

amendments, we have made that offer. HARRY, the leader, the chairman, and I am fully part of this, have made the offer to let's do amendments.

We hope the folks on the other side—it is sort of a little bit of a test. I am not throwing down any kind of gauntlet, but if we can't come up with a way to legislate on this bill, a bipartisan bill that has the support of the left, right, and center, that everyone agrees with, as Senator WYDEN outlined how much America needs them, what are we going to be able to legislate?

We have a little time. We have 1 week where we can discuss this while we are in our districts working away. Let's get this done. I plead with my colleagues—"plead" is the right word, the right verb—come up with a list. We will come up with our list, and then let's roll up our sleeves, get to work on the floor, and pass this bill.

I believe if we do, the other body will. The other body—one other point—has different ideas. They want to make a few of these permanent. That is a legitimate amendment in the bounds that Leader REID has talked about. Let's vote on it. Let's debate it and vote on it. That is what we are supposed to do. If the other body's wisdom prevails, it will make it easier to pass the bill. Even if the other body's wisdom doesn't prevail, they will see that our body has a chance to debate it and decide on it.

Again, we are willing not to pick amendments—I know there is a complaint on the other side of the aisle that our leadership picks which amendments. We are not doing that. All we are saying is they ought to be germane to tax extenders, focused on the issue at hand, which is the extenders. This is not a bill that came out of a figment of the imagination of four Democratic Senators with no Republican input.

If we can't legislate on this bill, then what bill can we? I would ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, ask them to get us the list they come up with of amendments they wish to vote on.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### WRRDA CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I wanted to spend a moment or two talking about the Water Resources Reform and Development Act conference report, and I want to say to my colleagues, both in this Chamber and in the House, some improvement in the WRRDA reauthorization has happened, but it is not nearly enough.

From 1986 to 2010, the average new authorizations were over \$3 billion a

year, and the average amount of money was \$1.8 billion a year. So we have been going backwards all that time. In this report, they did deauthorize less than 10 percent of the \$80 billion in backlogged projects. Their attempt to take some of the political nature out of it is a good attempt, but it is not nearly complete and will be gamed, just as we have seen in the past.

What really hasn't happened in the WRRDA bill, and partly because they do not have the authority to do it, is to change the Corps of Engineers. There has never been a project the Corps of Engineers doesn't want to build, and there has never been a study they do not want to do, because what that means is their budget continues and their jobs continue. So we do not have that distinct independent voice we can rely upon because bureaucratic malaise and self-interest trumps it every time.

There is another critical problem with this report. The inland waterways trust fund is out of money. We steal it every year. Like Social Security, the money has been stolen and spent. Yet they change the requirement for inland waterway repairs. It used to be if it was under \$8 million, we would pay for it out of the general fund—not the trust fund—but now they have moved that to \$20 million. In essence, what that says is we are going to do things that are the responsibility of the trust fund but we are going to charge the American taxpayer rather than the users of the inland waterway to do these repairs. We have a lot of those in need of repair on the McClellan-Kerr waterway in Oklahoma.

So there is a little sleight of hand, another smoke and mirrors set from the Congress of the United States to the American people about not being truthful about what they are doing. We need a priority of projects. We need discipline within the Corps of Engineers. There is none. There is no discipline. It is turf protection and bureaucratic excess continued as normal.

What we should have done is to deauthorize about \$40 billion worth of the projects that are presently in line and really put a priority on what is most important for the Nation, not what is most important for a certain Congressman or a certain Senator to look good at home. Unfortunately, we didn't have the courage to do that. We didn't have the strength of character to do that. We wouldn't stand and defend that. So what we did is make minimal progress—and there is some progress; I will admit it—but it is certainly not enough to get my vote. When we fix symptoms of disease rather than fixing the real disease, all we do is delay the onset of the cure, and that is exactly what we have done with the water resources conference report.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ISAKSON. 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. ISAKSON. I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate for up to 5 minutes as if in morning business.

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

#### HONORING OUR VETERANS

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, on the last Monday of every May our country pauses to commemorate Memorial Day and honor the men and women who died in wars around the world in defense of freedom, liberty, peace, and the United States of America.

This coming Monday is no exception. I urge my fellow Members of the Senate, all Georgians, and all Americans, to take a moment sometime over this weekend to pause and give thanks for the sacrifices made so we can do what we are doing here today, and so Georgians and Americans can do what they do on the lakes, beaches, and mountains of our country as they celebrate Memorial Day.

I was honored and pleased to travel to eight of the American cemeteries in Europe—in Italy, Luxembourg, Great Britain, and France, particularly Normandy, on the 70th anniversary of D-day, which is coming up—and pay tribute to the thousands of graves of Americans who went overseas in World War I or World War II and gave their life—sacrificed and died—so we can live in freedom and peace today.

Our Armed Forces are a great gift to us. They never ask for anything in return. They always give their service to our country. They swear their allegiance to protect and defend our domestic tranquility, and every single time they do the job.

Today we know they are deployed in Afghanistan, we know they are deployed in Africa, we know they are at sea—both on top of the sea and under the sea—and in the air, always looking to see that America is safe and free from harm.

I encourage all of my fellow citizens to say a special prayer of thanks this weekend for the men and women who sacrificed and died on behalf of our country, and on behalf of freedom, liberty, and peace for all mankind.

There is no secret that there is a scandal at the Veterans' Administration. We don't know how pervasive and we don't know how deep. But it surrounds the appointments and the cooking of the books in terms of appointments and services to our veterans and the VA health care system.

I know they have a hard job, but their first job and their main responsibility is to see to it our veterans get the health care they deserve, the health care we promised them, and the health care we are going to see to it they get.

I want the President to exhibit leadership and make sure we have a rudder