

pressure. I appreciate the work which allowed us to get this done.

I appreciate what Secretary Hagel, Ash Carter at the Pentagon, the Assistant Secretary of the Senate, Sheila Dwyer, and her entire staff in the Secretary's Office have done to make this whole situation as pleasant as it has been.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

I now ask unanimous consent that when the Senate resumes consideration of the farm bill this morning, the time until 10 a.m. be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Following the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on S. 953, I ask unanimous consent that the time until 11:45 a.m. be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each; further, that I be recognized at 11:45 a.m. today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING FRANK R. LAUTENBERG

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this afternoon the Senate will pay its final respects to a friend and a respected colleague—and that is an understatement—Frank Lautenberg. Frank will lie in repose in the Chamber where he spent three decades of his professional life.

Senator Lautenberg was one of the most effective and productive Senators to serve in the Senate and, as we learned yesterday, one of the most humorous. His leadership as well as his laughter and kindness will be missed.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I talked a little bit about the farm bill, but in a few minutes we will consider whether to end debate on the agriculture jobs bill.

I commend Chairman STABENOW and Ranking Member COCHRAN on their excellent work. We were able to get some votes, but we ran into a problem, and we were unable to reach an agreement to consider a finite number of amendments, as they have been trying to do for several days. I am optimistic and hopeful we will advance the measure and be able to pass the bill with a strong bipartisan vote as we did last year.

Unfortunately, last year the House of Representative failed to even consider the Senate passed bipartisan farm bill. I hope this year the bipartisan legislation—which will create jobs, cut taxpayer subsidies, and reduce the debt by some \$23 billion—will be voted on in the House.

America's farms and ranches are the most productive in the world, but to keep America's farms and America's economy strong, Congress must pass a strong farm bill and do it quickly.

STUDENT LOANS

Mr. REID. On one final subject, to ensure this Nation's continued economic recovery and long-term success, it is crucial that America invest in our educated workforce, and we need to continue to have an educated workforce. In this country a college education is the surest path to a better life. But higher education has never been more expensive or further out of reach for middle-class families. So it is crucial Congress act before July 1 to keep the interest rates low for 7 million college students who can't afford to pile on more debt.

Democrats have a commonsense plan to prevent loan rates from doubling for 2 years without adding a single penny to the deficit. We will consider that legislation, as I have just indicated, later this morning.

The Republican alternative proposal, by contrast, would be worse than doing nothing at all. It would be worse than letting the rates double, which would happen if we do nothing. The Republican proposal will saddle students with even more debt—about \$6,500 more debt—than they have today. That is a serious blow, considering that Americans have more than \$1 trillion in student loan debt.

Keeping college affordable is the best investment we can make in our country. Congress should remove the obstacles from keeping young people from getting an education and not put more barriers in their way. I hope our Republican colleagues will work to invest in America's future instead of, once again, sticking it to the students.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

STUDENT LOANS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Earlier this week, I came to the floor and asked Senate Democrats to work with us on permanent student loan reform. This is an issue ripe for bipartisan cooperation.

Both the President and Republicans want to prevent rates from going up in July, and the ideas Republicans have put forward on the issue are actually very similar to what the President has already proposed. This actually should be a slam dunk.

Instead, Senate Democrats have put forward a bill that fails the very benchmarks that the President himself set—a bill that is nothing more than a short-term political patch funded by permanent tax hikes. The bill would

cost taxpayers more than \$8 billion, yet only save students about \$6 a month. Worse still, it is a bill Senate Democrats know will fail. In fact, they actually seem to be indicating they want it to fail.

Why would that be? Undoubtedly so they could keep this issue alive for the permanent campaign that never seems to end. Top Senate Democrats have stated themselves that they are "not looking for compromise" and that they are determined to show "the difference between the two parties on a key issue," even when there isn't one.

Two of the most senior Democrats said those things. Those are direct quotes, so basically they are determined to force a partisan fight regardless of the costs to students. By the way they set up this morning's votes, it is pretty clear those votes are intentionally designed to fail.

So when the Senate Democrats get their wish and the bill fails this evening, I hope the President will step in to work with us on a serious permanent solution because, as I said, our ideas for reform are not all that different from his on this issue. Students should not be made to suffer just because some in this town seem to see them as rooks and pawns in a political chess match.

Look, this isn't a fight young Americans need, and they especially don't need this fight right now. Young men and women are already having a rough enough go in the Obama economy. Those who make it through college face a highly uncertain future once they get out in the real world, as their parents like to call it. They are having a real tough time finding a job.

Once ObamaCare comes online, experts predict their health care premiums are set to skyrocket. Young men in their mid-20s to mid-30s could see rate increases of 50 percent or more, depending on which study we look at.

Here is the thing: Even if premiums end up going up by just a small fraction of that amount, it is still going to create an enormous headache for the next generation. While the administration's allies promised subsidies, studies indicate those payments from taxpayers may not make up for the higher costs.

Many young folks seem to be living largely from paycheck to paycheck these days, often because they literally have no other choice. These men and women are just getting by as it is. Do we expect these Americans to be able to afford to pay even more?

Apparently Washington Democrats do. Because if young folks don't cough up money for health insurance, they are going to get hit with a penalty tax. So one way or the other, many are going to start paying more. That is just one more reason why Senate Democrats need to get serious about the student loan issue.

This summer alone more than 9 million college students will take out