Now, interestingly enough, at a time when the middle class is disappearing and the wealthy and large corporations are doing phenomenally well, it is important to hear what the CEOs of the largest Wall Street banks and corporations in this country—the Business Roundtable—have to say on the economy. Wall Street—bailed out by the middle class of this country—corporate America enjoying record-breaking profits.

Earlier this year, the Business Roundtable—again, these are the CEOs of the major corporations in America. Without exception, these guys are making millions of dollars a year in income. They have wonderful retirement packages, health care benefits for them and their families. This is what they have to say. They came to Washington, and they called on Congress to raise the eligibility age of Social Security and Medicare to the age of 70—70.

Wall Street billionaires, CEOs making huge amounts of money, with wonderful retirement packages—they now want Congress to raise the retirement age of Social Security and Medicare to age 70; they want to cut Social Security and veterans benefits, their COLAS; they want to raise taxes on working families and, obviously, it goes without saying, cut taxes for the largest corporations in America, at a time when one out of four of these corporations does not pay a nickel in taxes.

That is the background: the middle class collapsing; the rich getting richer. Then we have a right wing in this country, fueled by people like the Koch brothers, and others, who are pushing a totally reactionary agenda.

Let's talk about what that immediate agenda looks like in terms of the CR, the continuing resolution, that, in fact—and this is what is going to pass in the House, as I understand it—would lock in place sequestration for domestic programs, while providing a $20 billion boost to defense spending for the next 3 months. That is annualized, looking from the year's perspective.

If we do that for a year, that sequestration level, according to the Congressional Budget Office, sequestration will lead to the loss of 900,000 jobs and cause a seven-tenths of 1 percent drop in the GDP. Real unemployment today is close to 14 percent. With sequestration for a year, it would result in the loss of some 900,000 jobs—at exactly a time that we do not need it. Many of the jobs lost will be government jobs, but that should come as no surprise because the extreme right wing really does not believe in the concept of government.

So when we lose jobs in the teaching profession, when we lose police officers and firefighters and construction workers and VA nurses and VA doctors and scientists and engineers, that is no problem for some of these fellows.

Sequestration—we should be clear—has already caused enormous pain for millions of Americans. As I mentioned earlier, this country is way behind our global competitors in terms of childcare, early childhood education.

As a result of sequestration, more than 57,000 kids are losing access to Head Start and Early Head Start Programs.

At a time when food insecurity is skyrocketing, and when millions and millions of parents are wondering how they are going to be able to feed their kids, what the sequestration does is it literally goes after some of the most vulnerable people in this country, who are elderly people, low income, living on minimal Social Security benefits, who cannot even leave their homes. They are served right now by the Meals on Wheels Program, and I want to thank all of the Meals on Wheels volunteers out there for doing a great job trying to help these seniors. Sequestration will continue major cuts, throwing thousands and thousands of seniors off the Meals on Wheels Program.

We have a serious housing crisis in America. Sequestration will make it harder for over 100,000 families to get a variety of affordable housing programs.

Everybody knows the cost of a college education is soaring. Working-class families cannot afford college today. Yet sequestration would result in 70,000 college students losing Federal work-study grants. That is the means by which they earn some money to help stay in college.

Sequestration will result in cutting back on chemotherapy treatments to thousands of cancer patients because of a 2-percent cut to Medicare providers.

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program—very important in the State of Vermont where it gets cold—massive cuts.

Long-term unemployment checks—unemployment remains high—a 10-percent cut. That will be continued.

So that is where we are right now.

And it gets worse. It gets worse. If the Boehner CR is approved, programs that millions of Americans rely on will be cut even further. So everything I told you will get even worse.

I think what we are looking at right now is not just the immediate pain of the continuing resolution or the threat not to pay our debts and destroy the credit rating of the United States of America. Those are enormous realities. But what we are looking at is a real effort to dismember the U.S. Government and wreak havoc on the lives of tens and tens and tens of millions of people.

To my mind, what we have to do is exactly the opposite of what our right-wing friends are suggesting. They are suggesting that we should raise unemployment. They are suggesting that we should cut back on Federal funding for infrastructure. I believe we should be investing billions and billions of dollars in addressing our crumbling infrastructure—roads, bridges, water systems, wastewater plants, our rail system. When we do that, we make this country more productive and we create millions of jobs. I believe we have to invest significantly in energy efficiency and sustainable energy. When we do that, we not only protect the environment and combat global warming, but we also create jobs. I believe we have to rewrite our disastrous trade policies so that American jobs are not our No. 1 export. I believe, instead of further deregulation of Wall Street, Wall Street has to be effectively regulated so their greed and recklessness can no longer cause enormous problems for our economy. Instead of lowering taxes for the wealthiest people, I think it is high time they started paying their fair share of taxes.

So what we are involved in here is a great debate, which goes beyond the continuing resolution. It goes beyond the shutdown of the government. It goes beyond whether the United States fails to pay its bills for the first time in history. I believe what we have is an ideology, a rightwing ideology which reflects, at most, the views of 15 percent of the American people. I think that is probably a generous perspective. I think the vast majority of the American people do not believe what rightwing extremism is doing, and it is high time we begin to stand and say to these people: If you are going to continue those efforts, you may not be back here in the U.S. Congress.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to speak for up to 10 minutes in morning business.

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

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. President.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, today, the House of Representatives is voting on legislation dealing with the farm bill and food stamps. Recently—this week—the House of Representatives broke with 40 years of tradition, precedent, common sense, and perhaps human decency when it bowed to partisan politics and passed a farm bill without a nutrition title. They pulled apart what traditionally urban and rural interests have done in this country: coming together to pass a farm bill, connecting it with a nutrition title, where it served rural America, it served urban America, it was good for hungry kids, it was good for economic development, it was good for conservation and the environment.

The House leadership has announced that later today—sometime this afternoon—the House will vote on a bill that would cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, by nearly $40 billion. They are taking up this bill because the $20 billion in punitive SNAP cuts they failed to pass earlier this year was not enough for the

majority. They do not only cut $20 billion—$20 billion, $20,000 million—$20 billion in cuts, when the average family gets $4.45 per day. Cutting $20 billion was bad enough. That was not good enough for those Members of the House of Representatives who want to see cuts twice as big. Many of those Members of the House of Representatives—or at least some of them—are farmers themselves who get huge farm subsidies. It begs the issue a little bit.

For some of my colleagues who have seen the movie ''Lincoln,'' at one point, President Lincoln—listening, but perhaps not entirely hearing his staff, who exhorted him to spend more time in the White House, winning the war, freeing the slaves, preserving the Union—President Lincoln said: I need to go out and get my public opinion baths.

Well, I suggest that maybe more of us—those particularly who are voting to cut SNAP, to cut food stamps $40 billion—they may want to go out and listen to what people—not dressed like this, not working around here who get good benefits and decent salaries, not highly paid Congressmen and Senators, not the lobbyists who they may brunch with on Sunday when those Members do not go back home—but go out and talk to somebody at a labor union hall, go out and talk to somebody in a shopping mall, go out and talk to somebody at a school, where children—I heard a story today at my weekly coffee, where a woman told us that her daughter, who teaches in Columbus, has seen during the school lunch program children take some of the food and put it in their pockets so they can take it home for their brothers and sisters or for the weekend or for their moms or dads.

In this still difficult economy—when people receive $4.45 per day, on the average, for SNAP, for food stamps—people in the House of Representatives want to cut it nearly $40 billion.

It was not enough that 2 million Americans could lose SNAP benefits. It was not enough to them in the first bill that more than 200,000 children could lose access to the free and reduced-price lunch program. They want to make it harder, and they can say whatever they want. They can say: Well, people—I don't know. Do they get addicted to food stamps? Do they dig food stamps because they don't want to work?

The fact is, as Chairwoman STABENOW points out, the chair of the Agriculture Committee, in the next 10 years, 14 million Americans will leave SNAP. Why is that? If we do not do this, why will 14 million people leave SNAP? Because they will get better-paying jobs because they do not want to be in SNAP. Most people who get stamps would rather not. They would rather have enough food on the table. They would rather have enough purchasing power to go to the grocery store and buy food with their own money that they have earned so they can bring that food home and serve their children. That is what most people want to do.

I spoke to a woman in Hamilton, OH, some time ago who told me that early in the month she would occasionally take her 9-year-old son to McDonald's or to another fast food restaurant—maybe once in the first week of the month.

The second week, she could maybe serve him a hamburger, she could serve him meat. The third week of the month, she began to scrape. This is a woman who had a full-time job, volunteered, taught Sunday School, volunteered with the Cub Scouts for her son, was a very devoted single mother. The fourth week of the month, what typically happened was—she looked at me with her blues and she said: You know, I say to my son—I was sitting there with my son that last week of the month.

He said: Mom, how come you are not eating?

She said: Well, I am just not hungry.

Well, she was hungry; she just had to choose at the end of the month, does the money go for my son or does it go for me? Like most mothers and fathers, she chose to do it for her child. That is the backdrop.

If more of my colleagues would follow the admonition of Abraham Lincoln and go out and get a public opinion bath and listen to what real people are saying—not people who dress like this, not people who sit in Congress, not lobbyists who may buy them lunch and come to their fundraisers, but really listen to what people have to say about what this means and understand, as Presiding Officer knows from the work he has done in his State of Connecticut, that most of the people getting benefits are children. Eighty-five percent of people receiving food assistance are children or their parents or people with disabilities or seniors. Many of them have jobs, but their jobs pay $9 an hour. Again, this is not something they do by choice in a great majority of cases; it is something they feel they have to do. They are mothers and fathers who get up in the morning and try to give their children a better future. These are millions of Americans who head out every day looking for work so they can pay their bills and put food on the table.

As I said, almost 90 percent—80-some percent of SNAP households are made up of seniors and the disabled and families with children. One out of six Americans worries about where their next meal is coming from—one out of six Americans. How many people in this body have ever really thought that way, have talked to people that way, have tried to put themselves in the place of the—that is 50, 60, 70 percent of Americans—one out of six who worries about where their next meal will come from.

Then we have the body down the hall, the House of Representatives, who voted—$20 billion in cuts is not enough; let's do $40 billion. Maybe we will do more than that.

My colleagues in the Congress suggest that SNAP participation has grown too big. They bemoan the state of our economy, the still-too-high unemployment rate. We all do. I share that concern. But we must do more to help jump-start our economy. I will work with anyone who seeks to do so. We know how important these benefits are to our brothers and sisters from Cleveland to Cincinnati, from rural Appalachia to farmlands in western Ohio, all across this country. It is important that we stand strong. We need a farm bill. We need a farm bill that serves agriculture. We need a farm bill that serves rural development. We need a farm bill that serves conservation and the environment. We need a farm bill that helps us provide energy. We need a farm bill that provides nutrition assistance.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.J. RES. 59

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate receives H.J. Res. 59 from the House, the measure be placed on the calendar with a motion to proceed not in order until Monday, September 23.

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

RESPONSIBLE HELIUM ADMINISTRATION AND STORAGE ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the energy committee is discharged from further consideration of H.R. 527 and the Senate will proceed to the immediate consideration of the bill, which the clerk will report by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 527) to amend the Helium Act to complete the privatization of the Federal helium reserve in a competitive market fashion that ensures stability in the helium markets while protecting the interests of American taxpayers, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 1960

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the substitute amendment, No. 1960, is agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under ''Text of Amendments.'')

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 15 minutes of debate equally divided between the Senator from Oregon, Mr. WYDEN, and the Senator from Texas, Mr. CRUZ, or their designees.

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, as I said this morning, Washington, DC, seems to have an inexhaustible capacity to manufacture false crises. I am here to say that this is not one of them. If the Congress does not act immediately to pass the legislation Senator MURKOWSKI and I advance today, scores of