

The Republican leader tried to move the same measure again last week, even though the Senate already rejected it. And to no one's surprise, it failed.

How about this one? This year—this year—we have already had eight votes on the health of American women—eight votes. Everyone knows how those votes are going to turn out, but you can't satisfy this voracious appetite the Republicans have to bash women. Yet the Republican leader continues to schedule votes on legislation that can't pass the Senate.

I think C-SPAN will have to have a disclaimer each time that flips up there that says: This is not a rerun. This is the Republican Senate doing it again. We have already done it seven times. Once more won't matter that much.

Today the Republican leader wants to rerun the same show again, this time with another bill—military construction. This appropriations bill is still based on the Republican's faulty budget. The senior Senator from Montana, the ranking member of that subcommittee, said yesterday this bill "is shackled to an unwise and unrealistic budget that locks in destructive sequestration cuts and vastly underfunds programs vital to this nation's security and prosperity."

That is what Senator TESTER said yesterday.

It has no chance of getting 60 votes—none. I know that, and my friend the Republican leader knows that. So why are we wasting time on another vote that is destined to fail? Because they do not want to bring real legislation to the floor. Why aren't we spending our time coming to a real bipartisan solution that helps our veterans and helps the nondefense part of our country, which is so important?

The time to sit down and to begin real budget negotiations was a long time ago, but we will take it now. I am happy to learn the Republican leader said he wants negotiations—he said this a couple days ago—he wants negotiations to begin very soon. Well, isn't that nice. Democrats have been waiting for 4 months. So let's get to it.

Just imagine what we could have accomplished if the Republican leader had taken us up on our offer 4 months ago. The U.S. Government wouldn't have come within hours of a shutdown, hundreds of government agencies would not have had to spend time and effort preparing for a shutdown, diverting them from their main jobs.

If you want to see how close we were to a government shutdown take a look at what took place in the House of Representatives yesterday. We passed over here in the Senate a short-term continuing resolution to fund the government until December 11. It went to the House, and they voted on it yesterday. Three-fifths of House Republicans—151—voted for a shutdown. They voted against the continuing resolution. That says it all.

I have reminded people before, and I will do it again. The government was shut down here a couple of years ago for 17 days. We finally got it open. We passed something over here, and it went to the House. Two-thirds of the House of Representatives—Republicans in the House—voted to keep the government closed.

There are so many programs that are just not being taken care of. I will talk about a couple of them right now. There is something I have worked on since I came here—the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Presiding Officer is from Nevada. He has represented the northern part of the State for many years in different elective jobs. He understands and knows Lake Tahoe very well. It is a beautiful lake that we share with California. Well, the Land and Water Conservation Fund helps us greatly because we were able to take some money out of that program and purchase land that was going to be used for subdivision that would have allowed more filth to go into Lake Tahoe. We were able to stop that with money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The money hasn't been coming in as we have wanted in the past, so we beefed it up and were able to do a lot of things.

Now, for the first time in 50 years, this program has been allowed to expire. It is gone. This program has been supported by Democrats and Republicans and by rural and urban communities. But on the Republicans' watch, one of the most important programs and one of the best programs for our Nation's parks—and one of the most broadly supported programs in the country—has been allowed to lapse. It is gone.

The program is funded by a portion of fees collected by offshore oil and gas drilling. Every day that it is not authorized, we lose out on collecting \$2.4 million of offshore oil and gas so it can be used for our beautiful natural resources that are in a state of disrepair. This Land and Water Conservation Fund has supported projects in every State, from protecting the rim of the Grand Canyon to securing access to the Appalachian Trail, and from Lake Tahoe to building neighborhood playgrounds in urban areas across the country.

In a last-ditch effort to sway their own leadership, several Republicans came to the floor yesterday and tried to pass a stand-alone extension of the program that would be dead on arrival in the House. The Republican leaders refused to extend the program in the continuing resolution, despite many Democrats and Republicans asking for it to be included.

One other program. The good Senator from Illinois—the senior Senator from Illinois, the assistant Democratic leader, served in the House of Representatives, as I did, with a man named Claude Perkins. He was a wonderful House Member. When we came to the House in 1982, he was a very senior per-

son. He was responsible for something called the Federal Perkins Loan Program. It wasn't reauthorized in the continuing resolution. What does that mean? As a result of that, the Nation's oldest student aid program has expired, leaving up to 150,000 students who are coming into college in the lurch.

The Perkins Loan Program offers low-interest, federally subsidized student loans for students with exceptional financial needs and also offers a variety of forgiveness options for those who choose to pursue public service professions. Last year, more than \$1.2 billion in new Perkins loans were made to about 540,000 new and returning college students around the country, including 500 low-income students from Nevada.

It is hard to believe the tea party-dominated House—and obviously the Republican Caucus here is heavily influenced by the tea party—has turned a blind eye to this. It is hard to believe the tea party-dominated House of Representatives passed an extension of Perkins unanimously, but Senate Republicans would not agree to do the same. Yesterday, Senate Republicans even blocked a bid to extend the program.

These are just two of the programs that expired at midnight last night. There are many more. It is a shame because they wouldn't have expired at all if we had sat down and negotiated a few months ago. So I say to my friend the Republican leader: Let's not waste another minute on politically motivated votes that are doomed to fail. Instead, let's focus the Senate's energy and attention on bipartisan negotiations to get our country on the right track.

Mr. President, would the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein, with the time equally divided, with the majority controlling the first half and the Democrats controlling the final half.

The Senator from Louisiana.

MILCON-VA APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I wish to speak on the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill that is now being considered. I will start by saying that this is 3601 Gerstner Memorial Parkway, Lake Charles, LA. This is the location for the new Lake Charles VA clinic—a clinic that has taken 13 years to get