

this debate and we will not give in. The access to these critical services is so important to so many young women in this country. I told the story and I will tell it again. A few days ago I heard from a young woman in my State who, at 18-years-old, had to leave an extremely abusive family situation, out on the street on her own. She had cervical cancer that runs in her family. The only way she was able to get the medication and care she needed was through title X Federal funding through clinics in her State.

She and 5 million others in this country depend on that, and we are going to take this away at the 11th hour, in order to get an agreement? Not on my watch. Not on the watch of millions of American families in this country who know that access to women's health care is basic to them and their families and their communities. What kind of country are we, that at the 11th hour on a debate like this, the issue remaining is about women's health care? I find that stunning.

Families across my State are hurting. They have lost their jobs, they are worried about getting a pink slip, their home prices have dropped, they are worried about making their mortgage, and this debate now has come to this? An issue of access to title X funding for preventive health care for women? We need to focus on the economy. Yes, there are going to be some budget cuts in this that are going to be extremely hard for me and others who care about investing in education and jobs, but we know we have to come to an agreement. But we will not let women be used as pawns in this debate at this 11th hour. We are not going to allow this debate to end by cutting off funding for health clinics across America that are often the only place for low-income women.

In my State of Washington over 100,000 patients depend on these clinics to provide prevention. Over 3 million Americans do nationwide. We are not going to let the threat of a shutdown make us fade away. Women are going to stand tall, and men with them, across the country, to say: Not on our watch. Women are not pawns.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I am going to proceed in my leader time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has that right.

#### GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the American people have heard a lot of excuses over the past few days as to why it is that we are staring at a potential government shutdown here in Washington.

Democrats are saying the holdup is over social issues. This plays nicely into the political strategy they have decided on to distract people from their own fiscal recklessness.

Republicans say the holdup is over the need to reduce Washington spending—that Democrats, including the President, would rather see the government shut down than to allow a reduction in the size and scope of Washington that is perfectly reasonable by any objective standard.

Those are the competing messages. And generally speaking, people will probably agree with the party they tend to vote for. But whichever side you come down on, two things are not in dispute in this debate: First, that the whole reason we are in this mess is that Democrats abdicated their responsibility to keep the government funded through this year. And second, that Democrats have rejected the only plan out there that keeps the government open—the bipartisan troop funding bill—for no apparent reason.

The President says he will veto it, but does not say why. And Democrats in Congress would not vote for it, even though it funds the Defense Department and keeps the government operational and makes reasonable cuts in spending.

In other words, what Democrats are saying at this point is that they had rather see the government shut down either because they would not accept a modest amount of spending cuts that fall well within the range of what Democrats previously described as reasonable, or because they would not reinstate a longstanding policy related to one American city that Members of both parties, including Presidents of both parties, have approved repeatedly in the past.

The majority leader said yesterday that this particular provision relates to an issue that we have been unable to reach agreement on for 40 years. My response is that this is actually one of the few areas of agreement both parties have agreed about on this issue for years.

Let's be very clear about this: if the government shuts down, it is either because Democrats are pretending that a previously noncontroversial provision is suddenly out of bounds. Or they refuse to take another baby step in the direction of balancing the government checkbook, something we know the American people want. Neither reason is worth a shutdown especially when neither side actually wants one. And that is why I believe there will be an agreement here shortly. I have been in many negotiations over the years. I assure you, these are not unresolvable issues.

So my suggestion this morning is that both sides sit back and give the negotiators a few more hours to work this out.

Let Senator REID talk with his conference. Let the Speaker talk to his. And let's just hold off on the specula-

tion and the back and forth for a little while here. Both sides are working hard to reach the kind of resolution Americans want.

A resolution is within reach. The contours of a final agreement are coming into focus. There is virtually nothing in the troop funding bill Republicans in the House passed yesterday that will not be included in a final package.

Let's not disrupt and derail that agreement.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let's make it clear where we are at this moment in time. There is an agreement. There is agreement on the budget number. It was an agreement reached between the President with Speaker BOEHNER and with Senate Majority Leader REID—an agreement on the spending cuts for the remainder of this year. It was reached last night at the White House.

Then it fell apart, not because of a change of heart when it came to the number but, rather, because of the insistence of the House Republicans that they would not let us keep this government functioning, they would not let us pass a budget resolution for the remainder of this year, unless we were prepared to virtually devastate the title X family planning program.

Let me ask you something: In the big national debate in the last election over the future of our country and what we would do with our deficit, how many times do you remember that issue coming up? Exactly. None. This issue over title X has been brought in by the House Republicans at the last moment. It has virtually no impact on government spending—virtually none.

Yet they insist on it. Why? It is because of some problems within the House Republican caucus. The Speaker of the House, JOHN BOEHNER, whom I know and respect and like, is surrounded by lean and hungry colleagues challenging his value, his resolve, and his leadership.

This House power struggle has now reached a point where we face a government shutdown and a slowdown on whether we are going to provide basic health care access for women across America. First, understand, not one penny, not a penny in title X funds can be spent on abortion, other than the strictly limited provisions of the Hyde amendment, which have been the law of the land for decades, agreed to by virtually all Republicans and Democrats.

It is about access to cancer screening, it is about pap smears, breast screening, it is about screening for infectious diseases. Here is what it means: If we cut off the funding, as the Republicans ask, for women to have access to affordable health care for their basic health, it is not, as the Senator from Arizona says, just a matter of whether they will knock on the next