

To my friends on the Republican side of the aisle, I want to say, there are many instances where we might agree on social issues and some where we might disagree. That is the healthy part of our democracy. It is what makes us so unique. I assure you, there is a time and a place for everything. There is a time and a place for those votes. But not tonight. Today is not that time. Our deadline is here and rapidly approaching, as you can see.

My hope and prayer is that tonight we will do what is right, we will come together as Americans, and we will agree to a commonsense budget that is the first step to putting our fiscal house back in order. That is why the people of West Virginia sent me here. I took that oath of office not just to represent the Democrats on my side of the party or the Democrats in West Virginia, I took that oath of office to represent everybody in West Virginia: Democrats, Republicans, all different walks of life. I am going to do everything I can to make sure they understand I am here for them.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period for morning business for debate only be extended until 10:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the majority leader to be recognized at 10:30 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to add Senators LEAHY, MERKLEY, and BOXER as cosponsors to S. 724.

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

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, this brings to 77, out of 100 Senators, who are now sponsoring this bill. Our bill, S. 724, is very simple. It just says if there is a government shutdown, our military will be paid their full pay on time.

This bill is the very least we can do to assure every military family that they do not have to worry for one minute whether their mortgage is going to be paid, whether their car payments will be paid, or whether they will be able to get over this hump without thinking that there might be a halving of their pay, or that it might be delayed.

I am especially concerned, of course, about those who are overseas, but their families are at home, because if the mom or dad is overseas and there is a glitch somewhere, they are not here to help. I think it would be unthinkable that we would go to midnight and not have taken care of these families and assured them that everything is going to be fine.

I want to say that I hope there is an agreement, and I have heard the rumor that there is an agreement. If there is one, I know that it will include military pay. I believe that. If, for any reason, that agreement does not happen in the next 3 hours, or if the agreement doesn't include military pay—which I don't think will happen—I think both Houses of Congress want to serve our soldiers and their families, but I will be here until midnight, and I am going to make sure that whatever happens, either S. 724, with 77 sponsors in the Senate, is passed, or that we have an agreement that both Houses have before them that will assure that the military pay is handled in that other agreement.

So we are going to be here for 3 more hours and make sure that the will of the Senate, which is very clear with 77 sponsors, is met.

I want to just mention again that there was a Web site put up early this morning by just one woman who was very concerned about this issue and heard about my bill in the news. Her name is Hope Guinn Bradley. She is from Hawaii. I do not know her. She has started a social media network like I have never witnessed in my life. We now have over 1 million support hits on her Web site, called Ensuring Pay for our Military Act of 2011. In one day, she has accumulated 1 million support sentences, or messages, for what she is doing.

If you would go to that Web site and do nothing else but read those comments by people who are supporting our military and who are clearly in the support of our military—you know, I would like for the military people to see it just so they understand how much America appreciates them and what they do because they are saying to the people here in Washington, DC: You take care of our young men and women who are fighting for us. You better do it or there will be consequences.

Are they right? Absolutely. I have spoken a couple of times today. I want to make sure that we have the letters from the military organizations that have been written in support of S. 724. There is one from the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America that wrote a wonderful letter. I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD along with two other letters to which I will refer.

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

IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN
VETERANS OF AMERICA,
Washington, DC, April 7, 2011.

Hon. KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON,
248 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington,
DC.

DEAR SENATOR HUTCHISON: Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) strongly supports S. 724, the Ensuring Pay for Our Military Act of 2011. This bill ensures that all members of the Armed Forces will continue to receive the pay and allowances they have earned despite any lack of interim or full-year appropriations.

Our men and women in uniform protect our nation and continue to do so despite budget disagreements in Washington. The members of our Armed Forces are essential to the defense of our nation and must be treated as such.

Many young service members and their families are dealing with multiple deployments and often live paycheck to paycheck. Military families should not be asked to bear further financial stress in addition to fighting the war on terrorism. This legislation protects the men and women who protect us.

If we can be of any help in advancing S. 724 please contact Tim Embree at (202) 544-7692 or tim@iava.org. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

PAUL RIECKHOFF,
Executive Director.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR UNIFORMED SERVICES,
Springfield, VA, April 7, 2011.

Hon. KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR HUTCHISON: On behalf of the more than 180,000 members and supporters of the National Association for Uniformed Services (NAUS), I would like to offer our full support for your legislation S. 724, the Ensuring Pay for Our Military Act of 2011, a bill to assure that, in the event of a federal government shutdown, our nation's men and women in uniform would continue to receive their military pay and allowances.

The Ensuring Pay for Our Military Act would make available the necessary funds to prevent an interruption in pay for members of the military if there is a funding gap resulting from a government shutdown. The bill also includes a provision to authorize the Secretary of Defense to allow those who serve as DOD civilians or contractors in support of our men and women in uniform to continue to be paid as well.

The National Association for Uniformed Services thanks you for introducing legislation that demonstrates our nation's appreciation for those who serve in our Armed Forces. We look forward to working with you and your staff and deeply appreciate your continued support of the American soldier and their families.

Sincerely,

RICHARD A. JONES,
Legislative Director.

MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION
OF AMERICA,
April 8, 2011.

Hon. KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR HUTCHISON: On behalf of the 377,000 members of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), I am writing to urge you to cosponsor S. 724, the "Ensuring Pay For Our Military Act of 2011," recently introduced by Senators Bob Casey and Kay Bailey Hutchison.

Recent media stories stating servicemembers may not be paid in the event

of a government shutdown are only adding to unfair pressures on already over-stressed troops and families.

With loved ones involved in three separate combat operations and humanitarian relief in Japan, military families should not have to wonder if they will be able to cover house and car payments and other bills.

S. 724 would continue pay and allowances for active and reserve component forces in the event of a failure to enact interim or full-year appropriations for the Armed Forces. Absent any assurance that pay will continue, MOAA believes this legislation is essential to provide fair treatment for military members and families.

We respectfully request that you cosponsor and support immediate passage of S. 724 to ensure this situation never arises again in the future.

Sincerely,

VADM NORBERT RYAN, Jr.,
President, MOAA.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. The Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America understand better than anybody what it is like to serve there and to not have any other stresses that would add to what they are already doing for our country. They say pass S. 724.

The National Association for Uniformed Services, with more than 180,000 members, sent a letter in support.

The Military Officers Association of America has also added its support with 377,000 members.

We have the grassroots support. Everyone understands this. I will read a couple of the messages that have been on this wonderful Web site, but, first, here is one that came to my Web site:

Dear Senator Hutchison: My husband serves as a Captain in the United States Army. As the wife of a currently deployed soldier and mother to our two-year-old son, I find it outrageous that our government is debating whether or not to continue to pay our troops.

While my husband and I are very fiscally responsible, many of his junior soldiers simply cannot handle the implication of what it would mean to not receive their paychecks. We worry for these soldiers' families. How will they afford groceries? How will they afford diapers for their babies? Will they be able to pay their rent or mortgages? These are not questions that we should have to ask. Money should not be a worry on these soldiers' minds. My husband and the soldiers in his unit do incredibly dangerous missions and quite frankly it frightens me that this could split their focus in a very negative way.

My husband and his fellow soldiers risk their lives on a daily basis. They miss holidays and their children's birthdays. They deserve to know that the same government that sent them over to fight is looking out for them. They deserve to know that our government would not send them over to a war zone and then deny them their pay. My husband does not have the luxury to "walk off the job." He stays there until the mission is complete, and the Senate has a mission as well: to pass the Ensuring Pay for Our Military Act of 2011, S. 724.

Here is another hit that was found on the Ensuring Pay for Our Military Act of 2011 Web site:

As a military wife who is expecting our first child in June, my husband and I recently PCS'd overseas and are already on a tight budget to pay our new bills in Euros and our bills stateside in dollars. Now we

have to worry that we will not have enough money to pay our bills and our credit might be harmed, there is no safety net to help catch us when we fall behind, no interest on the back pay that we will be missing, or the late fees waived when we can't pay all of our bills. We would have to tell our German landlords that we cannot afford to give them money, how are they supposed to understand? They are not in this situation, we as Americans are. I am not complaining of being a military spouse; I chose this life. I knew of the hardships of deployments (my husband has served in both Afghanistan and Iraq), and I love what my family does. I hope and pray that this issue will be resolved soon.

Mr. President, really—I mean really, we have 3 hours until midnight. Can we tell these people that they might get half their paycheck on April 15? We can't.

Here is another letter. I am obviously not reading the names, although they are on here. I don't want to in any way harm them:

As a veteran of OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom), I stand behind you 100 percent and so do many others. This will tear morale from the troops and their families, which can be a dangerous thing. The mental and financial balance soldiers and their families are on, as it is, is a delicate one. They live month to month. Most are enlisted and make scratch as it is. Cutting more pay will put these families on the chopping block, and when a soldier's family is put in that position, that soldier is no longer fighting for his country but is now fighting for his family against his country. This would destroy the basic foundation of all our forces from the core.

There are 1 million hits on this Web site. So many of them are touching, many are pleading, some are angry. I just want to say I do have faith that in the next 3 hours, we will ensure that these people are taken care of. I do have that faith. But we only have 3 more hours. I want to ensure that we are going to be here. If it starts getting to 11 o'clock and we have 1 more hour to ensure that not 1 more hour passes after midnight that this cannot be taken care of, I am going to be here, and we are going to do it. And I am so proud that so far we have 77 cosponsors of this bill. I think we will have unanimous support for it. I do. But 77 people have made sure they called to be a cosponsor of this bill. I am proud we have something very bipartisan in a very partisan atmosphere. That is maybe a ray of hope that this is going to be done in the right way.

I want the people of this country to know and I want it to be in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD the overwhelming support that has now come because of the debate, what people are seeing and their support for the military.

The Presiding Officer is a cosponsor of the bill. The Senator who is taking his place right now is also a supporter of this bill—Senator MERKLEY, Senator UDALL, Senator DURBIN, Senator KERRY. We have very strong bipartisan support. It is my faith that we are going to do what is right for our military because we can do no less.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MERKLEY). The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Texas and her cosponsor, the Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. CASEY. They expressed the deep-felt sentiments of all of us. I am happy to be a cosponsor of this legislation.

I can assure the Senator from Texas that we have discussed this at length in our caucus, and there will be ample opportunity for all Members to join in an effort to make certain our men and women in uniform, who are risking their lives, will not be in any way disadvantaged by what is going on on Capitol Hill.

I share her frustration and anxiety. I have been listening and watching these negotiations now for weeks. I cannot believe we have reached this point—less than 3 hours from a government shutdown—when the differences are so minor, when there are so few things in disagreement. It is time, literally, for the Speaker of the House to come forward and accept the dollar amount he agreed to last night in the White House Oval Office, to accept that amount which dramatically cuts spending to help reduce our deficit.

I do not know why we have literally wasted this entire day in negotiations back and forth. Part of it was wasted, I am afraid, on this whole question of funding the access of women and families across America to health care. I understand that has been worked out now during the course of the day. The Speaker has considered a different approach to it, thank goodness.

Now is the time to close the deal. Now is the time to get our job done. Now is the time to not only stand up for the men and women in uniform—and they should be our first obligation—but stand up for so many others deserving of our help too. They are not covered by this bill. Right now, there are FBI agents in America risking their lives tracking drug dealers and terrorists who are about to learn at midnight that their jobs are in jeopardy, if not closed down, until Congress relents. The same thing is true about those in our intelligence community around the world. They may not wear a uniform, but they are literally risking their lives as well for the security of the United States in countries far and wide across this globe. The list just goes on and on.

We first think of our military, as we should, but they are not the only ones who are making great sacrifice for the safety of this country. When I think of their valor and courage, I wonder whether our leaders can summon the courage, particularly at this point I hope the Speaker can summon the courage to bring his caucus together and to vote, to avert this embarrassing—embarrassing—shutdown which will occur in less than 3 hours unless something happens.

I still believe it will. I still believe we have that chance, and I hope Senator

HUTCHISON, who has been a leader on this issue, does not have to come to the floor again. I can assure her, before anything happens to disadvantage our troops, we will stand together in a bipartisan way, maybe on her bill, maybe on another bill, but we will stand in a bipartisan way to protect these troops. I thank her again for her leadership. There is evidence between her and Senator CASEY that there is a strong bipartisan feeling that we need to get this job done before the Senate shuts down.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I appreciate very much what the leader has said. I know this has been arduous, and I know the negotiations have been arduous. That is why I believe that in the next 3 hours, we will do the right thing on this issue. I hope we do the right thing for all of our country.

We have not talked about the other Federal employees who are essential and those who are going to be furloughed. There are so many people in this country who are going to be affected in so many ways if there is a government shutdown. I am focusing on the ones who cannot help themselves right now because they are overseas protecting our freedom, but there are many people who are going to have hardships that are unnecessary.

I do appreciate what Senator DURBIN has said.

There is one other person I want to mention; that is, Congressman LOUIE GOHMERT. He started on the House side with the same bill I have introduced on the Senate side. He has gained large support on the House side for this legislation. I commend Congressman GOHMERT for assuring, as we were watching this week the very spirited debate that has gone on about the possibility of having a government shutdown—LOUIE GOHMERT stepped up first. I give him credit for saying there is one group we cannot leave behind no matter what happens. Our bills are virtually the same. Whichever House can pass it first is fine with me because whatever we do, we have to do it together and we have to do it before midnight.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I just wandered onto the floor hoping we were coming close to some type of an agreement. I very much regret that we have to careen from week to week, from period to period funding our government on a temporary basis. I think all of us were hoping we could get this resolved. I still hold out some hope. There is 2 hours and 50 minutes or so of negotiations still to go.

I commend the Senator from Texas, Mrs. HUTCHISON, for her efforts. She has been relentless in reminding us for several days, if not more, that we cannot leave our troops in the field and those who are wearing the uniform serving our country in a situation where they are not paid. This, of course, affects drug enforcement agents and many others across the Federal spectrum. But these troops overseas are bearing hardship enough to not be caught up in a debate here which is necessary, a debate that needs to be resolved.

As I said earlier when I spoke this morning or early afternoon, this is just a small little brushfire, as dramatic as the press has made it, and it does have consequences—serious consequences. But compared to the size of the problem our Nation faces from a fiscal standpoint relative to what we need to do and what we need to be debating, this is a small part, just talking about funding for the next 6 months to fill a gap that was left when no budget was passed and no action was taken on it in the last Congress, the last fiscal year, to put us in a position where we can move into and debate the real issue that is before us; that is, how do we make decisions that will affect the long-term spending of this country, affect our budget and our deficit, and bring us back to a fiscally responsible place?

I hope as negotiations continue to go forward that we can resolve this today so that we can begin that important debate. But if we cannot, at the very least, I believe it is important that we extend this for a small amount of time—I regret we have to do it—so we can bring it to its final conclusion. But the most important point is that before midnight, we have to make sure we pass legislation which will ensure that our people in uniform are paid their rightful due for the service they are providing. Again, I commend the Senator from Texas for reminding us of that and being vigilant in making sure we absolutely address that issue before this time runs out.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to add Senator LANDRIEU as a cosponsor of Senate bill 724.

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

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, that makes 78 Members of the Senate who are now sponsoring this bill for our military.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COONS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period for morning business for debate only be extended until 11:15 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the majority leader to be recognized at 11:15 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND FURTHER ADDITIONAL CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2011

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I will read a statement that was issued by Speaker BOEHNER and myself a few minutes ago. This is the statement:

We have agreed to an historic amount of cuts for the remainder of this fiscal year, as well as a short-term bridge that will give us time to avoid a shutdown while we get that agreement through both houses and to the President. We will cut \$78.5 billion below the President's 2011 budget proposal, and we have reached an agreement on the policy riders. In the meantime, we will pass a short-term resolution to keep the government running through Thursday. That short-term bridge will cut the first \$2 billion of the total savings.

I, first of all, express my appreciation to the Speaker and his office. It has been a grueling process. We did not do it at this late hour for drama. We did it because it has been very hard to arrive at this point.

I also express my appreciation to my counterpart, Senator MCCONNELL. We have talked during this process on a number of occasions. We have, as we say here, on many occasions it has turned out to be we have a terrific relationship. We do our best to protect each caucus. We have our battles here. But he is a pleasure to work with. I admire and appreciate his work for the people of Kentucky and the country.

This has been a long process. It has not been an easy process. Both sides have had to make tough choices, but tough choices are what this job is all