

schools run by the Bureau of Indian Education are forced to study in aging facilities that should be replaced.

As Senators, we have responsibilities to all children in our States to ensure that they all have access to safe and clean school buildings. The Federal Government has a particular responsibility to the tribes that includes taking care of tribal schools. That is why I offered an amendment to the continuing resolution with Senators TOM UDALL, TIM JOHNSON, KLOBUCHAR, HEITKAMP, and HEINRICH, to secure funding for tribal school buildings that need to be replaced.

In these times of tight budgets, everyone is making sacrifices. Programs across the Federal Government are forced to make difficult cuts and to do more with less. School construction is one small but vital program that I believe should continue to be funded. I was disappointed that the administration's fiscal year 2013 budget did not include funding for Indian school replacement construction.

I ask the Senator if it would be fair to say that the absence of funding for tribal school construction replacement in this CR should not be seen as a lack of support for this activity in future appropriations bills?

Mr. REED. Yes, that is correct.

Mr. FRANKEN. The continuing resolution we are now considering is needed to get us through the last 6 months of this fiscal year. It is my hope that as we return to a more regular appropriations process for fiscal year 2014, we can refocus on this important priority to support Indian school construction. I ask the Senator, would he be willing to work with me and our colleagues on that?

Mr. REED. Yes, I will welcome the opportunity to work with the Senator and our colleagues here in the Senate on priority needs within the Interior bill, including American Indian and Alaska Native health and education issues, to the extent possible given the overall budget constraints we face.

Mr. FRANKEN. I thank the Senator for committing to work with us.

WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Mr. REED. Madam President, I would ask my colleague, Senator MIKULSKI, Chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee, if she would join me and our colleague Senator COLLINS in a colloquy on the Weatherization Assistance Program.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I would be pleased to join my colleagues.

Mr. REED. I thank the Chairwoman.

I know a major reason that the Chairwoman wants to get back to regular order is that continuing resolutions are blunt instruments that do not allow for the adjustments for specific programs. One place where that has played out is in the Energy and Water Development bill, specifically with respect to the Weatherization Assistance Program.

I know the chairwoman has long supported the weatherization program, which helps provide energy efficient retrofits to low-income individuals and families. It also provides jobs, which is so important given the continuing challenges in our economy.

President Obama described the program this way in an interview in 2009, "[y]ou're getting a three-fer. Not only are you immediately putting people back to work but you're also saving families on [their] energy bills and you're laying the groundwork for long-term energy independence. That's exactly the kind of program that we should be funding."

Under the Recovery Act, we made a one-time investment of \$5 billion in this program, which has historically received \$175 to \$200 million in annual appropriations. As the program worked through this infusion, funding for the regular program was temporarily scaled back. In FY 2013, funding for the program will be only \$68 million even before the sequester is applied. Since there will no longer be carry-over funds available, there will not be enough funding to mount a viable program in all 50 States. That is regrettable, particularly when the Senate bill contained \$145 million, \$6 million more than the budget request. It is also counterproductive to our goals to create jobs and increase energy efficiency.

I would ask the Chairwoman if she would work with us and the Department of Energy to find ways to sustain the program through appropriate reprogramming so that it does not cease to be a 50-State program. I would also ask if she would work with us in fiscal year 2014 to see how we can support this important initiative. Before I yield to the Chairwoman to respond, I would ask Senator COLLINS if she would like to comment.

Ms. COLLINS. I would like to echo Senator REED's comments and thank the Chairwoman for her support of the Weatherization Assistance Program.

This program is currently facing significant funding challenges and its viability in many States is threatened. Weatherization plays an important role in permanently reducing home energy costs for low-income families and seniors, lessening our reliance on foreign oil, and training a skilled workforce. The current funding level represents a substantial reduction for the program, and the ability of the program to continue to deliver services is in serious jeopardy.

I too would like to ask the Chairwoman if she would work with us and the Department of Energy to find ways to sustain the program through appropriate reprogramming, so that low-income families and seniors in every State can continue to receive the energy savings from the weatherization of their homes.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I thank the Senators for their comments and would be pleased to work with them on this important issue and ways to maintain a 50-State weatherization program.

Mr. REED. I thank the Chairwoman for that response. I look forward to working with her, Senator COLLINS, and others to support this program in fiscal year 2013 and during the fiscal year 2014 funding cycle.

PLANT PROTECTION ACT

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I wish to engage my colleague, Chairwoman MIKULSKI, in a colloquy. I thank the Senator for her important work in bringing this bill to the Senate.

However, I would like clarification on Section 735 of Division A of the bill. This provision requires that the Secretary of Agriculture, if requested, issue temporary permits or temporary deregulation in the event a genetically engineered crop deregulation is set aside or vacated as unlawful. As you know, I oppose this provision and have deep concerns about its impact. I wish to confirm my understanding, even though this provision does not operate through a restriction of funds in this act, it is in effect only for the duration of the continuing resolution.

Ms. MIKULSKI. The Senator is correct.

Mr. TESTER. I thank the Senator.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

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 ask unanimous consent that at 11:15 a.m. tomorrow, all postcloture time on the Mikulski-Shelby substitute amendment be considered expired, the Durbin second-degree amendment to 115 be withdrawn with no other second-degree amendment in order; that the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the Toomey amendment No. 115; that upon disposition of the Toomey amendment, the Senate then proceed to vote on the Mikulski-Shelby substitute amendment, as amended; that upon disposition of the substitute amendment, the Senate proceed to the cloture vote on the underlying bill; finally, if cloture is invoked, the 30 hours postcloture begin to run as if cloture were invoked at 1 a.m. on Wednesday, March 20.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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