For some, for political or other reasons, these are challenging discussions. But no one more than the Senator from Illinois has been willing to put more on the line, has been willing to take more heat and has more represented this whole notion of putting country first on an issue that I think is the defining moment of our time.

I thank my friend, the Senator from Illinois. I appreciate all he has done. I think history will actually show in many ways that the original framework of the so-called Gang of 6—I think it is only in Washington where when people try to work together they are immediately designated as gang members—but particularly the low-income protections the Senator of Illinois made sure we had in our bipartisan agreement that reduced the deficit by more than $4 trillion will stand as the high water mark. I commend him for his work.

I want to say as a relatively new Senator and one who is still trying to learn the rules and procedures, I also always thought that if someone filibustered a bill they had to stay on the floor and make that case. As someone who was never a legislator before I came to this position, I look forward to working with him and reasonable Members from both sides of the aisle to make sure we have rules reforms so the Senate can get back to doing the people's business and not be involved in procedural matters.

With that, I wish to speak very briefly about the issue before us. It is hunting season in Virginia—I am sure it is in Delaware as well—so it is timely that this current bill is before us. I wish to take a moment to voice my support for the Sportsmen's Act of 2012, a bill I am proud to cosponsor. I applaud the hard work my good friend from Montana, Senator TESTER, has done in moving this bill forward through a number of challenges. He has put so much time and effort into pulling various pieces together, building support, and balancing different interests. I am confident that, with his leadership, we have put together a very strong piece of legislation.

The Sportsmen's Act of 2012 is a compilation of nearly 20 different bipartisan bills that are important to sportsmen and conservation communities across America. It focuses on the conservation of wildlife habitat and improved access for recreational hunting and fishing.

Sportsmen cite the loss of access as the No. 1 reason why they have given up on hunting or fishing. Currently, 35 million acres of public land are either restricted or provide no access. This bill allows the acquisition of more easements and rights of way to improve access to public land for hunting and fishing. The Sportsmen's Act of 2012 increases access to public lands for millions of Americans and Virginians who participate in hunting and fishing and other outdoor recreation, while also supporting the very important conservation of wildlife habitat.

This legislation promotes our recreational hunting, fishing, and shooting heritage. It also continues a number of key initiatives and public-private partnerships to support conservation of fish and wildlife populations.

This bipartisan bill is consistent with my long-term personal and policy commitment to provide more opportunities for outdoor recreation, to restore critical landscapes, and to support a robust outdoor economy.

It is also important to note that in the midst of our important debate about getting our fiscal house in order, this bill does not add one cent to the deficit. This CBO has concluded that it actually saves $5 million over 10 years.

Finally, and perhaps more telling than anything else, is the amount of support this bill has garnered from outside groups. Over 50 national conservation and wildlife groups support the bill. The National Wildlife Federation supports it, the NRA supports it, and President Obama supports it. That shows the breadth of support this legislation has. With such a broad spectrum of support, passing this bill should be a no-brainer.

I urge my colleagues to join me in another strong show of support for our sportsmen by voting yes on final passage.

Thank you, Mr. President. With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

BUDGET ACT VIOLATION

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I wish to speak about the budget portion of this bill. I share Senator WARNER's support for the bill. I believe fundamentally it is a good series of policy initiatives that will help sportsmen in the long run. However, I am the ranking member of the Budget Committee and this bill violates the deemed spending levels agreed to in the Budget Control Act. Senator WARNER is a member of the Budget Committee. Senator WARNER is a member of the Gang of Six that is working so hard to develop a plan that we are supposed to trust will be executed if their plan were to be effected. It doesn't look as if they are making a lot of progress, but who knows? I salute their effort.

The question is, if we lay out a plan to address our fiscal issues, will we adhere to it? Will we follow it? So I am a little bit taken aback that my colleagues seem oblivious to the idea and the concern that, plainly, the Sportsmen's Act legislation violates the Budget Act. The staff of Senator KENT CONRAD—our Democratic chairman of the Budget Committee, who is retiring—has concluded and certified that it violates the budget because it spends more money than we agreed to spend on this item 15 months ago when the Budget Control Act was passed in order to raise the debt ceiling in America.

I wish to tell my colleagues that I worry about things around here and about what kinds of agreements may be reached in the middle of the night—Christmas Eve, December 31st—to fix the fiscal cliff. We will hear: Don't worry, we have taken care of it. That is what they said when they passed the Budget Control Act August a year ago. I didn't feel good about it then, although it made some progress and it did have some limits on spending in various areas. So we did pass the Budget Control Act, and this will be the fourth time in 15 months we have had a bill on the floor that violates it.

Senator DURBIN earlier talked about the Simpson-Bowles Commission on which he served. Forty Percent of the revenue they raised was taxes. They said it was about 3-to-1 spending cuts to revenue increases when they were telling us about it. As I recall, they said it was 3-to-1 in spending cuts for every dollar in tax increases. But my Budget Committee staff and I looked at it, and I think it is closer to 1-to-1: $1 of spending cuts for every $1 in tax increases.

It was a tax-and-spend bill, really. I wish it were better. It wasn't as good as people suggested. At some point before the election President Obama suggested we should have $1 in tax increases for every $4 in spending cuts. Now we see that Simpson-Bowles proposed a ration of almost 1-to-1: $1 in tax increases for every $1 in spending cuts.

I am going to put out a statement today, but I wanted to correct something Senator REID said and Senator DURBIN said Sunday on the talk interview programs. Senator DURBIN said Social Security does not add 1 penny to the debt—not a penny. I think that is pretty close to a direct quote. But that is not correct. Social Security is already in a situation where the amount of revenue from people's withholding is less than the amount of money being paid out to the recipients. We have now spent $27 billion more than we have collected in payroll taxes in the last 2 years. So where does the money come from? It is borrowed by the United States Treasury to pay for Social Security spending. Why? Because the U.S. Treasury borrowed the money. They took the surpluses that had been in existence until 2 years ago and spent them. But the Social Security trustees asked for the money they loaned the Treasury, in order to pay our retirees. They have debt instruments to establish the debt that they loaned to the Treasury. They didn't give it to the Treasury. It was the money of the Social Security recipients. That is whose money it was. So it was loaned to the government, their debt instruments showing the debt, and the Treasury pays the interest to the Social Security trustees. Now, for the first time, instead of having a surplus, which the Treasury can spend and buy votes with, we have a deficit, and boy, it is just beginning. It is already on a path to surge out of control and threaten the future of Social Security. How does the

government pay the money it owes to Social Security? It has already spent the money it collected in past years. It is as if we borrowed the money from the bank, we spent it, and the bank says I want to be paid back.

What happens? Well, the Federal Government borrows that money on the world market, through the sale of Treasury bills, and then they get that money and they pay Social Security. It is just beginning. It is already in deficit. It has added not 1 penny—it has already added $27 billion to the public debt of the United States of America.

The Sportsmen's bill is legislation I strongly support. It came out of committee and I supported it, but it does violate the Budget Act. It is quite clear that it does. We can fix it easily. If we can fix it easily, we should fix it easily. Senator CONRAD has certified that it violates the budget. Senator REID has brought it to the floor under rule XIV, bypassing normal Committee procedures. The bill violates the spending limits we agreed to in August a year ago.

The BCA limited spending in various accounts as part of an agreement to raise the debt limit. We reached a limit on how much we could borrow, and the President and others wanted to keep borrowing and keep spending. So debt in America continues to surge out of control. But the Republican leaders at the time said: No, until you agree to cut spending, we are not going to raise the debt limit, Mr. President. Just like the kid with the credit card, you don't get to keep spending unless we know you have limited some spending, at least. So that is what happened. The President and the congressional Democrats resisted that. They attacked Republicans as wanting to cut spending and throw the country into the abyss, but they—with no choice, really—finally agreed to spending reductions of $2.1 trillion over 10 years. Those reductions were based on 2011 spending levels. Flat spending in 2011 would have totaled about $37 trillion over 10 years. But the baseline for spending has natural growth in it and always has, as calculated by the Congressional Budget Office. CBO said that under current law, spending would be expected to increase to over $47 trillion over 10 years—$10 trillion or $11 trillion more. So this agreement would simply have reduced the amount of debt that could be added to the government from $10 trillion to $8 trillion over the next 10 years. It would reduce spending—some said it was horrible—it would reduce spending from $47 trillion to $45 trillion. Remember, we are spending about $37 trillion now. The American people were assured that this solemn agreement was a good step and Congress would follow what they agreed to and put into law. So another thing is that Congress cannot continue to breach even the modest spending levels we agreed to. We cannot breach those levels. It is a sick pattern and makes a mockery of law and responsible governing.

Since the Budget Control Act agreement 15 months ago, this is the fourth spending bill that violates the law. How? Always Congress wants to spend more money—money we don't have. Remember, these four instances I have cited don't include the 13 appropriations bills because Senator REID, for the first time in history—the first time in the history of the Senate, we believe—did not pass a single appropriations bill on time. Every one of them was placed in one continuing resolution and funded forward for 6 months. So we didn't bring those appropriations bills up and we didn't have votes on them. Who knows how many more budget violations would have occurred in that. So the bills we are talking about are bills such as the Sportsmen's bill that is before us now.

I will object to the legislation because it violates the 10-year spending limits passed into law 15 months ago. But, of course, that does not end the matter. Senator REID—and I am sure he will, or his designee—will simply ask the Senate to override the law. They will make a motion to waive the statutory spending limits and, poof, if 60 Senators agree, we waive it and spend the extra money. No problem, except the Budget Act will be violated once again.

So at a time of unprecedented spending, unsustainable debt, and low public confidence in Congress, should we not adhere to even the smallest spending limits that have been enacted? Should we again violate the Budget Control Act for a mere $14 million a year—a mere $14 million a year—when this could easily be fixed? I say ''a mere $14 million'' because we deal with billions of dollars on a routine basis around here. So $14 million is a lot of money, but compared to what we spend and the ability we have to find savings in this vast government, it is not a lot of money.

And shouldn't the President, who negotiated and signed into law the Budget Control Act, object to his Democratic leaders' violating the spending limits he agreed to and negotiated last summer a year ago? Shouldn't he make it clear that he will veto any bill that violates the statutory limits we agreed to? Of course, he has not done so on this bill or any of the other four previous bills that would have violated those spending limits.

The words in the Budget Control Act, I have to say, appear, in his mind, to be words he never agreed to in his heart. Maybe he agreed to them on paper, maybe he signed the paper, but in his heart he never wanted to sign that agreement, so it is no problem for him to waltz in here and agree to spend more than he agreed to last summer. He is postmodern, as you know. Words are just a momentary thing. They can be reinterpreted a little later to better match what we meant to say my heart of hearts. This is why this country is in financial trouble, in my opinion.

Amendments my staff and I have tried to suggest that would fix this problem are being rejected, and the good groups such as Ducks Unlimited and other groups say: No; we don't want any changes. We say: Let's see if we can't get the money for the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund through another way, some of the other spending in this bill or some other savings throughout the government. Why can't we find the money and help fund migratory bird conservation, which I believe in, and maybe we can do that in another way without violating the budget. They say no.

But I will say to my friends at Ducks Unlimited and other groups that support the bill, they were not here 15 months ago. They did not vote on a bill that said we are going to limit spending to this amount. I did. Every Senator here told their constituents that Congress voted to limit spending to a certain amount and we would not go above it.

I understand Ducks Unlimited and other groups have a special interest and a deep concern, and I share it, to help maintain our great heritage of hunting and conservation in America. I understand that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is reminded we are operating under a 10-minute time limit.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have 2 additional minutes to wrap up.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. I will just say, we have responsibilities to the budget, to the Treasury. I will promise one thing: If we go back home and talk to duck hunters, as I do, and hunters on a regular basis, they think we are spending money like crazy. They think we do not adhere to any agreements. So I do not think the average duck hunter would be concerned if we slowed down a little bit and sent this bill back to committee and had it paid for so we did not violate the budget. In fact, I think most of the people I know would be very supportive of us doing that.

This proposal is a tax plan, pure and simple. The CBO and the Office of Management and Budget—President Obama's Office of Management and Budget—say the duck stamp fee is a tax. It is a tax, and Congress has always set the amount of it. This bill—I do not like this—we fixed this in committee, but Senator REID has brought up a bill without those fixes. The committee bill would have said Congress sets the amount of the tax on the American people, not some unelected Secretary of the Interior. Why should he have the unilateral ability to raise taxes on Americans? It has never been done before. It should never be done. It violates good, sound principles of government in America and actually I think it would violate the Constitution to do that. It is certified by OMB and CBO as a tax.

Also, I hear it said it would actually reduce the deficit. If we raise taxes by

$145 million and then we spend $140 million, we can go around and say: We reduced the deficit by $5 million. But I asked Senator WARNER and other colleagues have they researched this budget of ours to seek to find an additional $140 million? If we are going to raise the duck stamp by $140 million, if we are going to raise it by that amount, why wouldn't we reduce the deficit by $140 million instead of just $5 million? Those are the decisions families and small businesses make when they deal with these challenges in their budgets. They are required to make choices. One thing this Congress seems to always want to avoid is making choices. Since they can find nothing else in the entire Federal budget that would pay for this bill, this sportsmen's bill, it would indicate to me it is not a very high priority.

But the truth is that is not exactly true. The truth is, they never looked to find anything else they could cut that is wasteful or duplicative. In fact, there are over $900 million in existing wetlands conservation programs today. Nobody has sought to examine those programs to see if they could be more efficiently run and probably it would free up that much money right there.

I know the pressures. I know how this system works, but the people who drafted the Budget Control Act were aware of how Congress likes to spend. They specifically intended not to allow us to spend more by taxing more. They set explicit levels on how much we could spend. Therefore, this bill violates those spending levels, even though it has taxes there, and, as a result, it violates the budget and should not pass in its present form.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

THE DREAM ACT

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am honored to follow my distinguished colleague from Alabama, as well as a number of my other colleagues who I think have disproved, at least for this afternoon, one of the remarks made by the Senator from Illinois, which is that the cable viewers who subscribe to C–SPAN may not be getting their money's worth. I think the very spirited remarks made by my colleague from Alabama, even as I disagree with them, are a very well-stated point of view that deserves to be considered.

I am honored also to follow the majority leader and the Senator from Illinois and the Senator from Virginia in the remarks they made about the need to change the filibuster rules, and I wish to associate myself strongly with them. From the very first days I have been a Member of this body, I have strongly believed the filibuster needs to be ended or at least greatly modified so as to permit the business of this great Chamber to go forward. I believe the new Members who have come here have heard that message loud and clear from the American people and that they will vote—a majority of them—to change those rules. Because all of us know, having been home for a while, the American people believe strongly that we need to do better, we need to do more, we need to address the problems of this country through majority rule, not by 60-vote rule but majority rule, at least at the beginning of the process, as the majority leader has suggested, not by violating the rules but by following the rules to change and improve those rules. So I will vote to support the majority leader's proposals in that regard.

One of the measures that has been stymied, as the Senator from Illinois very eloquently said, is the DREAM Act. I have been a strong supporter and thank him for his leadership on the DREAM Act over many years. A number of times I have come to the floor to share stories, specific personal stories about those DREAMers whose lives would be changed and who would so greatly enhance the life of this Nation if the DREAM Act were passed. I am here again to share the story of another DREAMer from Connecticut and to urge my colleagues to act on this measure.

Of course, this measure should be part of comprehensive immigration reform. I have believed since I arrived 2 years ago that immigration reform ought to be a priority. I am gratified and grateful that the President seems now to be moving in that direction and that many in this body share that view. In fact, I asked to be assigned to the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Immigration so I could be a part of this debate, and I hope I will join leaders in this effort, such as Senator SCHUMER and Senator MENENDEZ, in proposals to repair a broken system. Clearly, our immigration system is in dire need of reform, comprehensive reform that will include the DREAM Act.

I have met and I have seen and experienced firsthand the stories of these DREAMers that make the case so compellingly for the DREAM Act to enable them to earn their citizenship and continue contributing to the greatest Nation in the history of the world, America.

As we return from Thanksgiving, having expressed our gratitude for our families, for our communities, for our country, what better time to address this measure for people who appreciate, maybe more than most of us, the importance and value of citizenship.

For more than a decade, Senator DURBIN has championed this measure, and I am honored to work with him in this effort. As attorney general, I advocated it at the State level. But, obviously, only the Federal Government can change the laws relating to citizenship.

The DREAM Act would give young, undocumented immigrants, brought to this country as infants or young children, through no choice of their own, a chance to earn their citizenship through education or military service. The young people who would benefit from the DREAM Act identify as Americans. This Nation is the only one they have ever known. English is often the only language they know. Their friends here are the only friends they have. It would give them a clear path to immigration status, as well as citizenship.

The DREAM Act would give these young people a chance to earn citizenship but only if they meet several requirements. First, they must have come here as children. They have to demonstrate good moral character. They have to have graduated from high school. They must have completed 2 years of college or military service. Then, having met those requirements, they can apply for legal permanent residency and pursue a path to citizenship.

The DREAM Act would enable thousands of young people in Connecticut—about 2 million across the country—to leave the shadows, to leave the shadows of fear, of deportation from their homes and their communities, a fear that haunts them and forces them to put their careers and their education on hold, to the detriment of them and our Nation because they have so much to contribute and to give back to their communities and our country.

They are well educated and ambitious, and they could enhance and expand our society, our economy, our democracy if they are given the chance to fulfill their potential. All they want, all they ask is the opportunity to stay in this country and to earn citizenship in the place they call home, proudly.

Two million immigrants nationwide would benefit from this act. Mr. President, 11,000 to 20,000 DREAMers are living in Connecticut, and one of them is Solanlly Canas.

She was born in Colombia and she is here with us in this photograph. She was brought to America when she was 12 years old, living now in East Haven where she has attended school. She is in her senior year of high school where she has thrived as a member of the Honor Society, the Executive Board of the Student Council, and president of the Interact Club, the National Honor Society.

She has dreams and goals for the future. She is proud of being a great student contributing to the life of her school, and she hopes to study psychology some day. She wants to go to college. But her life is in danger of being on hold because of her undocumented status. On June 15 of this year, Solanlly encountered the great hope that maybe all of her hard work would be worth it, because on that date, the Obama administration announced a new policy that deferred action for childhood arrivals that gave her a temporary reprieve for relief from deportation. It extended for 2 years that relief. She would qualify, because those who