United States of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 160 WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2014 No. 9

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable EDWARD J. MARKEY, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our hearts are steadfast toward You. Lead us safely to the refuge of Your choosing, for You desire to give us a future and a hope. Today give our Senators the power to do Your will as they realize more fully they are servants of heaven and stewards of Your mysteries. May faithfulness be the litmus test by which they evaluate each action. May they never be careless about their spiritual and moral growth as You make them Your instruments for achieving lasting peace and justice in troublesome times.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 15, 2014.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of Rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable EDWARD J. MARKEY, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MARKEY thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

HOMEOWNER FLOOD INSURANCE AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 2013—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. I move to proceed to Calendar No. 266.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 266, S. 1846, a bill to delay the implementation of certain provisions of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on this issue we have a bipartisan coalition that badly wants to get this done. So we are going to do everything we can to move forward. At this stage the Republicans have not cleared the proposed consent agreement. I have indicated to the Republican leader that later today I would ask that. But also, to stopgap, we have started a rule XIV procedure which in just a minute I will move to, and we will have a second reading so that, if we can't work anything out on the consent agreement, we will tee this up so this will be the first vote we have when we get back after our recess.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Will the majority leader yield for a question?

Mr. REID. Certainly.

Mr. MCCONNELL. The majority leader is correct. There is substantial bipartisan support for the flood insurance bill. We are not in a position to clear it yet, but Senator ISAKSON, who has taken the lead on this issue on our side, is working with our Members. Hopefully, we will be able to figure out a way forward here in the not too distant future.

Mr. REID. On our side, Senator LANDRIEU has been persistent for months now. So she and Senator ISAKSON, I hope, can work something out so we can maybe work on this before we leave.

SCHEDULE

Mr. President, following my remarks, and those of the Republican leader, the time until noon will be equally divided and controlled between the two of us or our designees. At noon the Senate will begin consideration of H.J. Res. 106, which is the short-term continuing resolution. At 12:15 there will be a rollcall vote on the joint resolution. Just before coming here I was told the vote in the House will be between 3 and 5 o'clock this afternoon. So we should get that at a reasonable hour today.

We expect to begin consideration of the omnibus bill when it is received from the House, as I have indicated, later today.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 1917 AND S. 1926

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bills by title for the second time.

The clerk read as follows:

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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A bill (S. 1917) to provide for additional enhancements of the sexual assault prevention and response activities of the Armed Forces.

A bill (S. 1926) to delay the implementation of certain provisions of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012 and to reform the National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to further proceedings on either one of these measures at this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar under rule XIV.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last night's vote to block emergency unemployment insurance was, I am sorry to say, what goes on and has been going on for a number of years here. It was blocked by the Republicans. It is really a tragedy for millions of Americans who are relying on Congress to help them get through these hard times. Today's long-term unemployment is double what it was at any other time Congress has allowed emergency benefits to lapse. Yet Republicans refuse even to allow an up-or-down vote on our plan to restore benefits to 1.5 million Americans, and there are 2.3 million children.

I thought we had satisfied every complaint and demand my Republican colleagues made throughout the week. They said they wouldn't vote on an extension which would provide an average of $300 a week to families struggling to get by unless the bill was paid for. So we proposed an offset. That wasn't unique for us. It was originally proposed by Congressman PAUL RYAN, chairman of the Budget Committee in the House and the Republican candidate for Vice President in the last election.

Then Republicans said they couldn't vote for an extension of unemployment insurance without reforms to the program. We also did that. What we did will prevent double dipping and reduce the number of weeks recipients could receive unemployment benefits. Then Republicans said they couldn't vote to extend unemployment benefits unless they were allowed to offer amendments. So Democrats agreed to vote on up to 20 amendments, 10 on each side. They again refused.

So, Mr. President, unless Democrats agree to vote on an unlimited number of unrelated, irrelevant minority amendments, the minority will filibuster the bill that will help people who have been looking for work for a long time. This callous vote yesterday proves Republicans want it to seem like they support an extension of unemployment insurance even though they didn't vote and wouldn't vote for an extension. The minority has hidden behind one process argument after another as they voted to end a program that has been successful for millions of Americans, including, as I indicated, more than a half million children, which has kept them out of poverty in recent years.

Middle-class Americans can see right through these flimsy Republican excuses. They see last night's vote for what it was—a slap in the face to almost 1.5 million Americans, including tens of thousands of veterans; a slap in the face for 18,000 Nevadans who are still looking for work, and 2.3 million children whose parents don't have jobs; and a slap in the face for 70,000 more people who will lose their unemployment benefits each week until Congress acts.

But the fight is not over. We are not going to give up on Americans struggling to get back on their feet. We are working on other proposals. We can move forward at any time on a 3-month extension, unpaid for, and that is really what we should have done 2 weeks ago, so that during this 3-month period we could continue working on a long-term solution.

We must take up this short-term continuing resolution, which, by the way, is bipartisan. Senator HELLER from Nevada joined with Senator REED of Rhode Island—the two States who lead the Nation in unemployment. The economy can't afford another manufactured crisis over whether the U.S. Government will stay open for business or pay its bills. But soon Republicans will be faced with the same choice: Put their middle-class constituents first or keep playing political games.

I received a letter this week from a Nevadan who, by the way, is a lifelong Republican. Here is what happened to him. After 13 years at a job he loved, this 54-year-old man was laid off, through no fault of his own. He hasn't been able to find work for 10 months, despite having applied for dozens and dozens of jobs. He is appalled at the way his own party has treated him and other unemployed Americans. This is what he wrote: ''I am shocked and dismayed and outraged at how Republicans have dealt with this matter.''

Let me read this again:

> I am shocked and dismayed and outraged at how Republicans have dealt with this matter. The Republican leadership has talked about people like me as if we're thieves, not worthy of help. That will cost Republicans their jobs and should cost them their jobs.

This Nevadan is not alone. People all over America feel the same way. Republicans around the country support the extension of unemployment benefits.

Mr. DURBIN. Would the majority leader yield for a question?

Mr. REID. Sure.

Mr. DURBIN. I would like to ask the majority leader through the Chair for clarity: Is the Senate Republican filibuster holding up unemployment benefits for 1.3 million Americans?

Mr. REID. It is actually now up to about 1.5 million.

Mr. DURBIN. Again, addressing the majority leader through the Chair, so the refusal of the Senate Republicans to allow us to vote on the extension of unemployment benefits is denying, on average, about $300 a week to 1.4 million or 1.5 million Americans; is that a fact?

Mr. REID. That is true, Mr. President.

Mr. DURBIN. I would like to ask the majority leader this question: Is it not true that the initial complaint of the Senate Republicans was that this payment of unemployment benefits was not paid for?

Mr. REID. That is true.

Mr. DURBIN. Is it also true that Democrats came up with a pay-for that would have paid for the unemployment benefits, as the Republicans requested?

Mr. REID. And the pay-for was originally discovered by PAUL RYAN.

Mr. DURBIN. I would like to ask the majority leader: After the Democrats came up with the pay-for, the first demand of the Senate Republicans to stop their filibuster, did the Senate Republicans then join us in calling this measure for passage?

Mr. REID. Would my friend repeat the question?

Mr. DURBIN. After we came up with a pay-for, which the Senate Republicans insisted on, did they stop their Senate Republican filibuster on unemployment benefits and allow us to move forward?

Mr. REID. No.

Mr. DURBIN. I would like to ask the majority leader if this followed: It was my understanding the Senate Republicans then came up with a new demand, and the demand was they be allowed to offer amendments to the unemployment insurance benefit package before they would drop their Senate Republican filibuster that was stopping unemployment benefits for 1.4 million Americans.

Mr. REID. That is true. And the biggest advocate we had for that on this side of the aisle was the whip, the senior Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I would like to ask the majority leader this question: Is it not true that yesterday, in response to this Republican demand, the majority leader offered a unanimous consent that would have given up to 10 amendments on each side of the aisle—Democrats and Republicans—to this measure and that the Democrats did not specify what the amendments would be; that it would really be the decision of the Republicans to offer those amendments? Did the Senate majority leader offer that to the Senate Republicans so they would stop their filibuster of unemployment benefits?

Mr. REID. The answer is yes. And in addition to that, there would be available on each side, if they wanted, five side-by-sides, as we call them here. So that could be a total of 10 amendments on each side, so 20.

Mr. DURBIN. So the Senate Republicans insisted on a pay-for, and the Senate Democrats provided it. The Senate Republicans still refused to stop their filibuster. Then the Senate Republicans insisted on amendments. We offered up to 10 amendments on each side.

Can the Senate majority leader say, after offering that unanimous consent, whether the Republicans agreed to it and stopped their filibuster of unemployment benefits?

Mr. REID. I am sorry to say they did not.

Mr. DURBIN. I ask the majority, at this point in time what are we waiting for? What are the Senate Republicans now demanding to stop their filibuster of providing unemployment benefits to 1.4 million people across America?

Mr. REID. I have no idea.

Mr. DURBIN. I would say to the Senate majority leader that it strikes me as unfair, if not cruel, that we are holding 1.4 million unemployed Americans hostage to this continued political negotiation where each day the Republicans come up with a new demand before they will stop their Senate Republican filibuster.

I ask the Senator from Nevada, our majority leader, does he believe that a majority of the Members of the Senate would vote for the extension of unemployment benefits to these 1.4 million Americans if the Senate Republicans would drop their filibuster?

Mr. REID. No question about that.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the majority leader.

Mr. REID. Finally, let me say that the man from Nevada is not alone. There are 1.4 million people just like him in this country. Sadly, that number will grow every week Congress fails to act. And my Republican colleagues denigrate or ignore these hard-working Americans at their own political peril.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

SENATE PROCEDURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, let me say in response to the colloquy we just heard that it used to be the assistant majority leader's view that, as he put it, if you don't want to fight fires, don't become a firefighter, and if you don't want to cast tough votes, don't come to the Senate. Obviously, those days have changed.

What really happened over the last week is the refusal to have an open amendment process, the refusal to treat both sides the same. The final proposal we objected to yesterday requiring all the amendments to get 60 votes but final passage only 51 still does not restore the Senate to the way it has formerly functioned. Any Member of the Senate ought to be able to have a fair chance to get his or her amendment adopted. That is the way it used to be around here before the majority leader decided to dictate everything everyone does.

So what we are seeking is fundamental fairness and, on this particular bill, an open amendment process and an opportunity to pay for it. I think the real concern was that the majority leader was afraid that some of the Republican amendments might actually pass, might actually enjoy bipartisan support.

So we will get back to that bill. It is a very important bill. But if anybody had any doubts that Washington Democrats wanted to see the unemployment insurance bill fail, well, I think we had those doubts erased yesterday and by the comments just made. It is just the latest example of Senate Democrats putting politics over policy. And in this case it is doubly tragic because this time they are putting politics over struggling families who deserve some certainty from Congress.

Look. It is no secret that our Democratic friends plan to spend the year exploiting folks who are still struggling in this economy for political gain. They have been telling reporters that for weeks. That is no secret, but that doesn't make it any less disturbing. It is still wrong.

I would probably want to be talking about something other than ObamaCare too, if I had voted for it. They want to talk about anything other than ObamaCare. But to create a conflict where the possibility of agreement was so close while more than 1 million people are stuck in the middle is just simply outrageous—making pawns out of these people stuck in the middle of this political game.

Here is the larger issue. Here we are in the sixth year of this administration, and we are still talking about emergency unemployment benefits—6 years into the Obama administration. After all the stimulus bills and all the other big-government solutions we were told would help the little guy, we are still looking at record long-term unemployment. We are still looking at hundreds of thousands of able-bodied men and women basically giving up on finding work in this economy in the last month alone, in just 1 month. One report I saw even suggested that about half of our Nation's counties have yet to return to their prerecession economic output—half the counties in America.

The bottom line: The Obama economy isn't working for middle-class Americans.

Democrats tell us again and again that their policies will help people who are struggling. Yet we always seem to end up in the very same situation—debating whether to provide more emergency help instead of talking about how to provide a long-term solution and a stable economy that doesn't require permanent life support from Washington.

What is needed is a fundamental course correction. What is needed is for our colleagues to finally acknowledge what has failed and then actually work with us on the underlying problem. That is what Republicans are saying in this debate. What we are saying is, how about actually trying to create jobs for a change?

That will be the President's challenge today when he speaks in North Carolina. We hear he might lay out some ideas to get the private sector moving again. If that is the case, then maybe he will be taking a step in the right direction—a step away from big-government policies that have failed so many Americans for so many years—because if he is truly serious about getting the economy back on track and creating jobs, he will do more than just talk about job creation or bipartisanship today; he will actually work with us on real bipartisan solutions to get there, and there are some simple ways he can show he means it.

The Republican-controlled House has sent over a number of bills that would give a boost to jobs and to our economy. A good start would be for the President to lean on Democrats who run the Senate to take up those for immediate consideration.

He could acknowledge the real pain ObamaCare is inflicting on middle-class families and then work with us to start over with real bipartisan reforms that actually lower costs and won't hurt the economy the way ObamaCare does.

He could call for true bipartisan tax reforms.

He could announce construction of the Keystone Pipeline. I see the Senator from Pennsylvania on the floor, who will remember that the President came to a lunch with Senate Republicans last year, and the President said he would make a decision on the Keystone Pipeline last year, sometime during 2013. Apparently, that was in the same category: If you have your policy and you like it, you can keep it. If you have your doctor and you like them, you can keep them. I will make a decision on Keystone Pipeline by the end of 2013. Well, we are still waiting.

He could actually deliver on one of the brightest spots of his economic agenda: trade. That means that instead of allowing the United States to lag behind our trading partners, the President could find a way to bring his party on board with a bipartisan bill introduced last week that would get the administration back in the game of helping American workers with increased exports.

These are just a few of the many areas where we could work together to get some good things done for the American people.

I hope he will be serious in his speech today. I hope he will focus on actually getting the job done instead of just providing another distraction from the pain of ObamaCare and the Obama economy because if this devolves into just another political exercise that is focused more on making a point than making a real difference in the lives of

people who are struggling, that is not going to help middle-class families get back on their feet. That won't help college graduates find full-time work. All it will do is continue a cycle of economic pain that the President needs to work with Republicans to stop.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

Under the previous order, the time until 12 noon will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise to address this situation we find ourselves in on the unemployment bill.

I have to say that this most recent episode in which the majority leader refuses to permit an open process, refuses to allow debate, refuses to allow the kinds of amendments Republicans would like to offer to improve this bill is very disturbing and is now part of a very well-established trend.

It is actually shocking to me that over the last 6 months, since July of last year, through today, this body has voted on a grand total of four Republican amendments—four recorded votes on Republican amendments in 6 months.

Under every previous majority leader, under every previous majority the Senate didn't work this way. It would be routine to have four votes in a morning before we broke for lunch. We have had four votes on our ideas that have been permitted in 6 months. So we are systemically being shut out of the process.

What is particularly maddening about this is that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle know full well that the votes are there to pass an extension of unemployment insurance. They know it. If they would allow an open amendment process, we would have a few amendments, we would have a debate, and we would have some votes. In the course of an afternoon, maybe two, we would have finished up last week and we would have passed an extension of unemployment benefits.

Evidently that is not the goal of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. They insisted on making sure we could not engage in this debate, offer the amendments, and do this in a way consistent with what the American people want us to do, which is move forward in the most sensible way possible.

I have an example this morning of the kind of very modest reform we would like. As for myself, I think that we should extend unemployment benefits for certain Americans who are in the really tough circumstances in which they find themselves provided that the cost of doing so is properly offset with a legitimate offset so we don't simply add still more to our excessive deficit and debt; that we have some modest reforms; that we begin the process of fixing a program that doesn't work. If this is working, then why are there so many Americans who are unemployed for such long periods of time? Clearly, this program is not working.

Let me give one example of an amendment I think most Pennsylvanians think is common sense. It is an amendment Senator COBURN offered, and it would simply end Federal unemployment benefits for people who have an income of over $1 million a year.

My guess is that most Pennsylvanians are shocked to discover that we extend unemployment benefits to millionaires. And I am not talking about a net worth of $1 million, someone who maybe has a farm that is worth $1 million on paper but they might have no income. No. I am talking about people who actually have earned income of over $1 million and then they stop working and start collecting unemployment benefits. I think most people think that is ridiculous.

It is not as isolated as we may think. In 2011 there were over 3,200 households that reported income of over $1 million, and yet they were paid $30 million in unemployment benefits. In fact, there were over 100 households that had income of over $5 million. And taxpayers are paying them unemployment benefits? This doesn't make sense, and it doesn't make sense to Members of this body.

In April of 2011 the Senate had a vote on the substance of this very amendment—ending unemployment benefits for millionaires and multimillionaires—and the vote was 100 to 0 in favor of making this modest reform to this program. Now, if we did actually enact this reform, it would save about $300 million over 10 years, which could go to paying for benefits for the people who actually need extended unemployment insurance.

Of all of the Members of the Senate who are here today and were here at the time of this vote in 2011—that is the vast majority—everyone agreed. There is no dissent on this. There are bipartisan cosponsors of this amendment, Democratic and Republican alike, who recognize this is just common sense. So despite the fact this is not controversial, that it is germane and relevant, that it is a modest reform that makes sense and would save money and would free resources to pay unemployment benefits for the people who truly need it, despite all of those facts, we are blocked. We are not allowed to offer this amendment on the Senate floor.

We attempted it yesterday. The minority leader, the senior Senator from Kentucky, asked unanimous consent to offer this amendment. That consent was denied. So then he moved to table or to eliminate, if you will, the amendments the majority leader uses to block our opportunities to offer our own, his blocking amendments, and the majority party defeated that attempt to do away with those blocking amendments. As we sit here this morning, the majority leader continues to block our opportunity to offer any amendments, even a modest, commonsense amendment with bipartisan support that passed this body 100 to 0.

I am going to make one more attempt to offer this amendment because I cannot for the life of me understand why we cannot have a vote on this little bit of common sense.

I rise to offer the Coburn amendment, No. 2606, to S. 1845.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The amendment is not in order as the motion to proceed to S. 1846 is the pending question.

Mr. TOOMEY. I move to appeal the ruling of the Chair that the Coburn amendment is not in order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The appeal is debatable.

Mr. TOOMEY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I come to the floor this morning to talk about another very important bill. There was an hour exchange about unemployment, which is extremely important for the Nation. I think people got to hear arguments on both sides. They can continue to try to process that.

I came to the floor this morning to talk about another very important piece of legislation that we do have very deep and very genuine bipartisan support for; that is, the flood insurance provision, the Homeowner Affordability Act, which will correct some of the more egregious provisions of a bill that passed a year-and-a-half ago called Biggert-Waters.

The bill, Biggert-Waters, that was passed, named for the two Members of the House who led that effort, was well intentioned. In fact, I have had many wonderful conversations with MAXINE WATERS, the absolutely distinguished Congresswoman from California whose name is carried on that bill.

She had wonderful intentions because California, like Louisiana, depends on a program to work that is sustainable and affordable, but she even recognized and has been so gracious with her time to come to Louisiana to say we intended for this to fix the problem, but I admit we made it worse; the way FEMA has interpreted some of the things we have done has made it worse and the fact that the Federal Government continues, despite our efforts, to recognize levees people have built. So she has agreed to help lead our effort to reform a bill she and Congresswoman JUDY BIGGERT passed a year-and-a-half ago.

I wish to start by commending the leadership. In the House, the effort is being led by Congresswoman WATERS and Congressman GRIMM. There are chairs of standing committees, working with them as we speak, to figure out how to move forward in the House.

But in the Senate we have been working so well together. Despite all of the commotion and adversarial positions on other issues, we put together a very excellent coalition of about 200 organizations. I am going to read those names in just a minute—200 organizations that have been working with us to fashion a reform bill that meets these objectives.

The Presiding Officer has spoken on the floor of the Senate now at least a half dozen times that I have listened to her speak on the floor, so she knows all this that I am going to say because she said it even better than I can. But the provisions that are in our reform bill for flood insurance meet important goals. First of all, it is affordable to the middle-class people who are required to have it. That is the most important thing about flood insurance, that it be affordable to the people required to have it.

Yes, there are some very wealthy families who live in mansions on beaches that are required to have it. They will have no problem paying a substantial premium. But there are millions of middle-class families—many of them in Louisiana—who do not live anywhere near the water and they most certainly do not live in mansions on the beach. They live in middle-class, blue-collar, working neighborhoods far from lakes, a distance from rivers, and nowhere near the ocean. They have found themselves caught up in paying premiums they cannot afford.

If we do not fix this, the premiums coming into the program will be less and less. People will be defaulting on homes. Banks, communities will take a downward economic spiral and the program itself will collapse.

We cannot have this program collapse. So even though our critics—and this has been in the newspapers—are saying we are trying to saddle taxpayers with a huge debt, nothing could be further from the truth. We are trying to save taxpayers from a big bailout by reforming a program that needs to be reformed and fixed so middle-class people can afford it, banks can operate well with it, homebuilders can build homes with it, realtors can sell the homes with the program, which they are not able to do now. Everyone can get back to work, anxiety can be reduced and give us some time to figure out how to reach those two important goals: so the taxpayers do not have to bail us out and homeowners and businesses can afford it. Is that too much to ask? I don't think so.

Happily, Senator MENENDEZ and Senator ISAKSON, two veteran leaders of the Senate, have put a very good bill together. We are ready to vote. We are ready to vote. We could vote, actually, right now if we could just get a few matters worked out.

I would like to talk about what those few matters are publicly so people can start working them out because I think the more things that are transparent around here the better off we all are and things that are done in secret are usually problematic.

Let me say to the many people following this that the base bill is still basically in the order that everyone understands it to be. It is printed. It has been visible, public, for weeks now. That bill that is the basic essence of the compromises worked out by Senator MENENDEZ and Senator ISAKSON and, I might say, with Senator MERKLEY's extraordinary leadership as a subcommittee chair, that is the base bill. There are amendments that Senators want to offer. Happily they are all related to flood.

To my knowledge—and Senator ISAKSON has worked through this, as I have, and Senator MENENDEZ—there is a Hagan provision about escrow requirements that we think we should vote on. We are not sure how that vote will turn out, but we are happy to vote on it. There is a Blunt amendment the National Association of Home Builders has suggested we have an amendment on. We could vote on that as well. There is a Crapo amendment that is in the works. Some of these amendments have been filed and have language. Some of them are just in theory form. There is a Crapo amendment that would adjust the rate increases in the underlying bill. We could vote on that. There is a Reed amendment, Senator REED of Rhode Island. This would require FEMA to conduct a study on the viability of offering community-based flood insurance policies. My notes say there is broad support for that.

There is a Coburn amendment, which is an alternative to the NARAB. That amendment will probably not receive the votes required, but we are happy to talk about his amendment and have him offer it. There is a Merkley amendment that will subject NFIB policyholders to force-placed insurance policies if they let their policies lapse—it is a technical amendment—and also a Rubio-Nelson amendment that is being discussed.

Those are the only amendments we know about. If there is anybody else who has an amendment on flood who would like to offer it or have it considered, the next couple of hours would be the last opportunity to get those amendments in. I know everybody is busy. I cleared my calendar. I had meeting. I cleared my calendar to do this today because it is very important that we not just get so busy with other things that we leave this place and not get this done. We are working transparently, openly, so there are no games to be played by either side.

Again, I wish to repeat, there is a Hagan amendment pending—not pending but that we know of—a Rubio-Nelson, a Reed of Rhode Island, a Coburn, a Merkley, a Blunt, and then Toomey, who was just on the floor, the Senator from Pennsylvania, has indicated he wants to offer a substitute to what we are proposing.

I am not the manager of this bill so it is not my authority to make these definitive statements. Senator MENENDEZ and Senator ISAKSON will ultimately decide the strategy. But as far as I understand, because we have all been working very hard together to move this bill to final passage—as far as I understand, these are the only amendments people would like to offer and there does not seem to be any objection to offering them.

In addition, if people want 51 votes or if they want 60 votes, we are very open to that as well. We could pass the bill with 51 votes, we could pass the bill with 60 votes, so we are open. That is the game that is played here. You say we want 60, no, we want 51 or 51 and 60—we can take it in any arithmetic anyone wants to give us. You want 51 votes, we can deliver them. You want 60 votes, we can deliver 60 votes because we have done the homework on this bill, working with coalitions, working with homeowners and businesses from South Dakota and North Dakota to New Jersey and New York, Mississippi, Louisiana, California, and Oregon. There is no disagreement.

Well, there is some disagreement, but there is not enough disagreement to overcome the great coalition which was put together, which was evidenced by an extraordinary press conference a couple of days ago, where almost 20 Senators showed up, or they were represented by their staffs, saying we are ready to go. My message on the floor—I don't know how many more minutes I have.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has used 12 minutes.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I would like another 5; I ask unanimous consent.

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. What was evidenced earlier—and the coalition knows this—there is broad consensus. There are a few Senators who want to vote against this bill. There are a few Senators who want to offer amendments. Fine. Let the record show these amendments could be offered—these amendments, germane to this bill and any that would come to us in the next hour or so that are germane to this bill, we can take these amendments and have a 51-vote, a 60-vote requirement, and final passage on 51 or 60. Let's just get this done.

There should be no confusion at all. I am glad no one on the opposite side is here debating me on this. That is a good sign for us that there truly is only one side to this story and this is the side.

I am trying to be as fair as I can. I have named the people who have amendments, to our knowledge. We, the Democrats, have said we have no

objection to them offering those amendments. If they want 51 or 60 votes, just let us know. I feel confident that our coalition can hold against any amendments that would try to gut this bill.

We will let people know what those amendments are and who has offered them because we think this is absolutely right for the country, for the States we represent, and for the taxpayer. Give us a little time to work together to figure out how to strengthen the National Flood Insurance Program without bankrupting 5 million families. If we don't stop this train that has already left the station—we have to stop it, reverse it, and put it back in the train barn because it is going down the track pretty fast. This is not a good place to be.

As I said, we probably should have never passed this bill, but it was put in a conference committee report that was unamendable and some provisions of it were indecipherable at the time. That is a little strong of a word, but they were not well understood. It wasn't that it was indecipherable; it was not well understood. After the bill was read and implemented, people thought, oh, my gosh, what have we done? This is not going to work. And they were right.

I am going to stay on the floor this morning. If anyone on the Republican side wants to come down and disagree and challenge what I have presented, please do so because I want this to be a very open process. There is nothing for us to hide from, and that is what a democracy is about.

There are some people who want to vote against our bill. Fine. Go ahead and vote against it. We have the votes to pass it. As I said, we have 60 votes. We may even have more than 60 votes. If we don't have the votes, all I can say is we tried our level best and we don't have the votes to correct it. I don't think that is the case.

I am not going to allow the smoke and confusion and all the hot air around here to confuse the coalition that has worked too hard, and they need to hear my voice very clearly, which is why I am here. There is clarity. There is no opposition on the Democratic side to this bill. We are waiting for a few clarifications from the Republican side. We hope to get those clarifications. The only Democrats who have amendments that I know of are Senator HAGAN, Senator REED from Rhode Island, and Senator MERKLEY. We have no objection on the Democratic side for this bill and there are only three Members who have amendments, and we are happy to have a vote on those amendments. They are not controversial. Somebody might have a problem with them and might vote no. Fine, but they don't gut the bill. There is no problem with the bill.

We are waiting on the Republican side for clarity. Again, I know how busy everyone is. I know the Senator from Pennsylvania is working very hard. He was just here speaking about unemployment insurance, and I know that is a very important issue to the people he represents, and to Louisiana. If he could get a little time to work on the amendment that we think he wants to offer on flood whenever he can, we are happy to have his amendment, and we will vote on it.

Senators ISAKSON and MENENDEZ will decide when and how and what the number is—51 or 60. As far as I am concerned, it doesn't matter. If his intention is to gut the bill, the bill will not be gutted. If his intention is to strengthen the bill, then that is a definite possibility. People are desperate to get an answer from Congress now. We should have done this 4 months ago before these rate increases. Escrow accounts are being collected. Some people were paying $500 a year and now they are paying $5,000. According to the Biggert-Waters law, the banks have to get that $5,000 and put it in the bank now to pay that insurance. That is a real hardship on people. We need to stop that and figure this out.

Madam President, I ask for 1 additional minute. I think I have extended my time already.

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. We have delayed this fix too long, and we need to go ahead and take care of it. I am going to stay on the floor this morning. I will periodically bring everyone up to date.

I will close by reminding people what we are talking about. These are the new flood maps in the United States. The purple shows where it is in effect, green shows the proposed areas, and yellow shows the new flood map. There is not a State that is exempt from what I am speaking about. The amazing thing is to see this cluster in Pennsylvania, New York, and in Ohio. Everyone thinks about this as a Texas, Florida, or Louisiana issue. But when we see the inland States being affected by flood maps—States that have never been issued before are being issued without good data because FEMA doesn't have the science, technology, or resources to do this correctly yet. The affordability study has not even been done, and they didn't do it even though the last bill asked them to do it.

We need to put this train back in the station. It is not ready for prime time. We need to bring it out in a way that, yes, rates may have to rise. No one is opposed to that. But rates have to rise in a way that people can afford them and can be notified.

From our standpoint, Louisiana would like levees to be recognized. Since we spent billions of dollars of the taxpayers' money building them, we would like them to be recognized. If you are behind a levee, you don't have to pay $15,000 a year because you already paid for the levee. You don't pay twice. Taxpayers should not have to pay three times. They are happy to pay their fair share. Most everybody I know is happy to pay their fair share. But under Biggert-Waters, it is not fair, it is not shared. It has to be not completely pushed back but it has to be delayed, which is what our bill does.

I will stay on the floor, and if someone comes to the floor, that is fine. I will talk about this. It is important to get this done. I am an appropriator. I am chair of Homeland Security. This is a big, important bill for our country. This bill is almost as important—don't get me wrong, it is not as important as the whole Appropriations bill, but there are 5 million people who are getting ready to lose their home or business, and it is really important to them. It is important for us since there doesn't seem to be any real objection to work hard to get it done.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the time during the quorum call be equally divided between the Republicans and the Democrats.

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

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I just had a conversation with the distinguished Senator from Louisiana with regard to the flood control bill. I am the Republican sponsor of that bill and am very adamantly in support of that bill passing.

Senator MENENDEZ is the principal sponsor from the Democratic Party. Senator LANDRIEU, myself, and Senators all over this country who have coastlines and rivers and flood issues are all very concerned. I want, as much as anybody in the world, to expedite that bill going from where it is now to the floor, so we can expedite its processing.

I have been working with some who have objections to the bill or objections with part of the bill to get an agreement on amendments with the leadership on the Democratic side, so when we do that debate, we have a fair number of amendments that are equally divided in terms of the time and the vote threshold is at 51 votes.

I am close to getting there, but I am not there yet. So if a unanimous consent were propounded right now, there would be an objection, maybe even from me to let everyone know I am for this bill. I want this bill to pass. But I

want to make sure that those I have been working with to lift their holds are accommodated in terms of their opportunity to debate a germane amendment to the flood bill that is relevant to flood control.

So I come to the floor for only the purpose of education, to let everybody know that I am the Republican sponsor and am deeply involved and engaged in the passage of this bill. I also have respect in regard to those who have differences of opinion or have some technical corrections they want to make. I want to work to get those incorporated into an agreement before we get a UC, so when we have the UC, we know what the amendments are, we know what we are going through, and we can expedite the handling of this legislation and deal with the problem that is affecting many homeowners all over the United States of America in flood map areas.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, may I say, before the Senator from Georgia leaves, how appreciative this coalition is of his leadership. He has been literally—I am not making this up—extraordinary in his time and effort to work through the final amendment process because this process has been going on for over a year.

We just did not start talking about this last week. He has given over a year of his time, and as the chief cosponsor he has been phenomenal. I think he would agree with me—if he doesn't, then we could respectfully disagree—that it is time now for the Members that have been hearing about this and have been told about this for weeks, weeks and months, to get their amendments to Senator ISAKSON so that we can make some decisions about how many amendments we can have. We could have four. We could have six. We could have ten. We can have a 51-vote threshold. We are ready. The Democratic side has, for the most part, cleared the amendments we know about.

So the Senator is terrific. I thank him for coming. I do not intend to ask unanimous consent at this point. The leaders are still working together, Senator MCCONNELL and Senator REID.

I know the Senator from Georgia is trying to work through this. Would that be a generally good description of where we are?

Mr. ISAKSON. The Senator is correct. In fact, to be precise, there were seven concerns about the legislation when the first UC was propounded on our side, five of which involve potential amendments that need to be made to the bill or in their opinion need to be made. In the case of two of those, in working with the leadership on the Democratic side, they are acceptable and would be included in the base bill.

There are three that would be allowed to be debated with the time equally divided on the floor. They have asked for a 51-vote threshold. There is the potential, as we all know, for a point of order. But amendments and points of order would be the only issues that I am aware of in all of those conversations. I continue to work at this very moment to get a final agreement so we can get a UC.

But we are just not there quite yet. I am going to continue to try to work toward that goal.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I am aware that we are not quite there yet. But I am also aware that the clock is ticking, that it is Wednesday, that we may be out of here on Saturday, and we need to pass an appropriations bill. This is something that also deserves a tremendous amount of attention.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum and ask that the time in quorum calls be equally divided.

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

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, first, the state of play in the Senate is that we want to pass an unemployment insurance benefit bill for 1.4 million Americans who, on January 1, had their unemployment checks cut off. Unemployment checks are sent to those Americans who have lost their job through no fault of their own and who have to prove to us they are trying to find another one. So while they are looking for a job, they receive unemployment benefits.

These benefits come from a fund which employers and, in some way indirectly, employees, pay into while they are working. This insurance policy is there so that if you lose a job there will be, on average, $300 a week to keep you and your family together while you look for your next job. It turns out that on January 1, 1.4 million Americans saw those checks cut off. In my State of Illinois, that affected 83,000 people.

These are people who have been unemployed for a while and are still looking for work. They have to because that is what the law requires. But here is the problem: The average period when someone is out of work when they lose a job in America is 38 weeks. That is the average. We cut off benefits at 27 weeks. That means that for 11 weeks a lot of people out of work get no unemployment benefits. What do they do? They turn to their friends, to their savings, and then they are out of luck. They may find themselves unable to make rent payments or mortgage payments, put food on the table, gas in the car to go look for work or pay for that cell phone they absolutely positively need if they are going to find a job.

So we came here and said: That isn't right. We are getting better. The economy is getting stronger. But the unemployment rate is too high. The national average is about 6.7 percent. It is over 8 percent in my State of Illinois, and in some States even higher, unlike the State of North Dakota, incidentally, which the Presiding Officer lives in and so doesn't worry about this at the present time. We came in and said: Let's extend unemployment benefits to these 1.4 million unemployed people in America so they can get by while they are looking for work.

This isn't a new idea. This is an old idea. It has happened over and over. In fact, under President Bush we did it five times, and the unemployment rate was even better than the one we have today. So it used to be bipartisan. Democrats and Republicans would say: Come on, give these folks a helping hand. These are workers facing tough times. We hear from them. They tell us their stories.

I ended up getting an email from a lady. For 34 years she had worked for the same company. She must be a pretty good employee, right? But now the company has laid her off and she can't find work. Another person had 9 years with the same company and lost his job. When he applies for a job, they look at his resume and say: Wait. You are way overqualified for this job. If we gave you this job, you would leave the first chance you get to get a better job. So there he sits, unable to find a job. He is trying, but he can't.

So these people are asking us: Can you help us keep our families together while we go through this tough period? And I think we should. So we want to call this bill to the floor of the Senate and pass it and extend unemployment benefits for 3 months. I would like to see it for 1 year, but even for 3 months we should extend these unemployment benefits so folks in this circumstance can get a helping hand.

The Republicans come in and say: No. We object to that. You cannot extend unemployment benefits unless you pay for them.

Well, that is new. Five times under President Bush they voted for their President's extension of unemployment benefits and didn't pay for it. Now they insist we pay for it. I don't like that. I think this is an emergency expenditure. But we live in a divided Congress, Democrats and Republicans. We have to find some common ground. So we came up with a pay-for. We came up with a way to pay for the benefits for this unemployment.

Then they said: No. We are still going to filibuster. We are still going to stop it unless you allow us to offer amendments. We have some ideas we want to bring to the floor and get them to a vote. Yesterday, the majority leader came to the floor and said: OK. We will give you amendments, up to 10 amendments on each side, to this unemployment issue. You pick the amendments. We are not going to pick them. They said: No. We still object.

So today we sit in the middle of a Republican filibuster stopping unemployment benefits for 1.4 million Americans. What used to be a bipartisan effort has now turned into an extremely partisan effort. That happens too much in this town. It happens too much on Capitol Hill. But it shouldn't happen at the expense of 1.4 million unemployed Americans.

That is why this floor is empty today. That is why we are giving speeches on a lot of different subjects. We are stuck in another Republican filibuster stopping unemployment benefits. I don't think that is right or fair. A lot of us believe we ought to extend these benefits and move on to deal with our economy and putting people to work, trying to find ways to make sure those who are working get a decent wage.

These are some of the things we ought to be taking up. But again, we are stuck in this filibuster, and so that is why I come to the floor to give a speech on two unrelated issues.

TOBACCO

Madam President, there is an issue that is very important to me personally, but it turns out it is important to a lot of people: Tobacco. I lost my father to lung cancer. He died when I was 14 years old. He smoked two packs of Camels a day and developed lung cancer at the age of 53 and died. I have to tell you it is one of the most profound events of my life, to be a high school student and to live through a parent dying slowly of lung cancer. My attitude toward tobacco and smoking, I am sure, is a product of that.

When I came to Congress, I decided that in some small way I was going to try to do something about it. I didn't believe I could solve the problem, but I thought I could help. So over 25 years ago I introduced a bill in the House of Representatives to ban smoking on airplanes. It is hard to believe—young people still don't believe it today—there was a time when half the airplane was smoking and half wasn't smoking. In fact, everybody was breathing secondhand smoke. We were successful. We passed the bill in the House of Representatives on a bipartisan vote. It came over to the Senate, before I was here, and Frank Lautenberg, the late Senator from New Jersey, took it up and did a great job, and the two of us together made it the law of the land.

We didn't know what we had done, other than to make airplane flight a little more convenient, safe, and comfortable. But it turns out it was a tipping point. It turns out that when we banned smoking on airplanes, people started asking questions 25 years ago: If it is not a good idea to smoke on airplanes, why is it a good idea to smoke on trains and buses and offices and hospitals and schools and restaurants and taverns and everyplace we go? So today, if you walked into a room and did what people did normally 25 years ago—pulled out a pack of cigarettes and lit one up—people would say: Stop. What are you doing? You didn't say a word to me. You are going to smoke in front of me?

That used to be normal. Thank goodness it isn't any longer. What happens is Americans have a different attitude toward tobacco. The actual debate on this issue began 50 years ago—serious debate—because it was 50 years ago the Surgeon General of the United States of America issued a landmark report that for the first time conclusively linked tobacco to lung cancer and heart disease. Remember this: Tobacco is the No. 1 preventable cause of death in America today, and it has been for more than half a century.

When this report came out, it was at a time when people smoked in offices, airplanes, elevators, even in congressional hearings. In 1964, 42 percent of American adults smoked. It is hard to imagine, but until a few months before the report was released the Surgeon General himself was a smoker. We have certainly come a long way since that time, and the Surgeon General's report played a big role in changing America.

Today we expect measures such as warning labels on cigarettes, keeping cigarette commercials off television, taxes on cigarettes, and now ''no smoking'' signs almost everywhere. Thanks to these commonsense tobacco control measures, smoking among U.S. adults in 50 years has been cut in half. The report released by Surgeon General Luther Terry in 1964 was a turning point.

We still have a long way to go. Approximately 44 million Americans, nearly one out of every five, still smokes, and more than 440,000 Americans die each year from tobacco-related causes. Last week the Journal of the American Medical Association published a study that showed over the last 50 years about 8 million premature smoking-induced deaths were avoided thanks to tobacco control measures. However, the study also noted that despite this progress, more than 17 million Americans died prematurely from tobacco over the last 50 years.

According to the Surgeon General's report, released in March 2012, tobacco use among kids is a pediatric epidemic and is the No. 1 cause of preventable and premature death in America. The report also found that every day 700 young people become new regular smokers, and of these new smokers one-third will eventually die from it.

We have young people who come and visit us in our offices, in the Senate galleries, and other places. These young people are the targets of tobacco companies. If they can get a kid to start smoking at an early age, before they have the maturity to understand the seriousness of that decision, they become addicted. Nicotine is an addictive drug and it is in tobacco and so they are picking up new customers by recruiting kids.

I have yet to meet the first parent anywhere, any time, anyplace who has said to me: I have great news for you, Senator. My daughter came home from school and she started smoking. I have never heard that. I don't think I ever will because we know intuitively it is a terrible thing and it could affect that young person's great young life.

The tobacco industry gets it. Our Nation pays the financial burden of tobacco use through $96 billion in annual medical costs, $97 billion in lost productivity of workers and, at the same time, these tobacco companies invent new ways to lure in these young customers and to entice people to buy their products.

Ninety percent of adult smokers began smoking before they graduated from high school—they were just teenage kids—which is why the tobacco companies continue to prey on children. They push products such as e-cigarettes. They just had the Golden Globe Awards, and some of these red-hot actors and actresses, whom we all love to watch in movies—Leonardo DiCaprio and others—were sitting there puffing away on their e-cigarettes. I looked at that and thought: You are killing the next generation of fans of your movies.

We have to bring an end to this. E-cigarettes—available in shopping malls—that release appealing fruit- and candy-flavored vapors so it is more of a candy experience than a tobacco experience is one of the new tactics. Unfortunately, it is working. Earlier this year, the Centers for Disease Control released new data showing the use of e-cigarettes among the Nation's kids is rising.

The report raises concerns that for young people, e-cigarettes could be a gateway to traditional cigarettes. More than 3.6 million kids under the age of 18 currently are smokers, and each day more than 3,500 kids try smoking a cigar or cigarette for the first time.

This graph I have shows how far we have come in reducing the use of cigarettes but also how much we have left to do. Between 2000 and 2011, the consumption of cigarettes in the United States decreased 33 percent—by one-third. During the same time, the use of loose tobacco and cigars increased 123 percent. Cigar smokers—why in the heck would a kid want to smoke a cigar? Because it is similar to smoking a candy bar. They flavor these cigars with cherry flavoring, sweet chocolate or grapes, and they are trying to get kids to start smoking.

Over the past 50 years we have seen the growing popularity of these candy-flavored tobacco products such as smokeless tobacco, e-cigarettes, and nicotine candies that look like breath mints. All these products are geared to luring the young into this addiction.

I have called on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to expand and assert its authority over tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and flavored cigars. Unlike traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes are not subject to Federal age verification laws. Kids can legally buy them in most places across

America. Although we do know that most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, we don't know what else is in them. Without FDA regulation, we will not.

This Congress Senator BLUMENTHAL of Connecticut joined me in introducing the Tobacco Tax Parity Act, a bill that closes the loopholes in how tobacco products are defined and taxed. It will end the exploitation of these loopholes by tobacco companies. It means taxing the roll-your-own loose tobacco we talked about and pipe tobacco at the same level. It means raising the tax on a container of smokeless tobacco from today's 11 cents to $1, the same as a pack of cigarettes.

I would like to show this as well. This is a story about Sharon, a 52-year-old woman from my home State of Illinois. Sharon started smoking at the age of 13. She said it seemed as though everybody was doing it. After her first puff, she quickly went from being a casual user to a full-blown addict with an expensive tobacco habit. When Sharon reached the age of 37—37—she was diagnosed with stage IV throat cancer. Thankfully, radiation and surgery saved her life, but she had to have her voice box removed and now speaks through an electrolarynx.

Last year Sharon was courageous enough to allow her story to be used as part of the Centers for Disease Control's 12-week antismoking campaign, a federally funded national antitobacco campaign with hard-hitting ads. It sounds like a pretty good effort by the government. But compared to the $10 billion a year the tobacco industry spends on marketing, the CDC campaign spent only $50 million; the tobacco industry, $10 billion.

CDC expects the campaign to help 50,000 people quit. One of those who called in to the quit line at CDC was a woman named Kim in Rockford, IL. She was watching an ad which showed the devastating effect on smoking on a North Carolina woman named Terrie. Kim said the commercial scared her, and that her son turned to her and said: Mom, you have just got to quit smoking. Kim called the Illinois tobacco quit line run by the American Lung Association and was connected to the nicotine replacement-patch program.

CDC's anti-smoking campaign is one of the many tobacco control and prevention measures that saves lives and shows we must continue investing in effective tobacco control measures.

This is a tough habit to break. One of my best friends in politics happens to be the President of the United States, who used to be a smoker. He is not now, thank goodness. His family is thankful and we are all thankful. But he still takes a little nicotine gum to chew from time to time to deal with the craving that is there. It is tough. But if people work hard, they can get it done.

This week we commemorate the importance of the first Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health and many other legal and cultural changes in this country. But as we look around at the proliferation of new and dangerous products luring kids to tobacco, we still have a lot of work to do. With the right commitment, we can spare future generations from this deadly epidemic of tobacco use.

I yield the floor.

MAKING FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.J. Res. 106, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 106) making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2014, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 15 minutes of debate equally divided.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I wish to speak on another matter pending in front of the Senate, the flood insurance bill.

I wish to say that Senator LANDRIEU has been a real champion here. We are still insisting that we be able to bring up the bipartisan bill to delay for several years the flood insurance hikes. In my State, where 40 percent of the policies are, we have seen spikes by tenfold of the rate on the flood insurance policies.

Thank goodness there was in this omnibus appropriations a provision which would provide some partial relief for some homeowners facing huge rate hikes. The estimate is it would only cover less than a quarter of all the flood insurance policies being affected by the huge rate hikes. That is why we need to move forward with passing the broad bipartisan bill which will delay these hikes for several years while FEMA does an affordability study. I told Senator LANDRIEU earlier that I wanted to come in and support her in comments she made earlier today.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, what is the pending business before the Senate?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. H.J. Res. 106 is the business pending before the Senate.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Which is?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The short-term CR.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I rise in support. This is a simple short-term extension of the continuing funding resolution we passed some weeks ago. This is Washington-speak and budget-speak for saying, as of today, the money that keeps the Federal Government in operation expires. However, being debated in the House this afternoon we have a consolidated appropriations bill which will fund the government through fiscal year 2014 and will come to the Senate either late this evening or will be on the floor tomorrow morning.

I ask the Senate to pass the short-term extension because it is a technical situation. This isn't the usual delay, drama, and fiscal cliff situation. When the Budget Committee acted, and we passed the bill on a bipartisan, bicameral basis, we, the Appropriations Committee, were given a very stringent deadline of January 15 to produce an appropriations bill for fiscal year 2014. We have worked all the way through the holidays and all the way up to Sunday evening, and we have completed our work. It is now before the Senate and the House to be reviewed. It is on our Web site and so on. We just need a couple of hours to complete the job now.

I can assure my colleagues this very short extension is status quo. It makes no changes in funding levels. It makes no changes in conditions for the operation of the government. The Appropriations Committee worked over the holidays. The agreement was made public on Monday. The House will vote on the agreement this afternoon. As soon as the House completes its work, it will come to the Senate.

This is a short-term CR. It is for 72 hours. It will provide the time needed for the Senate to consider the agreement, for the paperwork to be prepared, and for the President to sign it. This is a very short-term extension which will enable us to complete our work and not even have a temporary shutdown. I urge my colleagues to allow the short extension to pass the Senate expeditiously so we can move on to the diligence we need to provide in debating the appropriations bill.

We will have a vote at 12:15. The vote at 12:15 is on the short-term extension of the current continuing funding resolution. It will be for 72 hours. It takes us through Saturday. I hope we are done before Saturday.

This is not a vote on the appropriations bill itself, nor should it be viewed as a proxy vote. It is just simply a technical time bridge to enable us to have adequate debate in the House and adequate debate and review in the Senate to do this.

I really hope my colleagues support this 72-hour extension so we do not have the usual drama we have of fiscal cliffs and shutdowns and so on. My colleague, the Senator from Alabama Mr. SHELBY, who is my vice chairman, is involved in other duties in the Senate, but he too supports this 72-hour extension. We have been working so diligently on our bill through the holidays so we could have a bill before the Senate, and I must say it has been characterized by diligence, determination, and courtesy. But it takes time. It takes time to review, and it takes time to scrutinize. Quite frankly, it took time to discuss the issues involved in the appropriations.