

But I certainly hope we can get there today and not let one small provision that is very focused on one special interest group hold up a bipartisan bill which everybody on the commerce committee voted for and which is going to do something very important: recognize the men and women in the Coast Guard who risk their lives—just like everybody else in the military—on a daily basis to protect Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

TRIBUTE TO ARNE DUNCAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this week in Washington, President Barack Obama's favorite pickup basketball pal from Chicago is leaving town. He is heading back home to Chicago. His name is Arne Duncan. He is Secretary of Education. He was one of the first choices of this President to serve in his Cabinet. He was an obvious choice.

Arne Duncan has given his life to teaching and education. It starts with his parents—his father, who was a professor at the University of Chicago, and his mother, who ran a mentoring and tutoring center in the Hyde Park area of Chicago. As a young boy in school, Arne used to come out of class and go to his mother's mentoring center to help other young kids learn to read and do their homework. It was built into him. His dedication to teaching, to schools, and to improving the lives of students across America has been well documented.

As Arne grew up, he grew tall. As he grew tall, he played basketball, and he was very good at it. He ended up going to Harvard University and playing on their varsity basketball team. He then went on to play in the professional ranks in Australia. It was there that he met his wife. They have two children together. She is waiting for him in Chicago, and he is anxious, I am sure, to return and live full time in that city with his family.

When he came back from his stint in basketball, he went back to mentoring kids in the Hyde Park section and other parts of Chicago. He was chosen to head up the Chicago public schools by former mayor Richard Daley. He was the right choice. Arne Duncan truly had the interest of those public school students at heart, and it showed. That is when I met him for the first time and came to know him. He was an extraordinary and dedicated person, trying to manage one of the most challenging school districts in America.

Two things come to mind immediately. They used to have weekends where people would volunteer to go work at schools. My wife and I volunteered several weekends, and we would always run into Arne and his wife and family, who were giving their Saturdays building playgrounds, painting the interiors of schools, doing the basic things but doing things that many peo-

ple in his lofty status of superintendent might not have considered.

I used to visit—still do—a lot of Chicago's public schools, drawing my own impressions. I remember visiting a school once and coming out of it and saying to my staff: That school is out of control. It was so loud in the corridors—not between classes but during classes—I couldn't imagine students were learning. It didn't appear there was any supervision.

I called Arne and I said: You know, I have never called you about a school, but please take a look at this school. Something is wrong there. It doesn't feel right.

He said: I will do it.

He called me back 2 weeks later, and he said: You were right. That principal was an experiment to see if he could do it. He can't. We replaced him.

That is how Arne reacted. It wasn't a matter of sending it to a committee and waiting for months and evaluating at the end of the school year; he made the decision—he is decisive—because he knew it was in the best interest of the students.

Arne Duncan inherited a Department of Education that was in controversy when President Obama took the office of Presidency. It was in controversy because there was a Federal law—No Child Left Behind—promulgated by a previous Republican President, George W. Bush, and supported on a bipartisan basis by Congress, that was extremely controversial. Teachers were unhappy with it. Many administrators were unhappy with it. Governors were unhappy with it. There was too much testing, too many strict rules, and too much pronouncement of failure when it wasn't really warranted. That is what he inherited.

Over the years, Arne has made a significant impact when it comes to education in America. U.S. graduation rates are at an alltime high, with the biggest improvements from minorities and the poor. Under Arne's leadership, dropout rates are at an alltime low. Test scores are slightly up, with some of the biggest gains in States that embrace the administration's approach to reform.

We had a stimulus package, which the President supported when he was first elected, to try to help our country out of a recession, and Arne Duncan spoke up to the President and said that we ought to include in there some provisions to help school districts, provisions for money if they will compete for it. They instituted a program known as Race to the Top. They invited States, if they wished, to apply for these Federal funds. Over 20 States applied. They weren't required to. The \$10 billion tied to reform was held out—it included \$4.35 billion, I should say, for Race to the Top; \$10 billion overall—it was held out to the States, and within a year 40 States not only competed but changed their laws to improve their prospects to win money from Race to the Top. Forty-five

States embraced college and career-ready standards like common core.

It is interesting to note that one of the States that was successful was Tennessee, which is, of course, the home State of Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER, the chairman of our committee in the Senate that is drafting education legislation. Tennessee impressed Arne Duncan and the Department of Education and became one of the recipients, and Tennessee made some honest declarations about the state of education in their State when they made this application. It was a State that took seriously making dramatic change, and a relationship was struck between Arne Duncan and LAMAR ALEXANDER and many other Members of Congress.

Time has passed. During the last several years, there has been a change of thinking in Congress, in the country, and in the Department of Education about the course to follow.

A week or two ago in the White House, President Obama signed the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which was promulgated on a bipartisan basis and had the active support of not only Republican Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER but his Democratic counterpart, Senator PATTY MURRAY of the State of Washington. This bipartisan legislation received I think over 80 votes on the floor of the Senate. Arne Duncan was there at the signing. He had worked with the leadership to arrive at this new stage in the evolution of the relationship of the Federal Government to the States and to the local school districts.

I could go through a long list of things Arne Duncan worked on, including his concern about student debt, but I want to close by pointing to one that has a personal interest to me, and that is for-profit colleges and universities. I have given so many speeches on the floor about this industry—the most heavily subsidized private business in America today, for-profit colleges and universities. I have recounted the miserable statistics about this sector of the economy. With 10 percent of high school graduate students, they receive 20 percent of the Federal aid to education. They account for more than 40 percent of all student loan defaults.

I appealed to Arne Duncan and the Department of Education to do their best to make sure the worst for-profit colleges and universities were held accountable. Arne Duncan showed real leadership. It wasn't easy. He ran into political resistance on Capitol Hill from both political parties. And while I was probably pushing harder than I should have, he stepped forward and started demanding accountability. The net result was that one of the largest for-profit colleges and universities, Corinthian Schools, went out of business. It turns out they had been defrauding the Federal Government for years when it came to the results of job-seeking by their students.

Arne Duncan showed extraordinary public service and political leadership

in tackling this controversial part of the educational establishment of America. It is no surprise for those of us who know Arne Duncan and what he is made of. Back in the day, when his mother was running a mentoring center in Hyde Park, the local criminal gangs told her to close it down or they were going to firebomb it. Well, Arne and his mom showed up at the center the next day. They weren't frightened and they didn't run away. He has never run away from his commitment to young people. He has never run away from his commitment to public service. I don't know what the next chapter of Arne Duncan's life will be, but this chapter—his service as Secretary of Education for the United States of America—was an extraordinary display of commitment to the students, teachers, parents, administrators, and taxpayers of America.

I wish to join in, with so many other people, by expressing my gratitude to Arne Duncan for his service to our Nation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

OMNIBUS AND TAX EXTENDERS LEGISLATION

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise to applaud my colleagues for being in the Christmas spirit. I have never seen so many gifts and presents given out in one bill.

Let's be clear, we aren't voting on just a \$1.1 trillion spending bill called the omnibus, we are not voting on just that bill. That bill, by itself, could have been acceptable because it helps veterans, middle-class families, our Defense Department, our border security, and a host of other valuable Federal programs, but we aren't voting on just the omnibus bill. We are forced to vote on both the omnibus and the tax extender package that adds an additional unpaid-for \$680 billion of gifts for special interest groups.

We are giving out \$680 billion in irresponsible tax breaks, Christmas gifts to every special interest and corporation that asked for one. We gave Christmas presents to millionaire race car drivers and motorcycle riders, film, television, and theater producers, and even racehorse owners. Don't get me wrong. I like going to the movies, I like riding my motorcycle, and even going horseback riding from time to time, but I don't think many middle-class Americans will be happy to know we gave away billions of dollars in tax gifts to millionaires and billionaires at their expense. They should be especially upset that we did it by mort-

gaging the futures of their children and grandchildren. I have always said we are writing checks that our kids can't cash.

I think a lot of Americans would want to know how we got here. How did we get to the point where we force ourselves to vote on a 2,000-page, trillion-dollar spending bill at the end of the year just so we can all rush home for the holidays? How did we add a \$700 billion tax extender package that gives the wealthiest among us the gifts they want? The truth is that we stopped following regular order. A lot of us only heard about regular order. We have never actually governed by it. I only know about regular order because before I joined the Senate and before he passed away, Senator Robert C. Byrd told me how this place used to work. We used to talk about how things would happen. He would be disappointed in all of us on both sides, Democrats and Republicans, that we have run the body he loved so much the way we have.

This is what regular order is supposed to look like. After receiving the President's budget—which we do, starting our new Congress—Congress is supposed to respond with our view of what the budget should look like. Then we work through 12 appropriations committees and their subcommittees to develop 12 separate appropriations bills. The entire body should then consider each individual bill and make sure they meet the demands of our constituents while staying within the means of our set budget. We need to do that 12 separate times so we can honestly tell the American public that we were responsible with their money and we can answer to that.

Instead, we are jammed at the last minute with a \$1.1 trillion spending bill that is over 2,000 pages long and considers the priorities of those 12 committees all at one time, without talking about them and debating them individually. Not only that, as if that is not enough, this year we have a special treat of adding on a \$700 billion tax gift Christmas tree package instead of actually doing the tax reform all of us talk about but never actually get around to. At some point, we are going to have to start setting our priorities based on our values, budgeting based on our priorities, and being responsible stewards of the taxpayers' money. It will happen sooner or later.

Instead of working throughout the year in a bipartisan way, we continue to govern by crisis, one after another. We kick the can down the road all year and then add in more than half a trillion dollars in gifts to our special interest friends.

Both parties are to blame. This is not just a bipartisan issue, both parties are at fault. The Christmas gift will add \$2 trillion to our debt over the next two decades. My grandfather Papa Joe always taught me to base our priorities on our values and then budget based on our priorities.

Well, we have sure shown the American people what our values are with this bill. We pay a lot of lip service on this floor, on cable news, and on campaign trails about our priorities, but when it comes down to it and time to govern based on the priorities, all we get is lip service.

We had choices to make in this bill. We could have helped middle-class families or could have given tax breaks to multinational companies—notably the major banks—parking their money abroad. We could choose to make college debt free or we could choose to help the film, television, and theater producers deduct the cost of their movies, shows, and plays. We could choose to double our border security or we could allow racehorses to be depreciable. We could choose to give every American family \$5,600 in tax relief or we could have chosen to give favorable tax treatment to racing complexes. We could have chosen to keep the promise that President Truman made to our patriotic coal miners in 1946 and protect their pension and health care guarantees or we could choose to give \$680 billion in tax breaks to special interest groups, millionaires, and billionaires.

We chose poorly. We truly chose poorly. Democrats and Republicans both say we need to help our hard-working American families, but we have completely ignored the most hard-working people out there I know, our coal miners, and we should be ashamed of ourselves.

I know some of my colleagues don't like coal. They think they don't need it and want to get rid of it, but this isn't about coal. It is about the brave men and women who gave and who have gone into those mines every day for over a century to power our economy, produce the weapons to fight our wars, and provide the energy we all depend on today. It made us the greatest country on Earth, a superpower. Basically, with this God-given resource that we had, these brave men and women worked and worked hard, very patriotically, to make sure this country had the energy it needed to defend itself and to build the industrial might that we have to be the superpower of the world.

They were guaranteed affordable health care and dignity in retirement in return for the blood, sweat, and tears they shed for our country. That was a guarantee, a written guarantee, in 1946. They were guaranteed affordable health care and retirement. I want you to know that by not being able to have that in this bill—as laden as it is with all of these giveaways, freebies, picking who is getting what, and all the millionaires and billionaires—we went back on our promise. We decided to help race car owners, film producers, horseracing professionals, foreign entities, and a host of other special interest groups, but we didn't help our own miners. We did not help our own people.

Today we said that despite finding a fiscally responsible way to meet these