . [It has created] a substantial burden on not just me but the thousands of federal employees it's impacting.

Sadly, the shutdown also stands to affect the safety of air travel—not because our air traffic controllers aren't on the job. They are on the job. They are doing the work even though they are not getting paid. But the fact is, men and women who provide administrative and maintenance functions on the runway—those people who fix equipment when it stops working, who are in the control tower and at airport facilities—they will not be at work to support our air traffic controllers. So when a runway or taxiway light goes dark, it is going to go unrepaired. That jeopardizes the safety and the efficiency of aviation operations.

Then there are the impacts to those Agencies that are funded by the Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill. I understand this particularly well as the ranking member on the CJS Subcommittee of Appropriations. I know what a devastating effect this shutdown is having on these Agencies.

More than 41,000 law enforcement agents of the Department of Justice—including agents within the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Bureau of Prisons—are working for IOUs. We are hearing this directly in New Hampshire, where every staff member at the Federal Correctional Institution in Berlin, NH, which is in northern New Hampshire, is excepted. That means they are required to report for work, and they are not being paid.

I would like to read an excerpt from a letter I received from Chris Allen. Chris is the president of the union at FCI Berlin, which represents 180 staff members. He highlighted the kinds of choices staff members are being forced to make. He said:

While some staff members can call and potentially have a mortgage or a car payment

excused if they are missing only one source of income, even buying simple groceries or paying for childcare becomes difficult for a family when all sources of income have been stopped and you are required to continue working.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have Chris's letter printed in the RECORD.

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

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES COUNCIL OF PRISON LOCALS, LOCAL #2008,

Berlin, NH.

DEAR SENATOR SHAHEEN: My name is Chris Allen and I am the President of AFGE Local 2008. I represent 180 staff members at the Federal Correctional Institution in Berlin, NH. Today I write to you with great concern for these federal employees. As you are aware, these staff members are currently being affected by the current lapse in funding for the Justice Department. Every staff member employed at FCI Berlin is considered "excepted" and are required to report for work without being paid at this time. Next week, on January 17, 2019, which would have been our next scheduled pay day, we will be missing our first full pay check.

We are fortunate to have some banks willing to lend a helping hand to employees during this difficult time. However, it hasn't been a save all either. Staff members are running into issues with banks asking for documentation that they are truly furloughed and guaranteed to be paid when the shutdown ends. With no firm date that the shutdown could be resolved and no legislation in place to guarantee they will be paid in the end, banks are giving staff a harder time while they are applying for loans at a 0% interest rate. The other fear is that the shutdown continues past one or two pay periods. Many of the banks are only offering short term loans equal to only one or two pay checks. If the shutdown continues, banks are undecided on whether future low or no interest loans will be continued for our staff.

We also have a number of families working at FCI Berlin that have two incomes coming from the Justice Department. While some staff members may have a significant other being paid from outside the government, many of our families are now missing two sources of income. While some staff members can call and potentially have a mortgage or car payment excused if they are missing only one source of income, even buying simple groceries or paying for childcare becomes difficult for a family when all sources of income have been stopped and you are required to continue working.

I ask you and your colleagues in Washington to please keep the excepted staff of FCI Berlin in mind during this time of shutdown so they can be paid for the professional work they do day in and day out to keep our communities safe.

Sincerely,

CHRIS ALLEN,  
President, AFGE Local 2008.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, because of the shutdown, the Department of Commerce is not processing U.S. companies' requests to be excluded from the President's steel and aluminum tariffs. That delay will cost companies millions of dollars and will increase economic uncertainty. The shutdown is also preventing the Department of Commerce from assessing new anti-dumping and countervailing

duties cases that help ensure our companies are competing on a level playing field.

Finally, this shutdown, like all shutdowns, is going to put a lasting burden on the economy. The 16-day shutdown in 2013 cost the government \$2.5 billion in pay and benefits, and it lowered fourth-quarter gross domestic product for the country by about \$3 billion in lost output.

The 2018 Trump shutdown has furloughed about 380,000 employees, nearly half of the number furloughed in 2013. So it is fair to say that the shutdown has already cost the government at least \$1 billion, and the number is growing every day. The toll this shutdown is taking on the American people was completely avoidable. That is what is so frustrating, and I know it is frustrating to everybody in this Chamber.

Last week, the House passed legislation to reopen the government that is virtually identical to legislation that passed the Senate or was reported by the Appropriations Committee with strong bipartisan margins. In fact, here, as we remember, that continuing resolution to allow us to keep negotiating passed by a voice vote.

I urge Senator MCCONNELL to bring these bills to the floor. Let President Trump decide to sign them or not sign them. He can make that choice as President, but we are a separate branch of government, and it is up to us to make the determination to end the shutdown immediately and to do what is right for the American people. We need to ensure that all government employees affected by the shutdown receive the pay they deserve. I know there is legislation, led by Senators CARDIN and COLLINS, to do that. I urge Congress to take up and pass this critical legislation as soon as possible.

One of the most fundamental constitutional duties of Congress is the appropriations process—to supply annual funds for Federal programs that support national defense, transportation, small businesses, food assistance for low-income families, research and development, and so much more. Right now, by refusing to allow legislation to reopen the government, this Senate—this Congress—is failing, and millions of Americans are suffering as a result.

I urge President Trump, Senator MCCONNELL, and congressional Republicans to reopen the government and allow Americans to get back to work.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today out of deep frustration with the Trump administration's treatment of Federal workers due to the government shutdown.

It has been 17 days since more than 380,000 Federal workers were furloughed and more than 450,000 began working without pay.

Once upon a time, we were told that Mexico would pay for the President's border wall. Now the President is demanding taxpayers cough up more than \$5 billion, and he is holding our Federal workers hostage until he gets it.

At first the President tried to paint Federal workers and contractors as political actors. Now he imagines that Federal workers are actually cheering him on.

But rather than imagining what Federal workers are going through, I encourage the President and my Republican colleagues to listen to the firsthand accounts of how this shutdown is affecting the real families caught up in it.

Here are some of the messages I have received from Virginians whose families are experiencing significant financial hardship because of this President's shutdown.

Rebecca in Chesapeake writes: "... I just want my husband to be able to go back to the work he loves and to have stability for my family returned ... The stress of not knowing how long this will last is eating at both my husband and me."

Rosemarie in Falls Church shared this: "My husband was diagnosed last week with advanced lung cancer and now on top of that stress, I have to worry about not getting a paycheck ..."

The President, who has never worked for a paycheck in his life, says he can relate. He says he is sure Federal workers "will make adjustments." Here is what those "adjustments" actually look like.

Lisa in Arlington writes: "I am forced to look for multiple part-time jobs to make ends meet and my savings will soon run out. Creditors and landlords have only so much patience with us."

How disheartening it must be to dedicate your life to serving others, only to find your own livelihood in jeopardy through no fault of your own.

That is why I am doing everything I can to make sure Federal employees receive back pay for any time spent furloughed or working without pay.

That means low-wage Federal contractors, too. The other day, I received a letter from a Federal contractor from Ashburn, who says the shutdown has "rocked the financial stability of my family."

These folks who serve the Federal Government as custodians, cafeteria workers, security guards, and in many other important roles should not suffer because of this President's actions.

We also need to reverse the President's unilateral Federal pay freeze—a slap in the face to hardworking Federal employees—announced just a few days before Christmas.

The truth is, Federal workers are sick and tired of being treated like bargaining chips by this administration.

Here is what Chad, furloughed NASA engineer from Suffolk, told me: "I'm disappointed to once again find myself barred from doing the job that I love. I find it offensive to be used as a political pawn and find the recent executive order to freeze civil servant pay at 2018 levels, while on furlough no less, to be shockingly disrespectful and wrong."

Federal workers aren't in this business to get rich; they are public servants who often forgo higher pay in the private sector to serve their country.

Dishonoring this sacrifice with a shutdown, with a pay freeze, and with the President's utter indifference to our Federal workers is a national disgrace.

It is having a devastating effect on morale and the Federal Government's ability to recruit and retain talent.

Here is how Joanna, a DHS employee from Woodbridge, put it: "I love my job, but being a pawn for those who have no compassion for me or those I work beside is going to drive me and many, many others out of public service."

At a time when the share of Federal employees eligible for retirement is expected to jump to 30 percent in 5 years, the last thing we should be doing is actively undermining the competitiveness of the Federal workforce.

In conclusion, I thank my friend, Senator Kaine, for bringing us together this evening and for his partnership in fighting for Virginia's Federal workers and contractors.

Thank you as well to my constituents Rebecca, Rosemarie, Lisa, Chad, Joanna, and others for allowing me to share their stories.

I want to reassure them and every Virginian that I remain committed to ending this unnecessary shutdown and making sure every worker impacted by it is made whole.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from New Hampshire, as well as the Senator from Virginia and my other colleagues who are gathered here.

My trek each week to this desk starts in Illinois. It means that for a number of years, I have gone through the airports of the Midwest—primarily in Illinois and Missouri—more than most. In fact, I probably know O'Hare Airport and every corner of it better than anyone who doesn't work there on a regular basis, and I know the people who work there, too, at all different levels.

Starting in 2001, we brought in TSA as a means of making certain that we would be safe boarding airplanes, that people would not bring guns or weapons or bombs onto planes. These men and women, of course, get on our nerves once in a while as we have to open a valise or piece of baggage and take off our shoes, and perhaps we forgot there was a water bottle onboard. It is a little frustrating, and I know I have had that feeling, but I often think to myself: They are doing their job, and thank goodness they are. If it weren't for the men and women of TSA carefully screening passengers every single day, we would not be as safe, nor would our families be as safe, on these airplanes.

At 10 this morning, I went out to O'Hare. Instead of heading to the gate

to catch a plane, I had a press conference and brought four of these TSA agents in to explain what has happened to them and what will happen this coming weekend because, you see, this is showdown weekend for these employees. President Trump's shutdown of the Federal Government will mean that for the first time this coming weekend, these employees of the Transportation Security Agency are not going to receive a paycheck. They show up for work every day. They have to. They are known as essential personnel, which means our government has decided we can't really function as a nation without them. Yet our government has decided—at least in the White House—that as important as they may be, as essential as they may be, starting this weekend they will work without pay.

I had not met them personally before, but I asked each of them to explain, what is this going to mean to you and your family—not getting a paycheck.

They really brought home to me what workers across America—not just Federal employees but workers across America—face every payday. They each said to me, with only one exception: Senator, we live paycheck to paycheck. If we don't receive our paychecks, we have to make some basic decisions.

One young woman, who had worked for 16 years for TSA, said to me: I live 39 miles away from O'Hare, roundtrip 78 miles every single day, and I make it because I need this job, and I need gasoline for my car to get here. It costs me a lot of money each and every day and every week. I don't know what I am going to do without the paycheck.

Another one talked about the fact that they are dealing with expenses we all face—whether it is mortgage or rent—and what it will mean to them if they can't make their mortgage payment. Well, if you don't make your mortgage payment on time, and time passes, it affects your credit rating. It could affect the interest rate you pay on your mortgage or whether you even have a mortgage when it is all over. So, for these people, it is a critical element.

One woman brought up something, which I am sure many working families know instantly. She said: Senator, if I can't get my paycheck, I can't pay the daycare center that takes care of my kids while I come to work here every day. That is the reality of life for working families.

So why in the world has President Donald Trump decided that in order to make his case to the American people, he is going to penalize these workers, many of whom are essential to America's security and safety? Why did he do this?

I would have to say, with all due respect to President Donald Trump: Pick on somebody your own size. Stop picking on people living paycheck to paycheck who are trying to serve this Nation in important ways.

What we hear from the President: I just have to do it because I have to have my wall.

We remember the wall. You couldn't miss it in his campaign. He talked about it incessantly, the sea to shining sea concrete wall that was going to protect America and be paid for by the Mexicans. Remember that? Well, here we are. We have given the President money over the last 2 years in his Presidency to construct fences and barriers where they are needed—not his almighty wall, 2,000 miles long—but we have asked him to justify each year how he is going to spend this money, taxpayers' dollars, and whether it really is worthwhile.

The President has decided he is impatient. He can't wait any longer. He has to have huge sums of money, maybe even \$5 billion, dramatically increasing spending on barriers at the border, and he has to have it now, and the only way to make his point is to shut down the government.

I was at a meeting last week when the President said: Make no mistake, I am not talking about shutting down this government for a few days. I am prepared—and he repeated it afterward in front of the cameras. Donald Trump said: I am prepared to shut down this government for months, even years.

Now, this President is making history. No President in the history of this country has ever shut down his own government. We have elected men to lead and manage this government, and we understand that their responsibility is to keep the lights on and make sure taxpayer dollars are well spent, but this President doesn't understand that to be his responsibility, and a lot of innocent people are suffering.

Yesterday, I was at the Department of Agriculture research lab in Peoria, IL. It turns out it is the largest one, with 200 researchers there. You think to yourself, they are doing important research when it comes to agriculture. It turns out this lab has some amazing history behind it.

It was during World War II at this lab where they discovered penicillin. It was at the Peoria ag lab where they came up with penicillin that we could use for our troops who were being wounded in World War II, saving countless lives in the process. They are pretty proud of that legacy, and they should be.

Do you know what they are working on now? The Peoria ag lab is working on something called tunicamycin. I had never heard of it, and I am a liberal arts lawyer so I don't understand a lot about it, but here is what it gets down to: This element, which occurs naturally in nature, can boost the healing power of antibiotics that have been spent—they no longer have an effect on people—but if tunicamycin is added, they can once again be effective and save lives. Peoria may have done it again: first penicillin, now tunicamycin. Well, the lights have been turned off at the Department of Agriculture research laboratory in Pe-

oria. They have been turned off because of President Trump's shutdown.

I met with one of the research team. She has worked there for 15 years, she has a degree in chemistry, and she is doing her best to do her job, but she is not going to get paid this weekend. I asked her what she was going to do as a result of it. She said: I hoped I might be able to apply for unemployment compensation, but, Senator, the records I need to produce for unemployment compensation are in that laboratory building, and I can't get in there. They have shut me out.

She can't even apply for unemployment compensation so her family can get by until the shutdown is over. Why did we do this to her? Why does this President want to impose this kind of shutdown and hardship on people who are doing worthy work—at taxpayers' expense, for sure, but for the taxpayers of America? Whether it is TSA agents or it is people at the ag lab, these are good people who are dedicated to this government and have given their life and their life's work to this government. They deserve better treatment than this.

Let me close by saying a word about the border. The President says it is all about walls. Well, it turns out there are things he hasn't shared with the American people, and he is not likely to do it when he makes his presentation this evening.

Take a look here at the apprehensions at the border. These are the apprehensions being made by Federal agencies and people trying to cross the border illegally. Notice something? You may have noticed, in the year 2000, there were 1.6 million apprehensions. Then take a look at the year 2018. The apprehensions are down to slightly under 400,000. So from 1.6 million to slightly under 400,000.

We are going to be told we are facing a security crisis at the border, and it turns out that we have fewer people seeking to cross the border illegally now than we have in 45 years, and the apprehensions of those people have gone down dramatically from 1.6 million to slightly under 400,000, and we have already dramatically increased the number of people in Border Patrol.

Meanwhile, let me add something that the President doesn't talk about because it doesn't fit into his wall scenario. We are facing the worst drug epidemic in the history of the United States of America. It is opioids, heroin, and fentanyl, and fentanyl has now been identified by the CDC as the deadliest narcotic on the streets of America.

Where is the fentanyl coming from? I can tell you where a large part of it is coming from, from China through Mexico. Oh, they must be putting it in backpacks and jumping over the border. No, 80 percent of the fentanyl seized by CBP in 2018 was coming through ports of entry, places where vehicles and railroad cars go through now. So 80 percent of this deadly

fentanyl seized by CBP was coming through ports of entry. What are we doing to stop it? Let me tell you, we are not doing enough. Ninety-eight percent of the railroad cars that come into the United States are scanned, a basic x ray, to find out what is inside that car. Is it something that wasn't disclosed? When it comes to cars and trucks coming into this country, 18 percent are being scanned, fewer than one out of five of the cars and trucks coming into this country. Ever wonder how the fentanyl is coming into this country and killing people in every town across the State of Illinois and across America? It is coming in through ports of entry.

If the President would stop preaching about his almighty wall and take a look at real border security, he would be doing what is necessary to stop this fentanyl and these drugs coming into this country—and we are not doing enough.

I am for border security. Make it smart. I am not worried about a President keeping a campaign promise that didn't make sense from the start. I am worried about keeping this border safe for our families across the entire Nation. Tonight, let's make sure the people who work that border and work at TSA and work for the Federal Government get back to work this week. That is priority No. 1.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I am very proud to join with my colleagues tonight. I thank the Senator from Virginia, the Senator from New Hampshire, and other colleagues who are here to speak out and talk about common sense and what is happening and what we believe should be happening for the American people.

In Michigan, we are building a new bridge, and Canada is paying for it. That is the truth. Canada is paying for a bridge in Michigan. Here in Washington, President Trump is demanding walls that he is expecting American taxpayers to pay for—walls that the majority of experts and the majority of people do not believe will be effective in keeping us safe. Meanwhile, in Michigan hundreds of Customs and Border Patrol officers, who keep us safe every day, are working without pay, and that is wrong.

The President says we need more security. I support strong border security, as my colleagues do—strong, effective border security. I also support economic security for hard-working Michigan families.

Some Federal employees in Michigan, as other colleagues have spoken about, are wondering how they are going to support their families, pay their mortgages, and keep the heat on without the paychecks they are supposed to receive on Friday.



President Trump is talking about a humanitarian crisis. Here is a humanitarian crisis: 38 million people who depend on food assistance—the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program—to keep food on their tables now have to worry that it might suddenly be gone. Most of those Americans are senior citizens, people with disabilities, and children. This shutdown fight should not be about politics, but it is. It should be about people. What is happening here is about people, and the American people are losing.

One issue we should be able to agree on is the border. We all support border security. I can't say that enough, and my colleagues say that as well. I certainly know the importance of border security, as a Member from a border State—in fact, the State with the most active crossings at the northern border. The professionals on our northern border keep us safe every day, and they know what they need to do their jobs. They will say: It is more resources, more staff, more people. Above all, they need more technology. What they don't need is a 1st-century solution to a 21st-century problem. Building a wall on our border is a little like providing the U.S. Army swords and shields and expecting them to defend our Nation today.

Unfortunately, this administration is more focused on the merits of concrete versus steel than actually protecting the American people in a real and effective way. If our border is a national emergency right now, then, why hasn't the President spent the hundreds of millions of dollars that we have already given him in the last year's budget. We have already allocated dollars for border security—the majority of which has not been spent.

We all agree that border security is a high priority, and we should also be able to agree that workers—people working—deserve to be paid, and they should be able to take care of their families.

I have heard from Michigan workers who can't pay their bills and are desperately seeking temporary jobs—families who have been left without health insurance, businesses that contract with the Federal Government, that know that even if Federal workers get paid back at the end of this, they will not. There are also thousands of small businesses that depend on spending by Federal employees to remain open—the dry cleaner, the neighborhood store, the local restaurant.

This shutdown is also hurting American agriculture. My colleagues have talked about the fact that at the end of last year, just a few weeks ago, we passed a strong bipartisan farm bill to help farmers struggling with low prices, with growing trade concerns, and unpredictable weather, to say the least.

During these difficult times, our farmers desperately need the predictability and confidence of a 5-year farm bill. That is what Senator ROBERTS and

I spoke about every day on the floor of the Senate: We need to put in place a 5-year farm bill with predictability for farmers in rural communities and families. However, the President has undermined the certainty that the farm bill provided by continuing this shutdown at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Every day the USDA is shut down is another day the improvements we made in the 2018 farm bill are delayed. Local farm service offices all across Michigan are closed. Farmers can't apply for the loans they need, as they look to next year. We have dairy farmers in very desperate situations. We dramatically increased support for them in the farm bill—a new dairy program—and they need it now. They needed it yesterday. They needed it last week.

Important crop reports have been halted that farmers need to make decisions about upcoming planting seasons: What is the market? What are the prices? And there are all kinds of technical information they need to plan to move forward. Frankly, the USDA World Development Office is the economic development arm for every small town in every rural community in Michigan. Our rural homeowners cannot receive the housing loans they need to finance their homes and pay their mortgages. There are so many other ways things have stopped.

We can't forget about our families on food assistance. Thirty-eight million people are able to put food on their table thanks to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. While we should certainly do everything we can to ensure that food assistance is available in the near term—and I appreciate the Department working on that—our families deserve long-term certainty, especially considering that nearly 70 percent of those on SNAP are seniors, children, and people with disabilities. It is unconscionable to risk letting those most in need go hungry because of the politics of a government shutdown.

Beyond SNAP, school meals, support for WIC—a very important program for women, infants, and children—and food for seniors are all at risk if this continues to go on. Due to the shutdown, local food banks are no longer receiving funds to distribute and to store food. There are very real consequences going on. We could go through every single Department to speak about what is happening to real people and what will happen if this does not get resolved.

We can disagree about a lot of things. We should be able to agree, though, that people keeping us safe every day should be paid; that Federal workers should be able to pay their bills and take care of their families; that children, seniors, and people with disabilities shouldn't have to worry about where their next meal is coming from because of a government shutdown.

It is time for the President to end this. It is very easy. The House and the

Senate now have both passed the appropriations bills on a bipartisan vote. At the end of last year, we passed it in the Senate. It was just passed last week in the House. We can repass those bills. They should go to the President's desk, and this shutdown should end. He should sign the bipartisan appropriations bills and put the American people first.

We can and will continue to debate what border security looks like and how we can be most effective, doing what we all want to see get done. It is time to stop the shutdown and for the President to sign the appropriations bills that are bipartisan and make sure the American people know he is on their side when it comes to what is happening in the country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, we are now in the third week of President Trump's government shutdown. This is yet another manufactured, unnecessary, and irresponsible crisis from this President. This one comes at a steep, steep cost for very real people. A government shutdown ripples throughout the entire economy. It shakes consumer confidence. It impacts hard-working families.

In my home State of New Mexico, almost 6,000 Federal workers have been furloughed or are working without pay, many of whom were already living paycheck to paycheck before this President's shutdown.

Carol from Tijeras wrote to me: "I feel I am being held Hostage by my government which I have always felt it was an honor to work for."

Carol is worried about how she and her coworkers are going to pay their mortgages and their car payments if this shutdown continues.

Kathy from Los Lunas wrote to me: "I am a federal employee and I am dismayed that the president is holding us hostage. . . . He needs to quit toying with our lives and all of the public that we support and serve and end this shutdown."

It is hard to say it any better than that. The shutdown's impacts hit far more than our Federal employees. Hundreds of thousands of New Mexicans rely on the Federal agencies that President Trump refuses to reopen.

During President Trump's shutdown, our public lands have had to lock their gates or leave parks and facilities unstaffed. The impacts of reduced visitation, the challenges for furloughed public land workers, and the costs of repairing the damage accrued during the shutdown will hurt communities across our State and many others.

In this era of increasingly extreme and catastrophic wildfires, I am particularly worried about the impact that a prolonged shutdown will have on our national forests.

Nicholas, a wildland firefighter fighter from Las Cruces wrote to me that he and his coworkers have been furloughed. He says: "If this shutdown is

not resolved, it will impact my ability to provide for my family.”

Nicholas deserves to be able to support his family. Our communities can't afford to wait for Nicholas and his co-workers to do their essential work that keeps our forests healthy and prevents more destructive wildfires.

Our State's farmers and rural communities are also facing increased uncertainty. That is because President Trump's shutdown has shuttered the Department of Agriculture, which funds agricultural loans and many economic development programs in rural communities.

If the shutdown continues into next month, as President Trump seems entirely willing to allow, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—sometimes referred to as food stamps—will run out of funding. That would mean that millions of Americans—including more than half a million in New Mexico alone—would be left struggling to put food on the table.

Over the weekend, KOB, one of our local television stations in Albuquerque, talked to New Mexicans who would be impacted by a lapse in food stamps funding. One man named Steven said:

All of us who use food stamps rely on it. That's how we eat, that's how we get our nutrition.

He said that if he can't receive his support for food next month, he might have to take out a loan and go into debt.

New Mexico is also home to many Tribal nations, which are disproportionately impacted by a lapse in Federal funding and are now under distress to meet very basic needs in their communities. That includes things like law enforcement, education, housing, and transportation.

Let me tell you one example I heard from the Mescalero Apache Tribe in southern New Mexico. Mescalero's lands span more than 700 square miles. Because of President Trump's shutdown, the Tribe's federally funded police force has been furloughed. Just think about what that means for someone who needs help, someone who needs to report a crime, or someone who needs medical attention.

I need to remind us that this shutdown comes right after Congress failed in December to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. Now, without this law and without funding, Tribes are especially strained in addressing an epidemic of sexual violence that has been so acutely felt in their communities.

Mescalero has seen every single one of its Bureau of Indian Affairs social workers and victims specialists furloughed. That is extremely dangerous for women and children who are victims of abuse. These are real people's lives being unnecessarily damaged by President Trump all because he will not stop holding our government hostage.

Perhaps most telling about President Trump's shutdown is the impact it is

having on our Federal workers responsible for keeping our Nation safe along our southern border. As a border State, New Mexico is more familiar than President Trump with responsible and smart border security policies. In fact, our State is the proud home of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, one of the primary training centers for U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officers. Because of President Trump's shutdown, the workers at FLETC and all of the officers working at our ports of entry and agents along our border are either furloughed or working without pay. How can it possibly be the best way to keep our Nation's border region safe and secure?

The President has said he would be proud to shut down our government, and, well, I have to say there is nothing—nothing—to be proud of about any of this. The President can—the President must—put an end to this shutdown.

Look, the way out of this is pretty straightforward. The votes are not there in either the House or the Senate to make Americans pay the bill for President Trump's wasteful border wall.

Signing a bipartisan government funding bill to reopen the government is the only responsible way forward. The only thing he is doing by refusing to back down is hurting Americans like the families I represent in New Mexico, like the people who work along our southern border. They expect and deserve so much better than this irresponsible—this preventable—shutdown.

President Trump has all the power to end this madness right now. I will say this one last time. Mr. President, if you are listening, listen to the American people. Listen to the people who work for you and me and this entire Nation whom you are hurting. Do the right thing and end this now.

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I will.

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, prior to Senator Markey, I wanted to ask Senator Heinrich this: If I heard correctly, you indicated that half a million New Mexicans are currently participating in the SNAP program.

Mr. HEINRICH. That is correct.

Mr. Kaine. What is the total population of New Mexico?

Mr. HEINRICH. A little over 2 million people.

Mr. Kaine. So nearly one-quarter of the State is participating in the Food Stamp Program that is jeopardized by this shutdown.

To the Senator from New Mexico, are you aware that 95 percent of the employees of the Agency that administers SNAP have been sent home and furloughed? Are you aware of that?

Mr. HEINRICH. I was aware of that.

Mr. Kaine. That is causing problems not only for your half a million but for any new family who falls into hunger and needs to apply for SNAP every day.

Mr. HEINRICH. Thank you.

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, I yield the floor to the Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. Markey. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Virginia and I thank the Senator from New Hampshire for their great leadership on this issue.

Just talking about SNAP very briefly, 50 percent of all children in the United States, at some point in their lives, are going to be on SNAP, are going to need some help to eat so they can avoid hunger—50 percent of all children. So we are playing games with the program that is central to the lives of millions of families across this country, and we are playing out this entire drama in an all-too-familiar scene.

For the third time in just 2 years of the Trump Presidency, we are once more in the midst of a government shutdown. It is important to remember how we got here.

In December, the Senate majority leader brought to the floor a temporary funding bill to keep the Federal Government open. It passed this Chamber unanimously. Everyone—all 100 Senators at the time—agreed that, at the very least, it was important to keep the government open while we debate the issue of border security and immigration reform.

So why on Earth is the government shut down? Well, simply because President Trump has decided to hold the government hostage because he didn't get funding for a costly, ineffective wall. Shutting down the government over billions of dollars for a wall is like canceling the World Series because your team didn't make it.

At nearly 3 weeks into the Trump shutdown, we can track and see the devastating effects of the President's hostage-taking. Some 800,000 Federal employees are going without pay, and the longer this goes on, the more their worries mount. Mortgages, student loan payments, car payments, heating bills, food on the table—President Trump may operate from crisis to crisis, but countless American families are living paycheck to paycheck.

I have heard from many of the individuals and families who are part of the approximately 7,800 Federal workers across Massachusetts, and they are rightfully anxious about how they will make ends meet. Twenty-two percent of Federal employees in Massachusetts are veterans—22 percent. So how does Donald Trump repay thousands of individuals who have served and sacrificed for their country? By not paying them.

Let's be clear about who these workers are. They are janitors, cafeteria workers, secretaries, security guards. WORK, Incorporated, is the largest employer of individuals with disabilities in New England under the Federal AbilityOne Program. It employs hundreds of individuals with significant disabilities who work across Federal facilities in the region, but because of the Trump shutdown, they aren't going to work. If they are not working, they are not being paid, and they are not



providing the critical services which are needed for families in New England and across the whole country.

We have gone from Mexico paying for the border wall to Americans going without pay. That is how absurd the President is being in terms of who ultimately winds up paying the price for his campaign promises.

What is more, the Trump shutdown reaches beyond workers and empty paychecks.

The shutdown of the Environmental Protection Agency means almost all of the 516 employees in EPA region 1, which includes New England, have been furloughed. That has halted cleanup of rivers and other brownfields all across our region. It endangers the water, the air, all of the work that is done to protect the 13 million people who live in New England.

It means the Federal investigation into the deadly September 13 natural gas explosions and fires in Merrimack Valley is suspended and residents are left waiting for answers. The Trump shutdown is shutting down justice for the residents of Lawrence and Andover and North Andover because that investigation is now suspended.

We are heading for absolute catastrophe if the shutdown stretches on much longer as millions of vulnerable, low-income Americans relying on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—or SNAP—may have had their benefits cut severely. That is going to put 764,000 of the poorest Massachusetts residents at risk of hunger.

President Trump may think it is OK to furlough workers, but he can't furlough hunger, he can't furlough dirty drinking water, he can't furlough pipeline accidents. We need an open government to prevent these things from happening.

In just a few hours, we will hear from the President. He will go on TV tonight and present a fear and hate-ridden case about a manufactured national security emergency at our border.

The irony is, the longer President Trump extends this government shutdown, the more insecure and unsafe American families become because Federal workers aren't there to protect them against the things that they work every day to ensure that each and every family in our country are spared from—the pain that otherwise would be inflicted.

So the Department of Homeland Security is one of the agencies the President has shut down. An outsized number of Transportation Security Agency screeners and agents who screen and apprehend dangerous suspects at airports are calling in sick rather than work without pay. Some have even quit.

Sadly, our own American President is the architect of this crisis. The truth is, there are more Americans today going without their paycheck than immigrants who illegally crossed the southern border in the past 2 years.

Trump has completely manufactured this emergency, but there is an im-

pending one if this Trump shutdown continues and Americans are left without government services. So let's end this.

To my Republican colleagues, let's pass the bipartisan legislation to reopen the government. You supported it before; support it again. Raise your voices. Let's put people back to work, and let's provide certainty for the American public.

Once again, I thank Senator Kaine and Senator Shaheen for their leadership in organizing this very important colloquy.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues in calling for an end to this senseless government shutdown. I, too, want to thank my friend and colleague from New Hampshire as well as my friend from Virginia for their leadership in bringing us together tonight to speak about the need to move forward and end this shutdown.

All across our country, Americans are feeling the impact of this shutdown, and government services people rely on have been put to a halt.

In New Hampshire, our farmers were relieved last month at the passage of the farm bill. Now, thanks to the shutdown, they are again facing uncertainty that they may not receive the financial assistance they need to help them operate.

Our craft breweries, which contribute to our economy, are unable to move forward with new projects because the brewers can't get the projects approved through the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau.

At the White Mountain National Forest, some visitors' services are closed, and at this amazingly beautiful national resource, trash is piling up.

Additionally, the shutdown is creating safety concerns with regard to air travel. The Airline Pilots Association International recently wrote to the President to say that the shutdown is "adversely affecting the safety, security and efficiency of our national airspace system."

We know this shutdown is impacting our Federal workforce. These are law enforcement officers, border security agents, members of our Coast Guard, workers from our National Park Service, TSA agents, and so many other people who dedicate their lives to serving their fellow citizens, but because of the shutdown, many workers are scrambling to make ends meet.

President Trump has said these workers can simply "make adjustments" to stay financially secure, but in making such a claim, the President grossly ignores the reality that hard-working Americans face. What an out-of-touch statement.

One missed paycheck can be the difference between people being able to put food on the table or not, of making their monthly mortgage payments, of affording their medications.

If, as the President suggests, the shutdown drags on for months or even years, those hardships to our families and our economy will grow as paychecks continue to be delayed.

It doesn't have to be this way. Last week, the House of Representatives passed bills that have received substantial support from Members of both parties in the Senate and would reopen the government immediately. Those included robust funding for border security, funding to support commonsense improvements, including better technology that border agents say they need. Unfortunately, the President is more focused on campaign slogans than on strengthening border security based on the facts on the ground. As a result, the President has created a crisis for families across the country, including for the border protection agents and law enforcement officers whose duty it is to protect us.

The fact is that we can keep our country safe while also reopening our government. That is why Leader McConnell must bring the bipartisan bills that have passed the House to the Senate floor and the President must sign them into law.

In the meantime, I am focused on ensuring that our Federal workforce gets the pay that they deserve and that they have earned. That is why I have joined with a bipartisan group of colleagues on legislation to ensure that any government employee furloughed as a result of this shutdown or any future ones will be paid retroactively as soon as appropriations are restored. I cosponsored legislation that would fund Coast Guard operations during lapses in appropriations—including pay—for members of the Coast Guard.

Mr. President, it is time for these games to end. We need to keep providing the government services that Americans rely on, and the people who provide these services deserve stability not only for their own sake but for that of the people and country they serve. More broadly, the American people deserve to know our government can operate effectively without these constant games and irresponsible tactics from the President.

Let's move on from this shutdown. Let's reopen our government.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. President.

First, I want to thank my colleague from Virginia, Mr. Kaine, for bringing us together this evening on the floor of the Senate to talk about the urgent need to end the government shutdown because of the mounting toll it is taking on the American public and on Federal employees who are going without paychecks at this very moment.

This is a shutdown that President Trump said he would be "proud" to put in place, but I think, if he begins to look around and see the consequences,

he has to ask himself what he means by being proud.

Just yesterday, I had a roundtable discussion with many Federal workers in my State of Maryland. I wish President Trump had been there at the roundtable to hear what these public servants had to say. Maybe if he had listened, he would know that a government shutdown is nothing anybody should be proud of. I want to share some of the stories my constituents shared with me yesterday, and I hope President Trump is listening to all of us here this evening.

Tyra was one of the people who came yesterday. She works for the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency. She has to keep reporting to work every day, but she is not getting a paycheck. Tyra talked about the challenges of juggling the cost of medicine, food, and gas for her daily commute to a job where she is not getting paid right now. She told me yesterday: "I am trying to figure out how to get my child lunch." That is what the shutdown means for Tyra.

I heard the President say the other day: "I can relate, and I am sure that the people that are on the receiving end will make adjustments. They always do." That is the President of the United States saying he can relate to these hard-working Federal employees who are now going without a paycheck. Someone needs to tell the President that in the United States of America, 40 percent of our fellow citizens lack the \$400 in their bank account that would be needed for an emergency. So when you are talking about skipping a pay period, you are talking about thousands of families who are not going to be able to make ends meet. Mr. Trump can hang out at Trump Tower, and he can fly down to Mar-a-Lago, but it is pretty clear that one thing he cannot do is relate to the people who are going without a paycheck right now but who have bills they have to pay.

Another individual who joined us yesterday was Trish. Trish is an aerospace engineer at NASA. Trish is trying to buy a home, but the shutdown is throwing a wrench in those plans because her mortgage company, not surprisingly, says that they need current pay stubs from her in order to close on her purchase. What can she tell them? She doesn't have any current pay stubs coming in, so she may not be able to get that mortgage.

Mary works at the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the CFTC. She told us about the important work CFTC does to safeguard the financial system against financial wrongdoing and fraud. She explained that because of this shutdown, the CFTC cannot pursue legal cases against bad actors who were defrauding American consumers and that they have had to ask the courts to suspend those cases.

So I guess the shutdown is good for those who are trying to take advantage of our fellow citizens through various financial schemes. It certainly is not

fair to those who are working hard and playing by the rules and who want to do the public's business, like our Federal employees.

Mary said that because of the shutdown, she has had to make some difficult decisions in her own household. Mary's mother was recently widowed, and the shutdown is hurting her ability to help her mother make do during this tough time.

Before I had this forum with a number of Federal employees who have been shut out of work, I visited Prince George's Community College in Maryland. It is a great community college. The president of that community college is Dr. Dukes. As I was going to meet Dr. Dukes, I met a mom on the elevator. The mom had been there to talk about her daughter who is enrolled there. It turned out that her mother is a Federal employee who has been shut out of the Department of Commerce. Then I talked to Dr. Dukes, and the president of this great community college told me that she has been getting phone calls all week from parents who have students enrolled at Prince George's Community College who are on a monthly installment payment plan, and they are calling the president of this community college and saying: What are we going to be able to do? We are not going to be able to make our next payment on our child's community college tuition bill.

Just today, I got a number of letters from air traffic controllers in Maryland. They, like thousands of other Federal employees, are working every day right now, but they are not getting paid for it.

Tension is mounting, frustration is mounting for the air traffic controllers, a lot of Federal law enforcement officers, and the people at the border, our border security. So, Mr. President, you don't know how to relate to these fellow Americans who are struggling because of your shutdown.

In the Senate, our failure to take up the bills that have already passed the House and are sitting right here in the Senate to reopen the Federal Government is making this Senate complicit in this Trump shutdown. Every day that goes by where we don't make our first order of business ending the shutdown makes the Senate an accomplice in the Trump shutdown. The House made it its first order of business to say: Let's reopen government. They passed two bills. Both bills have overwhelming support for their components here in the Senate.

I have the first bill they passed right here in my hand. H.J. Res. 1 says to open the Department of Homeland Security at current funding levels through February 8 while we negotiate the best way to provide border security. This is on the Senate calendar. We can vote on this tonight. Of course, the irony here is that this Senate, just before the Christmas break, voted on exactly this measure. We voted on a bipartisan basis to open the Homeland

Security Department at current levels through February 8 while we negotiate. We have already done it. So why are we not taking up this bill this evening?

The other bill that passed the Senate I have right here in my hand. It is also on the Senate calendar. This bill that passed the House on their opening day would open eight of the nine Departments that are closed. The first bill would open the Department of Homeland Security, while we negotiate, until February 8. The other bill opens eight of the nine other Federal Departments that have been closed.

Here is the kicker: The House did not adopt the House appropriations levels. The House looked at what the Senate had passed on a bipartisan basis either here on the Senate floor or in the Senate Appropriations Committee, and they took the Senate funding levels to open those eight Departments through the entire fiscal year, through September 30.

Mr. President, we all have a very simple question: Why is the majority leader and why are our Republican colleagues not bringing up those House bills that are sitting right here in the Senate? We have already supported those bills on a bipartisan basis. We can pass these bills to reopen the government tonight, and there is no excuse for not doing it.

I am going to close by sharing the comments of one of the other individuals who joined me yesterday at that gathering. His name is Otis Johnson. He works here at the National Gallery of Art. His message to President Trump: "Mr. President, if you really can relate to how the Federal employee is feeling, you need to go ahead and open the government back up so our people who want to work can get back to work and handle America's business."

I wish President Trump was listening to Otis and all the other hard-working Federal employees I met with yesterday. If he talked to them, he would hear their stories, and he would know they are suffering, as are the American people who every day are losing access to important services.

I want to again thank my colleague from Virginia, Mr. Kaine, and my other colleagues.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to join my colleagues in voicing my sincere hope that the President will end this senseless shutdown.

The American people are tired of our country being held hostage and our economy threatened. There are real consequences. I see it all the time. Of course my State, unlike Mr. VAN HOLLEN's State of Maryland and the State of Virginia, may not have as high a percentage of Federal workers, but for every worker who has been hit by this, it is the same story.

At our airport just this weekend, I talked to countless TSA officers. They

said: We will continue to do our job, but now we are not going to get paid. You think about these people on the frontline who are doing the work for our country, who are keeping us safe, and who are not getting paid because of this senseless shutdown. You hear about the garbage piling up in our national parks. You hear about people having trouble paying their rent or mortgage. You hear about the fears about airport security lines. Everyday Americans are affected by this as well.

Other consequences of this shutdown are less visible but deeply painful for those affected. There are entrepreneurs who want to take their companies public but can't get approval by the SEC. You have rural home buyers who can't get their mortgages backed by the Agriculture Department. Farmers can't access critical loans or information about how the Department will implement the new farm bill. We were so proud to pass the new farm bill in this Chamber on a bipartisan basis—something the President took credit for—and now we can't even implement it and help our farmers as they approach growing season in the spring. They don't even know what is going to happen with the new provisions of this farm bill, especially the dairy farmers of Minnesota, who have been hit so hard by low prices and by the trade war that we are in.

While this trade war is going on, we are also going to not be able to help them and to deny the help that vulnerable Americans need. Funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which helps put food on the table for 38 million Americans, would be severely reduced or cut off all together. The Department of Housing and Urban Development payments that maintain housing for 3 million Americans could be in jeopardy.

It is time to put aside the political games, and it is time to get in the real game—and that is the lives of American people—and to stop this shutdown. It means reopening our entire government so we can work on the issues that matter.

This is a time in our country when we should not be governing from crisis. We should be governing from opportunity. After the downturn, the economy had stabilized, and we should be working with the rest of the world. We should be selling our goods to market and building the infrastructure in this country. We should be doing something about prescription drug prices. We should be training our workers for the jobs that are available today and the jobs that will be available tomorrow.

There are simple proposals out there. There is the Senate and the House of Representatives legislation that passed through this body unanimously—not a single Senator opposed it—yet the President suddenly changed course and, once again, insisted that he needs over \$5 billion immediately. The new House has now passed legislation to fund all shuttered agencies other than

the Department of Homeland Security through the end of the fiscal year. That includes the Treasury Department, the Agriculture Department, the Interior Department—government agencies that provide critical services. These noncontroversial bills were originally drafted and approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee run by the Republican Party. None of this makes sense to me at all. The measures that were passed by the House are sensible, and they are ones that have been supported in the past by Republicans in this Chamber.

Shutdowns are not good for the economy. I lived through the 2013 shutdown. That was estimated to cost our economy over \$20 billion. The President's own economic adviser, Kevin Hassett, has estimated that this shutdown will shrink our economy by 0.1 percent every 2 weeks. Maybe that doesn't sound like much. Do you know how much it really is? It is roughly \$10 billion every single week. That is real money for real Americans. So stop the games.

Shutting down the government should not be a negotiating tactic. If President Trump were to agree to sign the bills that the House has now passed and every Member of the Senate supported last month, we would end this shutdown. Instead, critical services and our economy are being threatened with poison pill partisanship.

To my colleagues in the Senate, I say this: Let's get this done. We owe it to the people whom we were elected to serve. We owe it to the country. As one former Congresswoman once said, America should be as good as its promise. This is a promise we made to them when we were elected—to do the best for them and to serve our country. Let's get it done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise tonight to talk about the government shutdown. I thank my colleague from Minnesota for her remarks. I remember the 2013 shutdown that she talked about. The reason I remember that is that while this place was shut down by the Senator from Texas, my State was under water from some of the worst floods we had ever seen, and there were people at every level of government—the local level, county government, the State level—coming together to work with FEMA, coming together to work with religious organizations, coming together to work with ordinary people to literally dig themselves out of the mud and the rocks that were the consequence of floods we had never seen before. I had to stand there almost like a fool explaining that the Federal Government was shut down for politics, and here we are again.

For 10 years, I have come to this floor and said over and over that this place had become the land of flickering lights. The standard of success was only whether we kept the lights on for

one more day or one more week. The standard of success had nothing to do with whether we invested in the next generation of Americans and had nothing to do with what America's place in the world was, and tonight, 18 days later, we are shut down.

Just like in Minnesota and just like in New Hampshire, people in Colorado are suffering as a result of this. This shutdown is inflicting real harm on people who are Federal workers who can't pay their mortgage, can't take care of their kids, can't hire a plumber. We heard today that the EPA is only getting paid half of their paycheck. You can't pay only half your mortgage. You can't go to the grocery store and pay only half your bill. We have farmers and ranchers all over the State of Colorado who can't get operating loans from the FSA to buy seed or fertilizer.

We have had FEMA meetings canceled and critical projects delayed that are vital to our rebuilding after the 2013 flood, the last time there was a long shutdown like this. After a terrible fire year in Colorado, the Forest Service can't move forward with new projects or reduce wildfire risks in our communities.

Rocky Mountain National Park is closed. Why do people from Estes Park have to bear the burden of the stupidity of this place—the inability to govern like every other entity in America governs, where you could never shut down your local government and you could never shut down your school district? But for some reason, you can do it over politics. In this case, why? It is over a mnemonic device that the Trump campaign supplied to candidate Trump—the wall—and two things that weren't true: one, that Mexico would pay for the wall. If he had fulfilled that promise, we wouldn't be here because there wouldn't be a need for \$5 billion because the Mexicans would pay for this wall. That is what he said over and over. It was objectively not true, just as it is not true that what is needed is the wall that he has proposed.

We had a bill here in 2013 that 68 Senators voted for. That bill had \$46 billion of border security in it, 350 miles of fencing on the southern border, internal security, and fixed our visa system—far more effective than the ineffective wall that the President is trying to build now for \$5 billion. He can't even spend the money that has already been appropriated, and now he has shut the government down for \$5 billion to keep a campaign promise that is not true. It wasn't true then, and it is not true now.

This is ridiculous. Last week, China marked the New Year by landing a spacecraft on the dark side of the Moon. That has never happened before in human history. Here in the United States, while they were accomplishing that, we had a government shutdown. Close observers might say—and they would be right—that NASA—which, by the way, is closed—marked New Year's

Day by successfully flying the New Horizons probe past an object 4 billion miles away. We should celebrate that achievement, but let's also remember that mission was 18 years in the making because people planned for the future. An American craft is literally on the outer edge of human discovery, and last week we were shut down while the Chinese landed their craft on the other side of the Moon. Because of the fecklessness of people in this body, we can't even put an astronaut into space now. We have to call up the Russians and ask them to put us on a rocket to take us up there. Do you think our parents and grandparents would have stood for that?

There was a unanimous vote in this Chamber, and it passed in the other Chamber. We should reopen the government. This is doing too much damage to the country, and the President should understand that part of his job of being President is keeping the government open, not cheering it when it is closed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. JONES. Mr. President, first of all, let me say how much I appreciate my colleagues on the floor—particularly, Senator BENNET's comments—and the passion that everyone has shown for the people in this country and why we are here for the people that we represent, whether they voted for us or not. That is not the issue. We are here to represent all the people, and I really appreciate those incredible words from my colleagues and, particularly, the passion shown by Senator BENNET.

I am rising today to give my voice to the thousands of Alabamians who are also suffering as a result of this government shutdown. It is not just the folks who are employed but those who are affected by this shutdown by whatever means necessary.

There are people who are not employed by the government who are also affected. In the midst of all the political posturing that we have seen, the costly government shutdown has hurt over 5,100 Alabama workers, their families, and the people who rely on them to do their job. Thousands more are contractors who will not get backpay. Unlike the Federal workers, who traditionally get backpay, these contractors who are not working now because there is no work to be had with the Federal Government will not get backpay from their employers.

Our Coast Guard employees, who aren't paid through the Department of Defense budget that passed last year, don't know whether their paycheck will come or not. By the way, it is the Coast Guard who is interdicting so much of the illegal drugs that are attempting to come into this country. It is not the southern border. It is the Coast Guard, which we are putting at risk, that is doing the best job of interdicting the illegal drugs that are attempting to come into this country.

These folks pay the price of this shutdown while this political drama that we have seen in Washington, DC, drags on and on—on cable TV, on Twitter, and on other social media platforms. These folks are hard-working Alabamians who keep our airports safe. They protect our communities. They monitor our prisons.

We have three Federal prisons in Alabama. Three of the workers in the Aliceville prison were on CNN today talking about the effects on them and their community in Aliceville, AL. These are people who support our national defense, like folks in Redstone Arsenal and at all of the military bases in our State. They support the aerospace programs in our State. These are the folks who are getting hurt. Many of these people are veterans who have gone on to serve their country a second time by working in Federal service.

Most of these folks support strong border security. I venture to guess that all of them support strong border security. Some will support the wall, as the President has described it, but they don't agree with—they don't support—shutting down the Government of the United States of America in a way to just get that wall or that border security done. They do not support that at the expense of their communities and their families.

Over the past 18 days or so since this shutdown, I have heard from any number of my constituents. They call the office here in Washington, and they call the offices in Huntsville, in Mobile, in Birmingham, and in Montgomery. They talk about how they are hurting already because of the shutdown.

One constituent who wrote to me is a small business owner in North Alabama, near Huntsville, whose 30-plus employees have provided very important, continuous support for NASA programs for the past 7 years. As their work gets delayed or stopped altogether, these folks don't know whether they are going to have jobs. If their work stops, those employees are going to need jobs, and they are going to start looking for other jobs. In the economy that we have now, in which unemployment is low, people are looking for workers, and they are going to find those jobs. So his business may get shut down.

There is a military spouse who also works for the Federal Government whose husband is deployed to Afghanistan right now. She also wrote to me and urged an end to this shutdown. She said that while she supports the wall, she doesn't believe that Federal employees should be used as bargaining chips just to get it done. She said that a lapse in funding would be devastating for her job and that her family needs the paychecks to cover these bills. This is a family that is already living under stress with its having a husband and father in Afghanistan. This family doesn't need the extra stress.

On behalf of her family of four in Smiths Station, AL, another mother

wrote to me about her family's lapse in healthcare coverage since the shutdown because the employees at a Federal health insurance agency, GEHA, have been furloughed. Her family's change in coverage was never fully processed by the end of the year. So it lapsed and was canceled as of December 31. The family members are now facing important medical decisions—appointments, prescriptions, refills in the next few weeks—but don't know if they are going to have the insurance to cover it.

The administration announced today that the deadline for farmers to receive their subsidies, because of the administration's trade policies, will be extended, which all sounds really great. It sounds all good and well. We are going to extend it. We are going to put a bandaid on this for our farmers. These farmers have been hit hard by the trade war that this administration has started, which I have talked about on the floor of the Senate on any number of occasions and around my State.

To ease that pain, a few months ago the administration decided to allocate \$12 billion as almost a bailout. Now, these farmers really don't want these handouts. They want their markets. Yet, to ease their pain, to its credit, the administration came up with \$12 billion to ease that pain. Less than half of that amount—roughly, about \$5.2 billion in payments—was made before the Department of Agriculture's local offices were closed. While extending that deadline sounds very good and is, simply, putting a bandaid over the wound, the fact is that until we get this government open, farmers who did not get their payments in before this shutdown are going to have a problem.

Another problem with the shutdown is that they can't depend on the Federal Government any more than they can depend on the weather. These farmers are at risk every season, every year, of things that are out of their control. What they don't need is a government that they cannot depend on, and that is what we have right now. They are out of luck at a time at which they need it the most, as they are starting to plan for their spring planting and summer planting—their loans, their crops, buying the seed—as Senator BENNET talked about a few moments ago.

There is one constituent who wrote me a really heartbreaking letter about the impact of losing her SNAP benefits after January 31 if the shutdown continues. She is living on a razor's edge financially and depends on Social Security disability benefits and SNAP dollars to survive. It is not a lot of money on a monthly basis. It is such a small amount of money that folks in this body and folks in the House and, certainly, the folks in the administration wouldn't think twice about it. It is probably less than they spend at Starbucks every morning, but, for her, it is an incredibly important part of her life, and we have to make sure that we do everything not to let her down.

I did see, just before I came over here, that the administration has said that we are going to extend it. We are going to make sure that SNAP benefits are paid in February. Again, that is great and sounds wonderful, but it is a bandaid. Sooner or later, if we don't end up doing something about this shutdown, that bandaid is going to be ripped off, and these folks are going to be left in the cold once again.

We need to remember—and I think this gets lost sometimes in the talk about this shutdown—that this is not just about the paychecks and the direct benefits that people in this country receive from the Federal Government. It also affects all of those people in our communities who serve those who work for the government—those who take in their grocery money and take in their utility money and take in their gas money. It is going to affect those people. It is going to affect car dealers, and it is going to affect local businesses. It is just like the folks at the prison in Aliceville said today, which is that sooner or later, if they don't have money to spend around Aliceville, it is going to affect that community. This touches so many people in this country that we need not lose sight of that.

The letters and calls and voice mails are pouring in every day as this shutdown continues. More and more Americans face the increasing consequences of the impasse that we see here in Washington, DC. There is, simply put, no excuse for it. We can and must do better. We can and must find the common ground that so many of us talk about. Every day, over and over, we talk about finding common ground, but we have to practice what we preach in terms of finding that common ground.

This past year, I talked to a number of my constituents back home who had gone through a number of issues. I talked to a lot of people who asked me to support the wall. They stopped me over the holidays, and I would always stop and talk to them. They were always very respectful, unlike with some things that happen in our political discourse today. These people were always very respectful, and we had nice conversations. When I asked them what they were talking about, they said that I needed to vote for a wall.

They said: We just need border security, Senator. We need border security.

This gave me the opportunity to say: I completely agree.

Unfortunately, the so-called “wall” that we keep hearing about, primarily on Twitter, has really become just a metaphor to support a secure border. To oppose it is to oppose a secure border. That makes no sense. What is getting lost in this debate is that every Member of this body wants secure borders. Every Member of this body and every Member of the House wants border security measures that will keep our communities safe. We might have disagreements about the best way to make sure our borders are secure, and

we might have disagreements on what border security will look like, but it doesn't mean that we want open borders as I keep hearing from the administration. That is a preposterous statement.

In fact, in the last Congress, we had one of the President's nominees before us for the head of ICE. He used to work on the border. He was there. He controlled it. He was the head of border security.

I asked him in the hearing: Have you ever heard one politician—have you ever heard anybody in Washington, DC—say that he is for open borders?

He said: No, sir, not at all.

We have to get away from that political posturing so that we can find the common ground that is necessary to move this forward. The fact of the matter is that we have found common ground. We have found that common ground right here in this body.

Last February, in the midst of bipartisan talks on more comprehensive immigration reform, a number of senior administration officials came to the Senate and briefed Members on the situation at the border. They outlined how an infusion of money in the context of a larger piece of legislation could improve security and conditions for asylum seekers and on the border. In the wake of that presentation—if I recall correctly, they proposed a \$25 billion price tag for border security—Republicans and Democrats alike, which was a majority of the U.S. Senate, voted to include that \$25 billion in border security funding over the next decade. That was a bipartisan effort.

Over the course of the last spring and early summer, the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee—led by my colleague from Alabama, Senator SHELBY, and by Senator LEAHY, the ranking member—passed a bipartisan Homeland Security funding bill by a vote of 25 to 5. It did that in June of this year. It included \$1.6 billion in border security funding, which was on top of the \$1.3 billion, I think, that was funded last year. What has started this whole process today is the administration's demand of a blank check of \$5.6 billion for a wall as the price to reopen the government. That is, simply, not how our government should work.

Now, candidly and in all fairness, in recent days, we have gone from an argument that was just, simply, about dollars and cents on both sides of the aisle—5.6 versus 1.6 or 1.3—to where we have now seen the administration begin to slowly roll out how it would actually spend that money. There was no plan in the beginning. It was just “send us \$5.6 billion.” We are learning about that plan via Twitter and on the TV talk shows, not the way this body is used to getting information from the administration—through a budget process or through some proposal about which you can ask questions and can vet.

If the administration is serious about border security—and it should be seri-

ous about border security, just like the Senate of the United States and the House of Representatives of the United States should be serious about border security—we should reopen the rest of the government. Officials should also come back to the Hill, like they did in February, and brief Members of both parties in Congress about what is needed and of exactly the new border security money and how it will be spent.

This week, the House has been voting on a series—or will be voting on a series—of funding bills that the Senate has already passed, many by a vote of 92 to 6. Think about that. As I travel around the State, I tell people all the time what I saw last year—my first year—which is that there is so much more bipartisanship in this body that you don't see just by watching C-SPAN and listening to dueling press conferences. There is a lot of it that goes on, and we passed those bills by 92 to 6.

These bills will ensure that the Federal employees and contractors can go back to work and can get paid, that food assistance and housing vouchers can go forward, that vital research can be done, that our parks and museums can reopen, that our airports are safe, and that our prisons are monitored. Instead of handing political appointees a 10-percent raise, it will ensure that we will pay the Coast Guard, whose members continue to serve throughout this shutdown without knowing if their next paychecks are going to come.

I am literally sad to say—and I really hope people will take this into account, especially the folks who have been here for a long time—that in my first year here, my first year in the Senate, this is the third government shutdown that we have seen. We should be embarrassed about that, and the administration should be embarrassed about that. At every opportunity, I have voted to keep the government open. I can't say that I would do it every time, because it will depend on the circumstances, but, thus far, I have done all I can to keep this government open.

The American people are frustrated and disheartened by the dysfunction and empty rhetoric that they hear out of this town, but we have to remember that the Senate of the United States has done its job and done so in a deliberative and bipartisan way. No one on either side of the political aisle should lose sight of that.

We came together and found common ground, and we should insist that the President of the United States not only acknowledge that but honor that, get this government up and running, and let's sit down to continue to discuss the plans for the border security that we all know is necessary and we would like.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO BILL CUNNINGHAM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on February 1, the Kentucky Supreme