

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT OF 2013—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 243.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 243, S. 1356, a bill to amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to strengthen the United States workforce development system through innovation in, and alignment and improvement of, employment, training, and education programs in the United States, and to promote individual and national economic growth, and for other purposes.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, at 10 a.m. there will be a rollcall vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to concur in the House message to accompany H.J. Res 59, the budget resolution.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MANCHIN). The clerk will call the roll. The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

BUDGET RESOLUTION

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, it is my understanding that at 10 a.m. the Senate will proceed to a cloture vote on the proposed budget. It has already been passed by the House of Representatives. The cloture vote will take 60 Senators. If those 60 votes are in favor, we would then move to a period of debate—pro forma debate, actually, because the question would already have been decided. If Members do not favor this budget, the time to register that opposition is this morning. At 10 a.m. is the last chance to say no to this proposal and simply send it back to the negotiators and ask them to do a better job.

I rise this morning to reiterate my strong opposition to the House-passed budget, to the Murray-Ryan budget. I do so for one specific reason. I would first interject that there are many as-

pects of the budget that Members do not like, that we are not overly delighted with. We realized from the outset that there would be compromises and unpleasant decisions that had to be made because when you find additional revenues, when you cut programs that are popular, it hurts and it is uncomfortable. So I appreciate the fact that Senator MURRAY and Representative RYAN have made tough decisions. Apparently, the House of Representatives on a bipartisan basis has agreed to go along. But my objection that moves me from “undecided” to a “no” is what the budget does to current and military retirees and the fact that it breaks a promise that has been made to military retirees for years and years. It does so retroactively, unlike what it does to Federal employees, unlike what this Congress directed on an earlier occasion when establishing a commission to look into retirement. What it does to military retirees under the age of 62, instead of receiving the same cost-of-living adjustment everyone else would be receiving, it cuts their COLA back to COLA less 1 percent.

Why do we have a cost-of-living adjustment in the first place? The cost-of-living adjustment is designed to protect the purchasing power of a pension. So when a young man or young woman joined the military, say, 20 years ago at age 22, for example, they served for 20 years at least and they were entitled to a pension under the law. That was the deal. We agreed also that once that pension was received and was in place, we would protect that pension against inflation each year by a cost-of-living adjustment. It is simply fair. It protects the purchasing power and the real ability of that pension to protect and support the retired military person and that person's family.

What this budget does is it goes back on that promise. It says to people who have completed their service, who have completed the full 20 years of their bargain: You may have done what we asked you to do, but now the government is not going to do what we told you we would do. We are not going to protect the purchasing power of your pension. In the first year, we are going to cut that cost-of-living back 1 percent. The next year, whatever cost-of-living there is out there, you get that less 1 percent.

It adds up over time. I think Members have been astonished to learn that an E-7 retiring at age 40 today; that is, an enlisted person, would experience a loss of \$83,000 in purchasing power over the course of the 22 years that pensioner would experience between ages 40 and 62—\$83,000 in broken promises to our military retirees. An O-5 would lose some \$124,000 lifetime with this budget agreement.

It is on the verge of being adopted. The only thing that stands in the way between our military retirees and this broken promise amounting to \$83,000 for the typical enlisted person and

\$124,000 for the typical retiree officer—the only thing standing in the way is this vote at 10 a.m. on cloture.

Forty-one of us could say to the Senate: Hold on a minute. We know we have a problem. We know we have an \$80 billion package. But there is \$6 billion of it here that is unfair to military retirees. We can do better than that.

There are amendments we would like to offer. There are amendments Senator GRAHAM would like to offer. There is an amendment by Senator AYOTTE, the distinguished Senator from New Hampshire, that would eliminate this broken promise to our military retirees and pay for it with other savings elsewhere, savings that have already been endorsed as good government and are simply a matter of tightening up the enforcement of laws that are already there.

We can find, my colleagues, \$6 billion elsewhere without breaking a promise to people who during the time of a global war on terror have stood forward, donned the uniform of the United States of America, and volunteered time and time again to re-up, to go overseas, place themselves in harm's way, and embark on a career in the U.S. military. We can pass a budget that accomplishes the goals of Murray-Ryan without breaking this promise. I so hope we will. But this is the time. Forty-seven minutes from now is the opportunity we will have. After that, it is a simple majority. The deal will be done. The news accounts say that the debate is over, that the votes are already in.

I would hope that somewhere someone within the sound of my voice is realizing this is just another example of the government breaking its word. When we do this, when we tell falsehoods and change our minds and change our positions to the American people over and over again, what does that do to the confidence the American people should have in their government and the confidence in their elected officials to do what we promised to do and to fulfil our side of the agreement?

I implore my colleagues even at this late hour to take a pause, perhaps ask the committee, the conference committee which I was a member of and which was not consulted, to take another look, find the \$6 billion in savings elsewhere, and fulfill our promise to the American people.

One other point before I yield back. I wish to point out that a commission was established last year by Congress entitled the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission. The purpose of this commission is to provide us with a comprehensive list of ways to make meaningful reforms to military pay and benefits.

Members should remember that we specifically told this commission it could recommend any option as long as it grandfathered in those who currently serve and those who are currently retired. That was the sense of the Senate, and that was the sense of the Congress last year.

This is one reason why military retirees are so surprised by this reversal—so surprised that we would be on the brink of changing the rules in the middle of the game—because we specifically said, only last year, that we would not do such a thing. I hope we will honor that promise, and there is yet time for the Senate to do so.

For this reason, I strongly urge a “no” vote on the cloture vote which will begin shortly.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, before the Senator speaks—I have the last 10 minutes before the vote—so I ask unanimous consent the Senator get 2 minutes and then I be recognized.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, the budget conference didn't meet. We didn't produce a budget in conference. Our conferees did not vote. The two leaders of the conference, Senator MURRAY and Congressman RYAN, prepared the legislation now before us which has a number of problems, in my opinion. To skip the conference and create this legislation instead is not the right way to have conducted this process.

But the question is, Should we advance with this legislation or does it need to be improved? I believe it can be improved, I believe it should be improved, and I believe legislation of this size and scope should be carefully considered. Since this bill actually amends the Budget Control Act of the United States, which has successfully contained the growth and spending for a couple of years the Budget Control Act ought not to be altered without more care and thought.

I suggest the right vote today would be to vote against cloture and say to the leadership and Senator REID that we want to have amendments on this legislation.

If this legislation goes forward, we are about to have a significant reduction in the retirement benefits of disabled military personnel, people who have served 20 years in the U.S. military. The pay is going to be cut as much as \$70,000 for a staff sergeant over their lifetime. We need to think about that.

This legislation, amazingly and disappointingly, has altered the ability of this Senate to block increases in spending. We have a budget point of order today which allows an objection to be raised to require 60 votes in order to spend more than we agreed to spend. This legislation takes that away. Perhaps the House didn't understand the significance of it, but it is very signifi-

cant. We have used it three separate times successfully to block tax-and-spend legislation within the last year or so and help us stay with the commitment we made to the American people to keep spending at an agreed-upon level.

So, colleagues, there are a lot of problems with this bill. But the only way to fix it would be to say to Senator REID and the Democratic leadership in the Senate: Let's slow down, let's give Senators a chance to have actual amendments, and let's fix some of the problems. There is plenty of time to fix those problems, send the bill back to the House, and be able to pass it before the deadline of January 15.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, through the past few years in Congress we have lurched from one budget crisis to another, from one fiscal cliff to the next. When one countdown clock stopped, it wasn't too long before the next one got started.

The uncertainty was devastating to our very fragile economic recovery. The constant crisis cost us billions of dollars in lost growth and jobs, and the continued across-the-board cuts from sequestration were hurting our families and our communities and cutting off critical investments in economic growth and national security programs.

After the completely unnecessary government shutdown and debt limit crisis just 2 months ago, the American people were more disgusted than ever at the gridlock and the dysfunction. They were sick of partisanship, sick of showboating and saber rattling. They were tired of turning on their televisions at night and seeing elected officials saying: It is my way or the highway, and they had no more patience for politicians holding the economy and the Federal Government hostage to extract concessions or score political points.

So when the government was finally reopened and the debt limit crisis averted, people across the country were hoping Democrats and Republicans could finally get in a room, make some compromises, and take a step away from the constant crises. That is why I was so glad that part of that crisis-ending deal was creating the budget conference that many of us on both sides of the aisle had been trying to start since the Senate and House passed our budgets 7 months earlier.

The budget conference began at a time when distress between Democrats and Republicans could not have been higher. We had just 2 months to get a deal to avoid lurching toward another crisis, and most people assumed there was no way the divide could be bridged. But Chairman RYAN and I got together and we started talking and we decided that instead of trying to solve everything at once, the most important thing we could do for the families we

represented was to end the uncertainty and start rebuilding some trust. We weren't going to spend the next 8 weeks sniping at each other from our partisan corners, we were not going to use what was said in the room to launch political attacks on the other, and we weren't going to try to tackle the larger challenges we both know are critical but aren't going to be solved right now. So we focused on what was attainable. We worked together to find common ground, and we looked for ways we could compromise and take some steps toward the other. We both thought the least we should be able to do is to find a way to replace some of the across-the-board cuts from sequestration and agree on a spending level for the short term so we could avoid another crisis.

I know some of our colleagues want to keep the sequester caps. But Democrats and many Republicans believe it makes sense to replace these meat-ax cuts with smarter and more balanced savings.

We spent 7 weeks working on this. I worked very closely with the House Budget Committee's ranking member CHRIS VAN HOLLEN as well as my colleagues in the Senate on and off the Budget Committee, and I am very proud that last week Chairman RYAN and I reached an agreement on the bipartisan Budget Act of 2013.

This bill passed the House of Representatives Thursday on a vote of 332 to 94, with overwhelming support from Democrats and Republicans. I come to the floor to urge my colleagues to support this bill in the Senate and send it to the President so it can be signed into law.

The bipartisan Budget Act puts jobs and economic growth first by rolling back sequestration's harmful cuts to education, medical research, infrastructure investments, and defense jobs for the next 2 years. If we didn't get a deal, we would have faced another continuing resolution that would have locked in the automatic cuts or, worse, a potential government shutdown in just a few short weeks.

Over the past year, I have heard from so many people across my home State of Washington who have told me sequestration has hurt their families, businesses, and communities—from the parents of children whose Head Start Programs were shut down and seniors wondering whether Meals On Wheels would continue, the scientists and doctors whose investments in cutting-edge research and medical cures were cut off or threatened, the construction workers who lost their jobs when projects were put on hold, small business owners whose revenues were declining due to the cuts and uncertainty, and so many more. For them, the cuts from sequestration were senseless. They were real, they were hurting, and they were only going to get worse. So I am very proud that our bill replaces almost two-thirds of this year's sequester cuts to domestic discretionary investments.

This will not solve every problem sequestration has caused, but it is a step in the right direction and a dramatic improvement over the status quo.

Over the past year I have talked to workers at Joint Base Lewis-McChord and Fairchild Air Force Base and elsewhere who have been very much impacted by the sequestration and very worried about how another round of cuts would affect their jobs and families. I have heard from military leaders who told me sequestration would impact our national security if it continued and from companies that do business with the Defense Department that the uncertainty and the cuts were hurting their ability to hire workers and invest in future growth. So I am very glad this bill will prevent the upcoming round of defense sequestration and provide some certainty to the Pentagon for the upcoming years.

Secretary of Defense Hagel and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Dempsey have both expressed support for this bill, as have a number of colleagues in Congress who have spent the last few years highlighting the impact of continued sequestration on national security and defense workers.

The increased investments we get from rolling back sequestration over the next 2 years are fully replaced with a smarter, balanced mix of new revenue and more responsible spending cuts. Experts and economists have said the responsible thing to do is increase investments now while our economic recovery remains fragile and workers are still fighting to get back on the job, while tackling our deficit and debt over the long run. This bill moves us in the direction of exactly that.

We have cut our deficit in half over the past few years, and this bill adds to the \$2.5 trillion in deficit reduction done since 2011 with an additional \$23 billion in savings over the next 10 years.

This bill is not exactly what I would have written on my own. I am pretty sure it is not what Chairman RYAN would have written on his own.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 3 additional minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. This bill is a compromise, and that means neither side got everything they wanted and both of us had to give a bit.

I was very disappointed we were not able to close a single wasteful tax loophole that benefits the wealthiest Americans and biggest corporations. I had hoped to extend critical support for workers who are fighting to get back on the job. I was very disappointed that Republicans refused to allow that to be part of this deal. I certainly would have liked to have replaced more of sequestration. I know it was difficult for many Republicans to accept any increases in the BCA caps at all.

I know many Republicans had hoped this would be an opportunity to make

the kind of Medicare and Social Security benefit cuts they have advocated in the past, but I fought hard to keep them out.

This deal is a compromise. It doesn't tackle every one of the challenges we face as a nation, but that was never our goal. This bipartisan bill takes the first steps toward rebuilding our broken budget process and hopefully toward rebuilding our broken Congress.

We have spent far too long here scrambling to fix artificial crises instead of working together to solve the big problems we all know we need to address. We have budget deficits that have improved but have not disappeared, and we have deficits in education, innovation, and infrastructure that continue to widen. There is so much more we need to do to create jobs, boost our economy, replace the remaining years of sequestration, and tackle our long-term fiscal challenges fairly and responsibly.

I am hopeful that this deal can be just the first of many bipartisan deals, that it can rebuild some of the trust, bring Democrats and Republicans together, and demonstrate that government can work for the people we all represent.

I urge my colleagues to support the bipartisan Budget Act of 2013.

I thank Chairman RYAN for his work with me over the last several months. I thank a number of Members who have worked very closely with us, including Ranking Member VAN HOLLEN and every Member of our Budget Committee here in the Senate who worked hard to pass a budget, start a conference, and get a bipartisan deal.

When we come back next year, I will be ready to get to work with Chairman RYAN or anyone else from either side of this aisle who wants to build on this bipartisan foundation to continue addressing our Nation's challenges fairly and responsibly. It is not going to be easy, but the American people are expecting nothing less.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum required under rule XXII be waived with respect to the cloture motion relative to H.J. Res. 59.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion to invoke cloture.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.J. Res. 59, the Bipartisan Budget Act.

Harry Reid, Patty Murray, Max Baucus, Mark Begich, Barbara Boxer, Richard

Blumenthal, Tom Udall, Debbie Stabenow, Sheldon Whitehouse, Claire McCaskill, Mazie Hirono, Christopher A. Coons, Jon Tester, Brian Schatz, Martin Heinrich, Joe Donnelly, Heidi Heitkamp, Kirsten E. Gillibrand.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.J. Res. 59, making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2014, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 67, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 279 Leg.]

YEAS—67

Alexander	Hagan	Murkowski
Baldwin	Harkin	Murphy
Baucus	Hatch	Murray
Begich	Heinrich	Nelson
Bennet	Heitkamp	Portman
Blumenthal	Hirono	Pryor
Blunt	Hoeven	Reed
Booker	Isakson	Reid
Boxer	Johnson (SD)	Rockefeller
Brown	Johnson (WI)	Sanders
Cantwell	Kaine	Schatz
Cardin	King	Schumer
Carper	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Casey	Landrieu	Stabenow
Chambliss	Leahy	Tester
Collins	Levin	Udall (CO)
Coons	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	Markey	Warner
Durbin	McCain	Warren
Feinstein	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Flake	Menendez	Wyden
Franken	Merkley	
Gillibrand	Mikulski	

NAYS—33

Ayotte	Enzi	Paul
Barrasso	Fischer	Risch
Boozman	Graham	Roberts
Burr	Grassley	Rubio
Coats	Heller	Scott
Coburn	Inhofe	Sessions
Cochran	Johanns	Shelby
Corker	Kirk	Thune
Cornyn	Lee	Toomey
Crapo	McConnell	Vitter
Cruz	Moran	Wicker

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 67 and the nays are 33. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

MAKING CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair lays before the Senate a message from the House which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Resolved, that the House recede from its amendment to the amendment of the Senate to the resolution (H.J. Res. 59) entitled, "A joint resolution making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2014, and for other purposes," and concur with a House amendment to the Senate amendment.

Pending:

Reid motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the joint resolution, with Reid amendment No. 2547, to change the enactment date.