

IL—for the record, Planned Parenthood and any clinic operating under title X is prohibited from using any Federal funds for the purpose of abortion. The only exceptions are those that have been in the law and accepted by both political parties for decades—the so-called Hyde amendment for women who are victims of rape, incest, or their lives are at stake in a continued pregnancy.

This isn't an abortion issue. It is obviously a health care issue. For some reason, the House Republicans would rather close down the government than allow this kind of health service to continue. That is troublesome.

It is also troubling that the underlying House budget they passed has been judged by economists to be a job killer—700,000 jobs would be lost if the Republicans passed their budget and the Senate approved it. At a time when we are celebrating the creation of over 200,000 new jobs last Friday, and the lowest unemployment rate in 24 months, here come the Republicans with a budget proposal that will cost 700,000 jobs, pushing us back toward recession instead of away from it. That isn't sensible.

I don't believe the American people ever considered that part of the bargain in the last election. It is true the American people focused on the deficit and cutting spending, and we are too—on both sides of the aisle. That is why we have reached an agreement on the amount of money to be cut from the remaining part of this budget. For us to now face a shutdown of the Federal Government over the question of women's access to health care or whether we are going to accept an EPA change, which has already been rejected on the floor of the Senate, shows the unreasonable level of this debate.

We had a meeting today of the Democratic Senators, and JOHN KERRY spoke. I told him afterward that what he said had a profound impact on me. He reminded us that what we are doing isn't just being observed by politicians on Capitol Hill or reporters and journalists in Washington; it is being watched by the world.

It is a sad commentary that this great Nation, the United States of America, with its government, has reached a point where we face closure. We know we can do better. It is unfortunate the House Republicans, with their new leadership facing growing pains, have brought us to this moment. I hope we can reach a point where we can find an agreement even now. I hope this evening there will be a breakthrough.

They said last week, when the Speaker announced to his Republican caucus in the House that there was going to be a shutdown of the government, there was a standing ovation. They were cheering the idea of shutting down the government.

I will not cheer that. That is a bad outcome. It is bad for taxpayers, bad for our Nation, and bad for the Federal

employees who are performing essential services in North Carolina, Illinois, and across the country. These are men and women who are working to keep us safe. They are performing important duties, such as watching dangerous prisoners and making certain our planes take off and land safely. To even jeopardize for a minute the funding for these agencies is irresponsible to the extreme.

Let's hope there is an agreement. If not, let's hope we can extend somehow the functions of government and not close them down at midnight tomorrow evening. At this moment, there is no report. There is likely to be one later.

At this point, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have just returned from the White House. We have narrowed the issues significantly; However, we have not yet reached an agreement. In 26 hours and 15 minutes the government will close if we don't get this resolved. We have not yet reached an agreement.

We are going to work throughout the night to attempt to resolve many issues. The remaining issues are extremely narrow. Having said that, I have been to this podium before, and I have spoken to the press before, and I said we have narrowed the issues—and we have. The sad part about it is that we never quite get to the finish line.

I hope we can work through the night and get this done. The President set an early morning deadline before we have to start notifying almost 1 million Federal employees that they will have to report to work and hear that they won't be there on Monday. It is a technical thing they have to do tomorrow before closing time. We need to work toward that deadline. I hope we can get that done. I am not really confident, but I am very hopeful.

FAIR ELECTIONS NOW ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, last year, the Supreme Court issued a decision in a case named *Citizens United v. FEC*. In this sweeping decision that ignored decades of precedent, the Supreme Court held that corporations and unions could spend as much money as they want to influence congressional elections.

At the time the Court issued this decision, I and others warned that *Citizens United* would have a negative impact on our democracy and open the floodgates to undisclosed private money in Federal elections.

The results of the first congressional elections after *Citizens United* have been analyzed. Those of us who sound-

ed the alarm about this unfortunate decision were right.

In 2010, for the first time ever, spending on House and Senate races exceeded \$1.6 billion.

Outside groups, now freed from spending limits by *Citizens United*, spent 335 percent more on congressional campaigns than they did just 4 years earlier.

The amount of money that big corporations and special interest lobbyists are willing to spend to shape policy is expected to increase even more in 2012.

This dramatic increase in spending tells us that big business is not going to be shy about using its new power to say to Members of Congress: "If you vote against our business interests, we'll spend millions to make sure you never get the chance to vote against us again."

That is a terrible reality for Members of Congress evaluating policy options and it is an even worse statement about our democracy.

As bad as *Citizens United* was, the Supreme Court may very well be at it again. Last week, the Court heard oral arguments in the *McComish v. Bennett* case.

An adverse decision in the *McComish* case would hamstring jurisdictions that have implemented campaign finance measures in response to corruption and scandal.

Citizens United and its corrosive impact remind us of the urgent need to fundamentally reform the way we finance congressional elections.

It is time we had a system that allows candidates to focus on constituents instead of fundraising.

That is why I introduced the Fair Elections Now Act. The Fair Elections Now Act will dramatically change the way campaigns are funded.

This bill lets candidates focus on the people they represent, regardless of whether those people have the wealth to attend a big money fundraiser or donate thousands of dollars.

Fair Elections candidates would be in the policy business, regardless of what policies are preferred by big business and wealthy special interests.

The Fair Elections Now Act will help restore public confidence in the congressional election process by providing qualified candidates for Congress with grants, matching funds, and vouchers from the Fair Elections Fund to replace campaign fundraising that largely relies on lobbyists and other special interests.

In return, participating candidates would agree to limit their campaign spending to amounts raised from small-dollar donors plus the amounts provided from the Fair Elections Fund.

Fair Elections would have three stages for Senate candidates.

To participate, candidates would first need to prove their viability by raising a minimum number and amount of small-dollar qualifying contributions from in-state donors. Once a candidate qualifies, that candidate must limit

the amount raised from each donor to \$100 per election.

For the primary, participants would receive a base grant that would vary in amount based on the population of the state that the candidate seeks to represent. Participants would also receive a 5-to-1 match for small-dollar donations up to a defined matching cap. The candidate could raise an unlimited amount of \$100 contributions if needed to compete against high-spending opponents.

For the general election, qualified candidates would receive an additional grant, further small-dollar matching, and vouchers for purchasing television advertising. The candidate could continue to raise an unlimited amount of \$100 contributions if needed.

The Fair Elections approach frees candidates to spend more time with constituents and in policy debates and less time with wealthy donors and special interest lobbyists.

Our country faces major challenges.

Everyone knows that we need to reduce the deficit, modernize our energy policy, and reform the Tax Code—among other things.

What many people may not know is that, at every turn, there are high-powered, special interest lobbyists ready to fight every proposal.

It is mighty hard for Members of Congress not to pay attention to the concerns of big money lobbyists and donors when Members of Congress may need to raise money from these same people during their next campaign.

This bill would dramatically reduce the influence of these lobbyists and corporations, because Fair Elections candidates would not need their money to run campaigns.

Let me be clear: I honestly believe that the overwhelming majority of the people serving in American politics are good, honest people, and I believe that Senators and Congressmen are guided by the best of intentions.

But we are nonetheless stuck in a terrible, corrupting system.

The perception is that politicians are corrupted by the big money interests . . . and whether that is true or not, that perception and the loss of trust that goes with it makes it incredibly difficult for the Senate to take on tough challenges and have the American public believe that what we are doing is right.

This problem—the perception of pervasive corruption—is fundamental to our democracy, and we must address it.

Fair Elections is not some farfetched idea.

Fair Election systems are already at work in cities and states around the country.

Similar programs exist and are working well in more than 12 jurisdictions, including Maine, Arizona, North Carolina, and Vermont.

These programs are bringing new faces and new ideas into politics, making more races more competitive, and dramatically reducing the influence of special interests.

The vast majority of Americans agree that it is time to fundamentally change our system of financing campaigns.

Recent polling shows that 75 percent of Democrats, 66 percent of independents, and 55 percent of Republicans support Fair Elections-style reform.

The Fair Elections Now Act is supported by several good government groups, former Members of Congress from both parties, prominent business leaders, and even . . . lobbyists.

Special interests lobbyists and big corporations are entitled to a seat at the table, but they shouldn't be able to buy every seat.

The Fair Elections Now Act will reform our campaign finance system so that Members of Congress can focus on implementing policies that benefit the people that sent them to Washington.

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF PLATTE COUNTY, WYOMING

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I am pleased to recognize the Centennial of Platte County, WY.

Although today's Platte County is vastly different than that of 100 years ago, its vibrant history connects the two. The early inhabitants, who were then part of Laramie County, campaigned passionately for the division of the county. They had distinguished themselves as functional communities, and they contributed to the State's economy by strengthening their ties to the railroad, agricultural development, and mining industries. They wanted an independent identity. On April 28, 1911, a headline in the Wheatland World jubilantly announced, "County division carries! Platte County a reality." Their success represents Wyoming's spirit of independence.

Platte County consists of 8,200 residents in the five communities of Wheatland, Guernsey, Hartville, Glendo, and Chugwater. Parts of Wheatland's unique irrigation system are still visible. In the early 1880s, engineers created a system of canals to transport water from manmade reservoirs through the mountains to the town below. Such foresight assisted in the taming of a small section of the great Wild West. A few miles outside of Guernsey stands Register Cliff, a sandstone outcropping upon which emigrants recorded their names and dates as they traveled the historic Oregon Trail. Wagon ruts from the trail are also visible and remind us of the grand journey people made. The Sunrise Mine, located just outside of Hartville, was one of the largest iron mines in the country, producing over 42 million tons of iron ore during its 80-year operation. Platte County is the only county in Wyoming with two State parks: Guernsey State Park and Glendo State Park. Both parks contribute to the area's irrigation systems, as well as provide excellent year-round recreational opportunities for Wyoming residents. Livestock production has always been a

major enterprise in Wyoming; Chugwater earned distinction as the headquarters for Swan Land and Cattle Company, one of the largest cattle outfits in the United States. Now, new generations of ranchers continue the cattle legacy.

Today, Platte County helps meet America's growing energy demands. The Laramie River Station powerplant, located northeast of Wheatland, delivers electricity to two separate power grids and is one of the largest consumer-operated, joint power supply ventures in the country. Strides have been made in developing renewable energy technology, including plans to harness Wyoming's wind. Also impressive is Platte County's proximity to the Niobrara Shale Formation, a shale rock formation that covers four States in the West. Drilling beneath this formation will provide numerous opportunities for oil and natural gas production.

Madam President, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of Platte County, I invite my colleagues to visit this historic place. This year, the Platte County Centennial Committee has planned several countywide celebrations and has announced its motto, "The People, the Land: Past, Present and Future." I applaud the citizens of Platte County in their efforts to celebrate such rich history and to present it to visitors from all over the world.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DR. CASS PENNINGTON

● Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, I am pleased to commend Dr. Cass Pennington of Indianola, MS, for his service and contributions to the State of Mississippi while serving as the 76th president of Delta Council. Delta Council is an economic development organization representing the business, professional, and agricultural leadership of the alluvial floodplain commonly known as the Mississippi Delta. The organization was formed in 1935 and is widely respected for its role in meeting the challenges which have historically been faced by the economy and quality of life for this region of our State.

Cass Pennington has served as president of Delta Council during a time when our Nation and the State of Mississippi have experienced enormous economic challenges at the local, State, and national levels. During his career, Dr. Pennington has been best known for his contributions to education and improved access to healthcare throughout the 18 Delta and part-Delta counties of northwest Mississippi. Prior to becoming the president of Delta Council, Dr. Pennington served as Superintendent of Education for school districts in Tallahatchie and Sunflower Counties, MS. He has served as a college sports referee and is a past chairman of the Board of Institutions