

alone bill that we introduced last week.

Our amendment would help mitigate the harmful effects of the indiscriminate across-the-board cuts, known as sequestration, which took effect on March 1.

Our amendment would not reverse the automatic spending reductions, but would empower the heads of Federal agencies and departments to set priorities and implement the cuts in a smarter way.

Without this amendment, sequestration will be applied without distinction between high and low priority programs, programs that have a proven track record of success and those that should be reduced or eliminated.

To ensure appropriate Congressional oversight, the amendment requires agency heads to submit their spending proposals to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees for approval.

This Congressional oversight is an important step in the process because the Appropriations Committees know the budget of each agency inside and out. This review process also provides a strong incentive for each department or agency to put forth a serious plan if it wants to avoid the across-the-board cuts that would otherwise take effect.

Mr. President, this is an approach that our intelligence community has requested. The Nation's senior intelligence officer, Director Clapper, testified yesterday before the Intelligence Committee that sequestration jeopardizes our Nation's safety and security and that the across-the-board nature of the cuts compounds the damage by limiting "our ability to manage where to take deductions in a balanced, and rational way." His plea was for flexibility, saying "All we're asking for is the latitude on how to take them to minimize the damage."

The Udall-Collins amendment would provide that needed flexibility to the intelligence community and other areas of our government, and I urge my colleagues to support the amendment.

Finally, I would like to note how pleased I am that the legislation currently before the Senate includes full-year funding bills for a number of departments and agencies, including the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Justice, Veterans Affairs, Commerce, and Agriculture. While I wish we had been able to move all of the annual appropriations bills, at a minimum, we appear on the verge of passing full-year funding bills for the departments I just mentioned, which is particularly important for the Department of Defense.

Military leaders have repeatedly warned that failure to enact a full-year defense funding bill would have dire consequences for our military. Military readiness would suffer, and the military would not be fully ready to respond to crises because DOD could not transfer funds from investment accounts into readiness accounts.

A year-long CR for the Defense Department would have resulted in a hol-

low force because the Pentagon would not have been able to increase production rates for existing weapons, start new programs, or sign multiyear procurement contracts that will provide significant savings for taxpayers.

When I questioned Deputy Defense Secretary Ash Carter on February 14, 2013, at a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing about what the continuing resolution means for the Navy and our domestic shipbuilding capability, he testified that:

We're in the absurd position where we're five months into the fiscal year and we have the authority to build the ships that we built last year and no authority to build the ships that we plan to build this year. That's crazy . . . and that has nothing to do with sequester, by the way, that's the C.R.

The full-year funding bills that are included in the continuing resolution offered by Senators MIKULSKI and SHELBY will help alleviate some of the impacts of sequestration on the departments and agencies funded through those bills.

Unfortunately, the departments and agencies that find themselves funded under a continuing resolution, operating under a budget based on last year's needs, are not as lucky. It is all the more important for these departments and agencies that we provide additional flexibility, as the Udall-Collins amendment would do, in carrying out the cuts mandated by the Budget Control Act.

Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to support this amendment so that the cuts that are taking place now can be targeted at programs that do not work while sparing those programs that do.

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. 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.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following leader remarks tomorrow, March 14, the Senate resume consideration of H.R. 933; that there be up to 1 hour of debate equally divided in the usual form on the Harkin amendment; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the Harkin amendment; that there be no amendments in order to the amendment prior to the vote, and the amendment be subject to a 60-affirmative-vote threshold.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the request?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a cloture motion on the Mikulski-Shelby substitute amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the Mikulski-Shelby substitute amendment No. 26, as modified, to H.R. 933 a bill making appropriations for the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other departments and agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Barbara A. Mikulski, Sherrod Brown, Barbara Boxer, Robert Menendez, Patty Murray, Amy Klobuchar, Debbie Stabenow, Max Baucus, Tim Johnson, Benjamin L. Cardin, John D. Rockefeller IV, Charles E. Schumer, Carl Levin, Thomas R. Carper, Richard J. Durbin, Maria Cantwell.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have another cloture motion to the underlying bill at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on H.R. 933 a bill making appropriations for the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other departments and agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Barbara A. Mikulski, Sherrod Brown, Barbara Boxer, Robert Menendez, Patty Murray, Amy Klobuchar, Debbie Stabenow, Max Baucus, Tim Johnson, Benjamin L. Cardin, John D. Rockefeller IV, Charles E. Schumer, Carl Levin, Thomas R. Carper, Richard J. Durbin, Maria Cantwell.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum required under rule XXII be waived with respect to both cloture motions.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO MYRON FLEMING

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have been waiting today to take just a moment to honor Myron Fleming, Director of Doorkeepers, who is retiring after 40 years of working on Capitol Hill.

Myron began his work in the Capitol with the office of Senator Howard Metzenbaum of Ohio. He has worked in the Senate for 33, 34 years, and prior to that he worked in the House of Representatives for 7 years. He is someone