

he relies on contracts with the Federal Government for much of his business, and his employees—to whose ranks he has been adding—will be impacted by this potential shutdown, if only the uncertainty it creates. He is not alone. Businesses all over Connecticut and the country will face a tougher economic climate because of the shutdown. The Small Business Administration will stop processing applications for the business loans it provides to tens of thousands of entrepreneurs, risk takers, and job creators around the country. Perhaps the most galling aspect of this shutdown is the direct economic hardship it will cause to families whose jobs will be threatened and whose livelihoods will be at risk.

There are hours to go before the final hour, but the point is, as the President said so well earlier, keeping the government open is not a bargaining chip, it is our job. President Obama said: “You don’t get to extract a ransom for doing your job.”

Families need to be able to plan for their future, businesses need certainty in order to make investments and hire new workers, and the Nation needs both parties, not just one, to be fully committed to the democratic process.

I hope in the time remaining the House does its job, that these extremist demands are rejected—and certainly by this Chamber they will be. My hope is that we can move forward, keep the government open, provide the services people need, and support the economy, which is all too necessary at this point in our history.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor and 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. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the time for morning business, with debate only, be extended until 9:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, and that the majority leader be recognized at 9:30 p.m.

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

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, let me speak for a moment about what we have happening. There is no reason for this happening, and there is absolutely no reason why, first of all, we could not have worked together to put a budget in place. We, months ago, passed a budget in the Senate and have been trying to go to a conference com-

mittee with the House so we could work it out and have a long-term budget that continues to bring down the debt. By the way, the deficit is coming down, which is very positive. But we know we need to continue to do more in a balanced way. That could be happening. It is not happening because the same people now who are putting us in a position where in a few hours there may very well be a government shutdown are the same ones who do not want to negotiate to get a budget for our country, which is very difficult to understand in terms of what the strategy is other than to just obstruct.

We are now in a situation where we have agreed to a compromise that would allow the continuation of funding of public services, from safety to health research, to what we do around education, innovation, small business. We have a whole range of things for 6 weeks. So we are talking about 6 weeks.

The compromise is that while we believe we ought to be reinvesting in education, in innovation, we ought to be creating jobs, rebuilding our roads and bridges and water and sewer systems, and doing a number of things that would strengthen our economy and create jobs, for this 6-week period, we agree to continue the funding level at the lower level the Republicans want.

So the continuing resolution we have sent to the House is a compromise by definition because we are willing for 6 weeks—while we negotiate a broader package on a full year’s appropriation—to continue funding at the level the Republicans have asked to be the spending level. By definition, certainly for many of us who believe we will not have a middle class—that we cannot grow the economy without doing the right kinds of investments and that we certainly should not be cutting back on cancer research and cutting clinical trials for women with breast cancer or cutting back on other possible cures, and that is happening right now at this lower level—but for 6 weeks we have said we are willing to compromise with the House Republicans in order to continue funding the government while the larger issues are worked out.

Instead of that happening, what we are seeing is a fight that, frankly, has been fought over and over. It was fought in the last election. It was very clear we had a President of the United States who ran on and who made a signature accomplishment of his first-term health care—access to affordable health insurance for all Americans—running against someone who said he would repeal that, and the President of the United States won with a substantial margin.

In the Senate, we had Democrats running against Republicans, with Republicans saying: Elect me and I will repeal ObamaCare; Democrats saying: No. We need health reform. We need to create a better, more competitive way to bring down health insurance rates—like in Massachusetts, the home of our

distinguished Presiding Officer. Our candidates—Democrats—won.

So I would suggest that in many places, and certainly across the country, with the President of the United States, the people of America spoke pretty strongly.

Now we are here. We all have seen the intensity of what is a minority opinion. I appreciate that. It is very intense. But it is a minority opinion in this country. So the minority of a minority is trying now to essentially slow down or stop the economy, hurt middle-class families, bring public services to a standstill because—even though they lost in the election, even though theirs is not the majority view—they have decided it does not matter—it does not matter—they are going to shut things down if they do not get their way.

What we are going to see tomorrow when healthcare.gov comes online are more competitive, lower rates for many Americans, young Americans, families, and so on, people who maybe could not get insurance in the past at all, moms-to-be who could not find maternity care—8 million women in this country who have not been able to find insurance companies that will cover them for maternity care because somehow being a woman was a “preexisting condition”—they are going to have a chance to do that, which means we will have more healthy moms, we will have more healthy babies, and this is good for our country.

We are seeing now in health reform that has already taken effect hundreds of dollars a year more in the pockets of senior citizens that they used to pay out for prescription drugs. But they do not have to do it anymore because we are closing this gap in coverage from the Medicare prescription drug bill.

As a caveat, let me say as somebody at the time 7 years ago who voted no on that Medicare prescription drug bill—because I believed and the majority on our side believed it was written way too much in favor of the drug companies as opposed to the seniors in terms of costs, not allowing Medicare to negotiate group rates and so on—when we lost that fight, we did not try to stop funding the implementation of Medicare prescription drugs, we did not do all of the antics that have been done. We said: OK, we lost that fight, so let’s make it work the best we can make it work, and we will fix it later.

We did not stop the funding for the educational efforts for seniors. We did not spend hundreds of millions or—I do not know, maybe it is billions now—trying to scare people, confuse people. We said: Let’s try to make it work. Even though in the May before the prescription drug bill took effect 21 percent of the public said they wanted it, they supported it, 7 years later, 90 percent of the public says they support it.

In health reform we were able to fix one of the things that many of us were concerned about then. Rather than