

polls. I am not preventing access to tools everyone else has because that is not even what my colleagues are asking for. Not only do I realize that Puerto Ricans are American citizens, I believe the people of Puerto Rico are valuable and cherished fellow Americans, not political pawns.

In closing, while others may wish to engage in political dart-throwing exercises, I am not interested, and I believe it is a disservice to the people of Puerto Rico, who deserve our continued efforts. I intend to continue working with anyone who wants to work with me to arrive at tools, support, and assistance that will help the people of Puerto Rico—not particular politicians or interest groups here or on the island. My goal, and the goal of anyone who wants to keep working with me or join me anew, is simple: help the people of Puerto Rico and help get Puerto Rico on a path to fiscal sustainability, economic growth and stability, and greater efficiency in government.

We can do it. I am dedicated to doing it, and we have given them the benefits so they can carry this over until the end of February, maybe into March, while we try to work on what it really should be, a very good resolution of these problems. In the meantime, I hope Puerto Rico will get us their financials—their audited financials. That would be of great help to us. We have given some time here now because it was impossible to put together a major bill on this matter and have everybody support it. So we have given time, we think we can get this done, and I intend to get it done one way or another the best we possibly can so Puerto Rico isn't just helped, it will be helped to go into the future, and Puerto Ricans who have had to leave that territory for jobs will want to return and be members of the citizenry of Puerto Rico again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Maryland.

THANKING SENATOR HATCH

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, while Senator HATCH is still on the floor, I thank and congratulate him on his work with regard to the tax provisions we just voted on. I am a proud member of the Senate Finance Committee. Senator WYDEN and Senator HATCH, working together in the best tradition of the Senate, were able to bring out an incredibly important bill that will add predictability to our Tax Code and to provide, I think, the right incentives for growth.

I thank the Senator for the work, and I am proud to serve on the Finance Committee.

Mr. HATCH. If the Senator will yield for a comment.

Mr. CARDIN. I am pleased to yield to my friend.

Mr. HATCH. I thank the Senator. He is one of the really good people in this body. I am so grateful he is on the Sen-

ate Finance Committee. We have a lot of good people in this body, but the Senator from Maryland is one of my favorite people. He works hard, he is very articulate, he is very intelligent, and although he is too liberal for me, he works hand-in-glove with the rest of us on the committee to make things work. Frankly, if I were from Maryland, I would probably be as liberal as he is. All I can say is that he is a great man to work with, he is a great man in the Senate, and I happen to care a great deal for him.

Mr. CARDIN. Once again, I thank my friend from Utah. We share a lot of the same objectives for a strong nation and moving our country forward. I think that is reflected in the bill we just voted on, the Omnibus appropriations bill.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF TOWSON UNIVERSITY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, before I talk about the Omnibus appropriations, I note that just a few minutes ago the Senate approved the resolution for the 150th anniversary of Towson University. I must admit I have a direct interest in Towson. My mother graduated from Towson University. My wife Myrna graduated from Towson University, and Myrna today is the chair of the board of visitors of Towson University.

It is a great institution. It started as the primary institution for educating our teachers and now has expanded to be one of the great universities in our State, attracting students from the entire university in a variety of programs.

We are very proud of its 150-year history and we know it has a very bright future.

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to talk for a few minutes about the Omnibus appropriations bill and tax bills that we just passed. I am very proud to have supported it. We have finally passed a budget for this year, giving predictability to our agencies and providing predictability for those who depend on the government as a partner or for services.

The alternative would have been another continuing resolution, which freezes in last year's priorities at last year's level. Now we have elevated appropriations with this year's priorities. The other alternative could have been sequestration, which is mindless, across-the-board cuts, saying that every priority in government is the same—when it is not.

We have avoided the worst consequence, that is, a government shutdown that we have seen happen in the past. So we should be very pleased the political system has worked and we have been able to pass a full-year appropriations bill with current priorities at a reasonable level.

I am also pleased we were able to pass the tax legislation Chairman HATCH talked about. The alternative to that would have been another short-term extension of the expiring tax provisions. We saw last year that we did that with 2 weeks remaining in the year, and it expired on December 31, 2 weeks later. Now we have given—many of the permanent provisions give long-term predictability, and we have even approved the tax provisions to make them more efficient. That is good news.

Then we have acted on many important issues from dealing with the extension of benefits to the first responders, to the attack on our country on September 11, to the extension of reform of the IMF—International Monetary Fund—to authorizing some very important programs, including the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a 3-year authorization that provides \$450 million in this year, \$144 million above current appropriations. That is all good news, and we list many more important accomplishments in this important legislation.

I must tell you there are some disappointments. One of the major disappointments is that we didn't follow regular order. It would have been much better to pass each of the appropriations bills, to have the tax bill considered as an independent bill, and have these other issues—and to have done it in an orderly way rather than looking at it December 18. So I would hope that in the future we will return to regular order, where we have, I think, a better chance of improving legislation with participation from all Members.

Secondly, I was very disappointed that included in this legislation was the lifting of the ban on oil exports, energy exports. The reason I am so upset about that is I think that should have been a separate issue. It should have been taken up in consideration with the energy policies of America, our environmental policies of America, our environmental policies, the economic impact, and the security impact. We should have had a chance to debate that issue as a separate issue. It is far too important to our energy security and our energy policy in this country.

Another concern I have—and let me point this out—I supported the package. I supported the tax provisions. The tax provisions will be scored as losing \$680 billion over the next 10 years. I think that is somewhat misleading. I am going to be perfectly blunt about it. If you take out existing policy—this is the current policy in our Tax Code—that actually costs us about 10 percent of that \$680 billion, but that is still a substantial amount of money. I think it would have been far better to deal with these issues in a long-term budget agreement that dealt with the revenue needs of our country, dealt with our discretionary spending targets moving forward, as well as mandatory spending. That is what we should do rather than taking this up in piecemeal and now making it a little more difficult