The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Savior, we thank You for the fellowship of Your Spirit and Your consolations of love. May our lawmakers remember that You are their rock and refuge. Lord, speak peace to their hearts in these turbulent times, guiding them along the path of Your wisdom. Reward their efforts with a joyful harvest, as they strive to build up and not tear down. Raise them above discord and division, helping them to work together to keep America strong.

We are grateful for the favor You have given this Nation and for surrounding us with the shield of Your compassion, mercy, and love. Strong Deliverer, accept our grateful praise.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HELLER). The majority leader is recognized.

THE BUDGET AND TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Senate is taking the next critical step in passing the comprehensive, fiscally responsible budget before us. It is pretty obvious that this is a good budget, and that is true whether you are looking at it from a fiscal perspective or an economic one.

Take the fiscal side first. It reins in government spending. It protects Social Security fully with the previous spending caps, while also providing for an increase in defense resources if a bipartisan agreement can be reached. In short, it is a fiscally responsible budget that will help put the Federal Government on a path to balance.

On the economic side, this budget can help our country realize better and more sustained economic growth, which is critical, given the last decade of missed opportunities for the middle class. One way this budget can help our economy is by providing legislative tools to advance tax reform.

As I have said many times before, tax reform represents the most important thing we can do today to get our economy reaching for its true potential. Tax reform is all about getting America going again and growing again. It aims to take more money out of Washington’s pockets and put more money in middle-class pockets, and it represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to replace a failing tax bill that holds Americans back with one that works for them. Passing this budget is critical to getting tax reform done so we can strengthen our economy, after years of stagnation under the previous administration.

I know Members are eager to continue proposing amendments to this budget. We already adopted some good ideas yesterday. For instance, the Senate adopted an amendment offered by Senator HARKIN to replace the individual mandate with the individual responsibility provision, which is critical, given the last decade of missed opportunities for the middle class.

We also adopted an amendment from Senator COLLINS to provide relief to small businesses, which have been responsible for the creation of about two-thirds of the net jobs in recent years.

That is according to statistics from the Small Business Administration. Both of these amendments reinforce the goals of the tax reform framework developed by the President, his team, and the tax-writing committees in Congress.

Today we will consider more ideas from colleagues on both sides of the aisle. I want to thank, particularly, Chairman Enzi and the members of the Senate Budget Committee for their good work in getting us to this point. The budget they produced is important to our fiscal and our economic future. I look forward to passing it soon.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. STRANGE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET, FISCAL YEAR 2018

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H. Con. Res. 71, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 71) establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2018 and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2019 through 2027.

*This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.*
The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 11:45 a.m. will be equally divided between the managers or their designees.

The Senator from Oregon.

AMENDMENT NO. 1302 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1116

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 1302 as provided for under the previous order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oregon [Mr. Wyden] proposes an amendment numbered 1302 to amendment No. 1116.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To strike the reconciliation instructions relating to tax reform)

After section 2002, insert the following:

SEC. 2003. MODIFICATION TO RECONCILIATION INSTRUCTIONS.

Section 2001(a) and 2002(a) are null and void.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President and colleagues, later this morning, the Senate will be voting on the amendment I am offering to strike what are known as reconciliation instructions from the budget proposal.

The reason I will be focused this morning on that is that it is absolutely key that we pass this amendment in order to get bipartisan tax reform. The fact is that reconciliation is an on-ramp to the most partisan process around, and the history of successful tax reform is in working in a bipartisan way. For example, that is what the late President Reagan worked to do in 1986 with a whole host of Democrats, and they came up with a lot of very important, bold, progressive ideas. They chose to actually treat income from a wage in the same way as one would treat income from investments so as to send, in one fell swoop, a message that working-class people would get a fair shake, that the tax law was not about the 1 percent back then but that it was about working people. The middle class drives 70 percent of the American economy. They were not talking about massive tax handouts to big corporations and the wealthy; they were talking about the fact that, in our country, economic success is built around a thriving middle class—a middle class that can buy homes and cars and educate kids and pay for essentials.

What troubles me so much about these reconciliation instructions that would allow for a $1.5 trillion net tax cut is that it is just the opposite of the kind of approach that Ronald Reagan and the Democrats used in 1986. It is going to polarize us rather than bring us together. I think that is particularly important right now, given the meeting that was held at the White House yesterday that I attended along with a number of Democratic colleagues on the Finance Committee, because at that meeting Democrats made it very clear to the President and to the Treasury staff that we think that the Tax Code is broken, that it is a broken, dysfunctional mess. We described the letter we sent that lays out our principles that tax reform should focus not on the 1 percent but on the middle class and not savage Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security, which are our essential retirement programs.

What was striking about the discussion was that the President said: I agree with you on all of those things. He said: Tax cuts should not go for people like me. I want help for the middle class, and I don’t want to cut Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security. That is why I hope respectfully, Mr. President. I said: Unfortunately, there is a big gap between the administration’s rhetoric on this and the reality of what is really on paper. That is why it is so important that we strike these reconciliation instructions and make it clear from the get-go that we are going to get tax reform right, that we are not just going to kind of utter these sort of sound bites and rhetorical plights and speeches, as the discussions go out from various administration officials, and we actually focus on what it is going to take to do bipartisan tax reform.

The President agreed with the principle that Democrats talked about yesterday and that he agreed with you, so I want you to see it on paper, and I want to talk a little bit about what is actually on paper.

First, the Trump tax plan creates a massive new loophole, the Grand Canyon of all loopholes, by twisting and turning income from partnerships and pass-throughs. It used to be that the tax passthrough was for a store or a restaurant or a garage. You see them all over Oregon. You see them all over America. Those are the people for whom we ought to be working together to give a boost to. That is not what is on paper. What is on paper is very different, and it is very different than what the President said yesterday he wanted.

For example, on paper is a new loophole that would allow tax cheats to self-declare as passthroughs, rake in income, and pay a much lower rate. It is a tax change that is deeply slanted toward what I call the top of the top—not just the 1 percent but the top of the top. Eighty-eight percent of the benefits of this kind of passthrough rate cut would go to those at the very top, according to recent analyses, the top 1 percent and those even more affluent. Just the other day that it goes mostly to the people at the very top.

The Finance Committee Democratic staff put out a report last week that looked at some of the worst schemes that are used by the megawealthy to avoid paying estate tax. There is a cottage industry of crafty lawyers and accountants who have made careers out of getting the estate tax by engineering billion-dollar tax shelters for the 1 percent. So the estate tax is already full of loopholes, but this administration isn’t interested in closing them even after the Treasury Secretary, Mr. Mnuchin, admitted just the other day that it goes mostly to the people at the very top.

So there is a common thread in these proposals. There is a common thread in this debate that is driven by partisanship and reconciliation, which is why I want to strike those instructions. What is actually on paper—not what is said in the speeches and sound bites and the like—is that the Republican plan doesn’t close the most egregious loopholes. It enshrines them as permanent features in our tax law. That is contrary to what the President said he chose to do, and I want to see it on paper, and I want to talk a little bit about what is actually on paper.

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cuts to the wealthy. In the same interview, he delivered what sounded like a real ultimatum; that if the Congress doesn’t pass this plan so tilted to the megawealthy, oh, boy, it is going to be tough times on Wall Street. You have to agree—out-populism, but the ideas behind what the Treasury Secretary is talking about on tax reform pretty much leave your jaw on the floor. If that is where the administration has trained its focus, as far as tax reform is concerned, the middle class is in tough straits.

In my judgment, this is yet another reason the Senate should reject using reconciliation for taxes and support my amendment. The fact is, the Congress has never used reconciliation to write a comprehensive tax reform bill. There is a template for comprehensive tax reform that has been proven to work, and I have mentioned it already. It is the one initiated by President Reagan, a big group of Democrats, a culmination of years’ worth of work. You saw was real bipartisanship, which I define as not taking each other’s bad ideas but taking each other’s good ideas. The bill was considered under regular order; it was debated in the Finance Committee on the Senate floor for months, and it was open to unlimited amendments and passed the Senate by a vote of 97 to 3. That is the kind of bipartisan process we would like to see.

Democrats have made it clear, and we made it clear again yesterday, that we have heard the President’s comments about how he wants to help the middle class and not the wealthy, that he understands how strongly we feel about protecting Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, but the fact is—and this is the heart of the challenge—there is a big gap right now between what the President says his priorities are and what is actually written down on paper. That is the challenge, and we are not going to be able to address that challenge, in my view, by signing up for more partisanship, for taking the most partisan route on tax reform.

What we ought to be doing is saying that we all agree the Tax Code is broken; we all understand the key is helping the middle class, not more handouts for the top of the top, the 1 percent; that is sensitive to long-term costs because we don’t want to pass those off to our children. Doing that is best going to be accomplished by saying that as we move now to the actual consideration of tax reform, we reject partisan approaches like reconciliation, and we come together. I know we can do it.

The fact is, what the President says when he speaks about this subject is in line with the principles in the Democrats’ letter. What we have talked about doesn’t even go as far as what President Reagan did in 1986. What is in the Democrats’ letter tracks a bipartisan piece of legislation that several colleagues here have been part of, including one in the President’s Cabinet now. We can do bipartisan tax reform that is good for our country. We shouldn’t make it a lot harder to accomplish that goal by including partisan reconciliation instructions in the budget proposal. That is why I urge my colleagues to support my amendment to strip these reconciliation instructions when we vote on my amendment later in the morning.

I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized. Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to use leader time.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, on healthcare, my two good friends Senators ALEXANDER and MURRAY have constructed a good, fair, bipartisan agreement that gives us a way forward on healthcare. It will offer stability in the marketplace, and it will help lower premiums.

We have seen President Trump’s near-constant equivocation on the agreement. We shouldn’t let it impede the progress of this very important bipartisan compromise. He is for the bill one day, against it the next. That is not uncommon; the President sometimes is for and against something in the same sentence. We can only hope he comes around again once he grasps what is in the bill.

The Alexander-Murray deal is not a bailout to the insurance companies at all; it is the opposite. We have taken pains to ensure that insurance companies do not reap any benefits from this program. That is what ALEXANDER and MURRAY have done. They have explicit provisions in the bill to ensure that the cost-sharing program does what it is intended to do: Lower premiums, deductibles, and out-of-pocket costs for Americans who can least afford it. I was reading in the Wall Street Journal this morning where they interviewed a retired manufacturing worker in Pennsylvania who was upset by the President’s decision. The man said:

It seems like he’s trying to hurt the middle class. . . . He [President Trump] says he’s going to make it better for everyone. How does a (premium) increase make it better?

That is the question the President should ask himself. Ending cost-sharing hurts people, not insurance companies. Restoring cost-sharing will help people, not insurance companies. Senators ALEXANDER and MURRAY have made sure of it. I have talked to them about their language. It is good language, well intended. Maybe we can make it better. If the President has a suggestion, we welcome it, but as it is, it is pretty strong.

Well-intentioned Members on both sides who want to reduce tax deficits and protect those in the middle class should continue to sign their names onto this bill. I believe it has significant support within our caucus, and if Leader MCCONNELL puts it on the floor of the Senate, I am pretty certain it would pass.

I ask my Republican colleagues to take a good, hard look at the bill and to cosponsor it. So many of my Republican friends have said: Why can’t we be more bipartisan? This is a bipartisan agreement. It wasn’t one party coming up with something and telling the other to be for it, as too often happens in this Chamber. It was done together by the chair of the HELP Committee and the ranking Democrat of the HELP Committee. It is truly bipartisan, and it is a good way for us to go forward and set a metaphor for future bipartisanship.

Mr. President, now on the budget, today the Senate will vote on more amendments to the GOP budget resolution, which increases deficits by $1.5 trillion, slashes Medicare and Medicaid by $1.5 trillion, and sets up this awful, partisan process—the same one our Republican friends used in healthcare.

The Democrats could have offered an unlimited number of amendments on the floor, but this bill that we didn’t want to be all over the lot. We wanted to focus on a few issues where we know the American people are overwhelmingly with us, not with the language in the bill.

Here is some of what we are doing.

We are going to make our colleagues say that they want to vote to increase the deficit by $1.5 trillion. After 8 years of crowing about debts and deficits under a Democratic President, the Republican deficit hawks seem to have flown the coop. This budget is going to increase the deficit by $1.5 trillion. Our amendment would say: No, it should be deficit neutral. We have heard that for the last 8 years. Whenever a spending program comes about, I know our side says that spending programs grow the economy; their side says that tax cuts grow the economy. But if there is going to be an actual deficit, we should vote for it. Put your convictions where your votes are.

We are also going to make our Republican colleagues vote on whether they want to raise taxes on the middle class. The President claims that his tax plan will cut taxes, but it actually will raise them on millions of hard-working families. Today, our Republican colleagues will decide whether they want to support those tax increases or protect the middle class from paying more taxes.

We are going to make our Republican colleagues vote on their specific proposal to eliminate the State and local deduction. Nearly one-third of all taxpayers take the deduction—red States,
cuts for the rich. If our healthcare system needs to be improved, tax cuts for the rich. It is entirely divorced from the real problems in the economy and our society.

Our economy suffers from massive inequality, what economists call a "concentration of wealth at the very apex of our country's elite. The rich are doing well in America. God bless them; I am glad they are. American corporations are recording record-high profits. Look at the stock market, which reflects them too. We hope they do well. But looking at the GOP tax plan, the American people have to wonder, is now the time to tilt the scales even further in favor of big corporations and the very rich? I believe the American people will reject that approach soundly and roundly, and after the amendment votes today, the American people will have a much clearer picture of what the Republican budget and tax plan is about.

There isn't a single vote that I turn back from this budget and the one-party legislating that has stymied this Congress. I urge my colleagues on the Republican side to reject this budget. Come work with Democrats, and we can produce a real, successful, bipartisan tax reform.

I yield the floor. The PRESIDING OFFICER. If no one yields time, the time will be charged equally to both sides.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I know the Presiding Officer and all of our colleagues and those watching today know that we have been focused on the budget resolution. It is a very important document for the country, for the Senate, and for the Congress. There are a lot of big issues that we are all focused on, but there is one I wish to talk about this morning that relates to the budget document. Actually, to be perfectly frank, it relates to a number of the speeches made by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. They have been coming down to the floor and talking about issues related to energy, which is really important for America, the environment, which is also very important to America, and a little bit to my surprise, from all of these experts coming to the floor—Alaska, which is my State.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I am going to say a little bit more about what my colleagues have been talking about—my State. There seems to be a few experts on Alaska from States like Massachusetts and Oregon. I just want to put things in perspective from a Senator who is actually from the State and not these other Senators who, to be honest, don't know much about what they are talking about.

The one thing you are seeing is that it is for sure that you know there is kind of an issue in the debate on the other side of the aisle. The one thing you are seeing is that it is for sure that you know there is kind of an issue in the debate on the other side of the aisle. The one thing you are seeing is that it is for sure that you know there is kind of an issue in the debate on the other side of the aisle. The one thing you are seeing is that it is for sure that you know there is kind of an issue in the debate on the other side of the aisle.

First, there is energy security. For our Nation, it is lower cost energy. With the increase in natural gas, we are seeing the drop in the prices of natural gas, for consumers and increasing manufacturing. These are enormously important for our Nation.

There is economic growth and jobs. In the energy sector there are good jobs. The President of Senate has a lot of these jobs in his State. I have a lot of these jobs in my State. These are really important jobs. When you look at
the weak economic growth in the United States over the last 10 years, the one sector that is actually driving growth has been the energy sector.

How about the trade deficit? It is a big problem. Everybody has talked about it. President Trump is very focused on it. We are now starting to export oil and export natural gas. My State has been exporting natural gas for over four decades. That helps our trade deficit.

Then, when you look at the Federal budget deficit, energy is a huge positive impact on the Federal budget deficit. That is what the budget resolution asks Congress to do in terms of policy. Let’s produce energy so we can produce more revenue for the Federal Government. That is a good idea. Nobody should be opposed to that.

Mr. President, as you know, when we are the world’s energy superpower, as we are, we really have national security. It really helps our foreign policy. A lot of Americans have been concerned for decades that we have troops in the Middle East, that we have troops in areas where energy is really important. I produce it.

I was in a meeting last year at the Munich Security Conference with the great Senator from Arizona and many of my colleagues. It was bipartisan. Senator McCain took us to the Munich Security Conference in Germany. We met with a very prominent Russian dissident who has been fighting and battling with Vladimir Putin. At the very end of the meeting, we asked him: What more can we do in the United States to help somebody like you, who is battling against a dictator who doesn’t have our interest at heart? Do you know what this very smart Russian official, a courageous dissident said?”

As I mentioned, this is a really important point. We have the highest standards on developing our resources and our energy than anywhere in the world, and we have some of the most technically advanced and sustainable ways to develop resources in the energy sector. That allows us to do what I just mentioned, which is to protect the environment and to develop our resources.

Here is an important point that a lot of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle miss. They come down here, and this is what they talk about—by the way, they were in alliance with the last administration: How do we shut down energy development? How do we make it harder? How do we delay it?

As I mentioned, I was attorney general and the DNR commissioner in Alaska for almost 6 years of the Obama administration. It was all about how to shut it down in Alaska, how to delay it in Alaska, and how to shut it down in America. This is not what the country wants. This is not what the country needs. This is one issue that is often overlooked. This doesn’t help the global environment, as they claim. It doesn’t. Why is that? Because when you chase away investment in places like Alaska, with the highest environmental standards in the world, what does that do? That drives capital and that drives investment to places like Russia, Iran, and Brazil, whose standards are so much lower than ours.

Russians on the tundra in the Arctic don’t care anything about their environment. In my State and in the rest of America, we do.

I don’t need to remind people that Russia and Iran right now are certainly our adversaries. Yet the policies that some of my colleagues like to promote, and certainly the last administration promoted, are to drive away investment in our energy production in America, with the highest standards in the world, so the Russians and the Iranians can take the capital and produce energy. They do not have high standards on the environment, and they are our adversaries. It makes no sense—no sense.

So how do we do this in Alaska? What are the environmental standards that almost no other place in the world—maybe Norway, maybe, to some degree, Canada—uses? What is the technology that enables us to produce American energy, with American jobs, with the American people, with the highest standards in the world? Let me provide a few examples. First, what I want everybody here to be aware of is, do you believe the scenarios. Don’t believe the misinformed commentary. When my Democratic colleagues come to the floor, with very little knowledge about what is really happening in this sector, don’t believe it. They come to the floor and talk about a State like mine—Alaska—about which they know next to nothing, don’t believe it.

Let me give one infamous example. In the 1970s, we were debating in the Senate, and I think one of my colleagues was maybe here then, probably using the same talking points—the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, one of the greatest energy infrastructure projects in the history of the world: 800 miles, 16 billion barrels of oil; at one point, 2 million barrels a day, from Americans, in America.

The people who were against it came to the floor and said: Oh, no. The Central Arctic caribou herd is going to be decimated if you do this. These beautiful animals that we care so much about in Alaska. Those were the arguments right on this floor. So what happened to the Central Arctic caribou? Again, we care about these animals way more than anybody else does in this body. In 1975, we had about 5,000 caribou; today, 60,000. I don’t think the herd was decimated. We haven’t heard that from anybody because they don’t know, but that is the kind of doomsday scenario we heard from people. We don’t have the knowledge, and then, when it doesn’t happen, we don’t hear them on the Senate floor saying: Oh, we were wrong about that.

Let me talk just briefly about some of what we do to make sure we do this in the most responsible way in the world. First, in the energy business, one thing we do is we explore. Again, in Alaska we have the highest standards in the world. A lot of other places in the United States have these standards, but the Arctic—that is called impact exploration. What does that mean? It means we literally do everything to make sure there is no
impact on these great species like the polar bear. Again, we care a lot more about our animals than my colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

What does no impact exploration mean? Well, we undertake exploration required by State standards—these are not Federal standards—where we essentially have what are called ice roads and ice pads. Let me show my colleagues what that means. We only allow for exploration in the winter on the tundra. When an exploration crew comes out, they have to build an ice road—it is a road made of ice—over the tundra. This photograph is an example of an ice road. Then they do exploration on an ice pad. They have drills, and they do all this work on the ice, on the tundra. They have about 4 months to do it and then they are done and then they leave.

What does the tundra look like after that exploration on ice? Right here. This is just one capped exploration well. Nobody was here when we were—literally zero impact. These are Alaska standards, the highest in the world. They are expensive, yes, but we do it because we care so much about the environment. That is the exploration phase.

How about the production phase? What has happened in the production phase? The innovations in technology, many of which have occurred in my State, have made it so the surface footprint—when we actually put together a production pad—has shrunk dramatically. When we look at this chart, we see Prudhoe Bay in the 1970s. The other developments in Alaska include Kuparuk, Alpine, and Liberty. What happens is, the surface footprint has shrunk dramatically to 11, 12 acres now. Yet the ability to horizontally drill extends the reach of these wells underneath the ground, where we can reach resources in an incredibly vast manner without impacting the environment at all.

If a rig was placed right here on the Capitol Building, in terms of horizontal drilling, it could extend out to Andrews Air Force Base in Southeast, Silver Spring, MD, to the north, and well into Fairfax County—miles and miles and miles. Yet the surface footprint—the impact on the environment—is minimal.

That is what we do. We don't hear about it in the other side of the aisle, but it is as tough and robust, as I mentioned, going to be an instruction for increased revenues for the country for more American energy production. It is a simple instruction.

As I mentioned, this should be very noncontroversial. What could be wrong with more energy production, particularly in a State like mine, where the standards are the highest in the world, and the technology is the most advanced in the world. What could be controversial about more energy production? More energy production means more American jobs, more American economic growth, more American national security. More American energy security, increased Federal budgets and trade deficits, and a more sustainable global environment because no one in the world produces energy more responsibly than Americans, especially Alaskans.

Never has one of my Democratic colleagues be put forth an amendment that does just the opposite. Think about that, an amendment that says let's kill energy production, thereby undermining American job growth, good jobs, American economic growth, American national security and energy security, while increasing our budget and trade deficits and harming the global environment. That is a lose-lose-scare scenario to me, but that is what is at stake.

Later this afternoon, when we debate that amendment—and I certainly ask all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to reject any attempts to not take advantage of this incredible opportunity to have an American energy renaissance that we need to continue—and this afternoon we are going to have an opportunity to do that.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the President's action last week stepping away from certifying Iran's compliance with the nuclear deal that was negotiated between the U.S. allies and the nation of Iran.

National security is about military power, but there is more to it than that. America also comes from the power to use diplomacy.

In October 1945, President Harry Truman, my favorite President, changed the seal of the Office of the President to have the eagle face the olive branches of diplomacy instead of the arrows of war, signifying that America would also prefer that we use diplomacy first. In modern times, our judgments to go to war rather than use diplomacy have been flawed. Under this administration, diplomacy, in my view, is under assault, and that is why I rise today.

We see a decimated State in the USAID budget. We see bellicose rhetoric from the President. We see efforts to undermine, publicly, American diplomats engaged in negotiations. We see the refusal to even nominate key State Department diplomatic appointees.

As of last week, the administration has not put forward a nominee for approximately seven key high-level positions at the State Department that require approval by the Senate. Thirty-two countries do not yet have Ambassadors in place, and that includes no nomination from the White House for Ambassadors to key countries like South Korea, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. No one has been nominated for Assistant Secretary for Arms Control, for Assistant Secretary for International Nonproliferation, for Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs, or for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

How serious can the administration be about nuclear threats with no Ambassador to South Korea or no ambassadorial nomination for the key State Department official, on nonproliferation? And the President has repeatedly undercut his Secretary of State's diplomatic efforts with North Korea.

President Trump's most recent action—his recent attack on diplomacy—is the decision to decertify the Iran deal, and I think this could be the most dangerous yet. By stepping back from a diplomatic deal that the United States made with the global community that is clearly working, the President is publicly undercutting negotiations, and he is setting us on a road where military options become increasingly more likely. I will state it bluntly. If you weaken diplomacy, you raise the risk of unnecessary war, and that is what this President is doing.

First, President Trump's refusal to make the Iran certification and his threat to abandon the nuclear deal with Iran recalls the disastrous U.S. entrance into the Iraq war in 2003, where intelligence was politicized, and the administration repeatedly made false claims to justify going to war—a war of choice—to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

The Bush administration insisted that regime change in Iraq was necessary, and it insisted on that because of the claim of Iraq's continuing productions of weapons of mass destruction.

In March of 2003, the IAEA came out and said there was no credible evidence that Iraq had a program of weapons of mass destruction and that there was no evidence they had revived the nuclear program they shelved in the 1990s, but the Bush administration would not accept that claim. It did not fit with the narrative they were selling to the American people about Saddam Hussein so they said the IAEA was wrong. We said we needed to see war—one that has proven so costly to Virginians and to Americans in treasure and in regional stability but especially in American lives—to prevent Iraq from obtaining weapons of mass destruction.

We went to war. It turned out the scientists and the technicians and the IAEA were right. Iraq didn't have a program of weapons of mass destruction. The politicians who tried to undermine the credibility of the international agencies were wrong. Of course, the consequences of that decision are significant. Ironically, you
could claim—I believe there is strong evidence—that decision in 2003 has today led to greater Iranian influence in Iraq and the region and a proliferation of extremist groups that didn’t exist before.

We are now hearing the Trump administration make similar claims about Iran; that Iran will soon enough have a nuclear weapons program, that the IAEA cannot be trusted, that Iran supports al-Qaida, and from a Republican colleague: “The policy of the United States should be regime change in Iran,” and from Secretary of State Tillerson, we need a “peaceful transition” of the Iranian Government.

We should stop to think. Is this really about the nuclear deal or is it about beginning a drumbeat from the administration to march the United States toward another preventable war in the Middle East?

Second, while threatening to unilaterally terminate the nuclear deal at any time, President Trump also wants to revisit the terms of the deal to address what he sees as its flaws.

This isn’t new. Since the day the deal was announced, some critics have argued that we could get a better deal or push harder, we were on the right track, but we didn’t get there.

nor am I now, interested in the world of hypotheticals. I am interested in the world of facts. The fact is, the deal is working, and it is dramatically better than the alternative for at least 15 years. And that is a fact.

Additionally, if we want to renegotiate the deal, Iran will seek to do the same. If we take a step back from the deal, Iran will take a step back, and what will they ask for—that they get to now increase centrifuges or get some of their enriched uranium back? I don’t want to give Iran one thing back from this deal, but if we step back from a deal that is working and say we want to renegotiate, they will, too, and I don’t believe it would be to our benefit.

Most wars start because of miscalculations. The notion that we can renegotiate the deal just on our side and the other side wouldn’t think of renegotiating is magical thinking. The U.S. entrance in World War I 100 years ago started with miscalculations—most nations do. A miscommunication, a misunderstanding, another step, another step, and you are at war. We should be very, very wary.

I always felt very willing to go after Iran on the nonnuclear front. It was just 2 months ago that we passed—I think unanimously; maybe there was just 2 months ago that we passed—the Iran deal, but I thought what they have signed. Do we want to give Iran the ability to step back from that promise they have made by stepping back ourselves when the deal is working? Finally, the deal gives us a coalition. Our partners around the world who have signed on to the deal, who have been witness to the Iranian pledge, who know that Iran will have to permanently comply with the additional protocol of inspections under the deal—if we move away from the deal and Iran moves away from the deal, could we count on the coalition partners being with us to try to put a deal back together when it is we alone among the partners who have walked away from the table? What coalition could we expect if we are the ones who walk away from the deal, if we say we are not interested in diplomacy? Then, later, if we want to take military action against Iran after we walked away from a deal, could we expect a coalition to support us in that?

I would like to conclude in this way: I think the President’s decision to step back from this diplomatic deal poses a real challenge for this Congress. The President has done some things I agree with. He has done a number of things I disagree with. He has done only one thing that scares me, and it is this. I think that, together with the administration—I think that, together with the Secretary of State and pouring cold water on diplomacy and not filling key posts, this leads us closer to an unnecessary war. When you reject diplomacy or weaken it, you run the risk of an unnecessary war.

I have had to cast two war votes in the Senate, both as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I have been a city councilman, a mayor, a Governor, and casting a war vote is different from any vote you ever have to cast—any vote you ever have to cast. I have a son in the military, and that makes that vote different from any vote I have cast in 23 years in public life. As a Member of Congress, I may have to cast other votes to go to war against other nations, whether against nonstate terrorist groups or against a nation like North Korea or even Iran if I think that is in the national interest. If I think that is in the national interest, if I have to cast that vote, if I have to contemplate putting Congress on record that we should go to war, I want to be able to look American troops in the face and say: I exhausted every diplomatic option before I cast my vote. I think that that is an obligation we owe to the public and to our troops. We have to exhaust diplomacy.

There may come a time when that eagle just cannot face the branches of diplomacy, but we have to insist on military strength to keep order in the world and protect America. But if we turn to those arrows of
war, we should be able to look at our public and look at our troops and say we exhausted diplomacy.

Stepping away from a diplomatic deal that is working is exactly the wrong thing for us to do at this time. It is my concern that Congress will not dignify what the President is doing in this regard and that we will insist, yes, upon strict compliance and also insist upon sanctions against Iran for non-nuclear behavior. But let’s not be a nation that refuses to keep its diplomatic commitments. The stakes are just too high.

Mr. President I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I wish to take a few minutes to support the effort to pass the fiscal year 2018 budget resolution. I am on the Budget Committee, and I am pretty familiar with the doves provide a pathway to balance. It actually has a $197 billion surplus in 2027, and it allows for tax cuts.

To Republicans—and Democrats too; you are welcome to join—the only way we are ever going to meaningfully get a tax cut is a budget reconciliation instruction. This budget allows us to cut taxes. I hope some Democrats will join us, but if they choose not to, we can do it with a simple majority. If we don’t pass this budget, we can’t cut taxes unless we also vote to cut friends on the other side—I think it is going to be hard to get any Democrats for a meaningful tax cut. They are not bad people; they just see things differently. When they spend money, they think that is good. They don’t worry about the deficit. When we cut taxes, the deficit is the most important thing. My belief is that not only will we not have a deficit, we will actually have a surplus because this budget does two things: It restrains spending by $5.1 trillion over the next decade, and it actually creates a system for tax cuts to spur economic growth.

If we could grow the GDP number by just 1 percent, that would be trillions of dollars of revenue. To those who are interested in this, we have been growing at about 1.9 percent GDP per year over the last 8 years—right around 2, sometimes under, sometimes a bit over. The historical average since World War II has been 2.2. If we could get back to 3.2 percent GDP growth, there would be trillions of dollars coming in to the Treasury, and I believe we can.

President Trump is trying to deregulate America after 8 years of heavy regulations, unless he can only do so much through Executive order.

Senator SULLIVAN, the Presiding Officer, talked about the opportunities in Alaska. I have learned a lot about Alaska. There are 750,000 people living in a State twice the size of Texas. It is beautiful as it can be Environmentally, you are very sensitive. That is one of the qualities of Alaska you want to preserve. God has blessed Alaska with a lot of natural resources, and it would be good for the people of Alaska and the United States as a whole.

Every liter of gas and barrel of oil we can extract from Alaska in an environmentally safe and future-friendly way from people who hate our guts. We are going to be using oil and gas for a long time to come. I want to move to a lower carbon economy. I think that would be good for the environment and good for our economy. Alaska has been blessed but taxed out of existence. And I think Senator SULLIVAN explained how sensitive they are in the extraction process. But it would be insane to take Alaska oil and gas off the table for America because in that area, Russia is all over the place, and, trust me, they don’t care about the environment.

One thing this budget doesn’t do is it doesn’t change the Budget Control Act caps. There is one member of our caucus who claims that this budget is an inflection point or finishing point. It is not. It actually leads to a surplus.

There is nothing in this budget that allows for more defense spending. The overseas contingency operations account is money set aside for our military and State Department to deal with things: It restrains spending by $5.1 trillion over the next decade. It actually has a $197 billion surplus 10 years from now.

But I want to let the body know—and the Presiding Officer will be right in that fight—that I, along with Senator McCAIN, President Trump, General Mattis, Senator SULLIVAN, Senator BLUNT, and many others, am going to do everything I can to give the military more resources to fight wars we can’t afford to lose.

I look forward to this debate with some of my colleagues on the other side and a few on this side.

Really, is it smart to have the smallest Navy since 1950? Is it really smart to have an Army 1940s-size given what is going on in the world, having fighter squadrons grounded not because the enemy shot us down but because the Congress shot us down? I mean, if we want to give the military more resources to fight wars we can’t afford to lose.

To those of you on the Republican side who have been claiming that we need tax cuts and a simpler tax code, this is your chance. If we don’t succeed now, we are going to fail for the entire term of President Trump. That will be the end of us as a party, because if you are a Republican and you don’t want to simplify the Tax Code and cut taxes, what good are you to anybody? Our friends on the other side have really invested in “the government.” Somebody needs to be involved in American politics who would actually like to send more money to you and less money to the government in a responsible way.

So I hope we are going to cut the corporate tax rate to make us competitive. We are going to double the standard exemptions so working people will have more money in their pockets. We are going to get rid of deductions and exemptions for the few at the expense of the many. But we can only do that if we pass a budget resolution.

A final thought. From the Republican Party point of view, we have the House, the Senate, and the Presidency. We have nobody to blame in this exercise but ourselves. If you are a Republican and you are frustrated with the lack of progress, count me in. The President is a willing partner to help us repeal and replace ObamaCare and to get a healthy tax cut to grow an economy that is dying to grow. But we have to help ourselves.

If we can’t muster the votes necessary to pass this budget resolution to cut your taxes, then everybody who supported us for all these years should feel let down, and we will have let you down. I hope that doesn’t happen. I am confident it won’t. But to those Republicans who believe the rate cut is good for the future of conservatism and the future of the economic well-being of the country, I could not disagree with you more. You will never balance the budget by dealing with discretionary spending alone. We are at 2008 levels of discretionary spending. What balances the budget is entitlement reform. If you want to balance the budget, vote for Graham-Cassidy because it finally puts Medicaid on a sustainable path.

We have to deal with our entitlement problem, but that is not in this budget reconciliation instruction. This instruction allows us to cut taxes with a
majority-only vote and gets to balance or a surplus in 2027.

From a Republican point of view, this is the most important vote we are going to cast in 2017. If we fail, that is the end of this party’s ability to grow. All of the hard-working families who have worked hard to get us here are going to be disappointed, and they should be.

We are not going to disappoint you. We are going to pass this budget resolution. We are going to cut your taxes, and we are eventually going to rebuild and replace ObamaCare, which is failing, with a block grant that gets the money and power closer to where you live, in the hands of the people you can vote for. We are going to succeed.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, let me first agree with the point that the Senator from South Carolina just made about the importance of passing a tax bill this year. He made the point—and if he didn’t, I will make it—that if we don’t pass a tax bill this year or at least get most of the way there—I hope we get done with this tax process this year. If we don’t get that done, I think we would have another opportunity to pass a tax bill in the next 4 years.

On the other hand, if we do pass a tax bill this year, we will have the incentive to take a second look in 2019, maybe 2020, but probably in 2021. The point I make when is, we don’t have to do everything that could possibly be done to improve the Tax Code this year to take an important step. But if we don’t take that important step, my belief is we are likely not going to have the kind of tax relief that working families need in the next 4 years. So not only is the pressure on the Republican Senate, the Republican House, and a White House that wants to work with us to get this done, but the pressure on everyone who wants to see hard-working families and the pressure should be on everyone who wants to see tax relief for those families happen. We need to understand that it needs to happen now.

Fights that can’t be won in the next few weeks can be won in this Presidential term but only if we take this step successfully right now. As the Senator from South Carolina and others have pointed out, this is an important step.

The first step is a budget that allows us to move forward so that we can do this under the budget rules and allow 51 Senators to pass a bill on tax reform. By the way, they don’t have to be 51 Republicans. I suspect that is what will happen, but once we get to 51 Republicans, I would love to see Democrats join us. I would love to see them join us before that.

This is the kind of help that hard-working families need—families who, for 9 years, were stuck in a system where their buying power wasn’t increasing, their job opportunities weren’t increasing. They generally were not seeing that better job out there that was largely available to those very same hard-working families in the past because we aren’t competitive as we need to be.

There ought to be a couple of things we should know. First, you create tax relief for working families right now so that, as soon as possible, they begin to see a check that has more take-home pay? The other way to increase take-home pay is to increase starting wages to make those jobs better. That is where we need to be looking on the other end of the spectrum.

On the end that creates jobs, what do we need to do to make ourselves more competitive? What do we need to do to constantly have the kind of pressure on the working job market that allows people who are working hard for a living to have better opportunities than they would have otherwise because we are more competitive than we would be otherwise.

I think the entire focus of this discussion should be, what do we do that improves the opportunities and improves the future for hard-working families? You can do that with a tax cut right now, which we should do. You can do that so that people make choices that make more sense as we try to compete with the people we compete with around the world.

You can’t have the highest corporate tax in the entire world and assume you are going to be the most competitive country in the entire world. You can’t have a tax system that is uniquely different as it relates to products you sell overseas and expect to be more competitive than the countries who don’t have that unique system, which penalizes rather than encourages American products to be sold in other places.

The Senate will vote later today on a budget resolution that reduces Federal spending by $5 trillion over 10 years, putting a strong foundation for economic growth, and allows us to move forward in the first, necessary legislative step in the Senate so that we can then move immediately to tax policy. This is a budget that will allow us to reduce taxes by $1.5 trillion over 10 years, a budget that would put more money in the pockets of hard-working families, a budget that would add some opportunity to that struggle where, for almost a decade now, things haven’t been as strong or easier. They seemed to be getting more difficult because we were less competitive and there was less pressure to find the workforce to do the jobs that need to be done. And then this is a tax code that will make it simpler and fairer and more uniformly impactful on everyone who pays taxes.

Most people don’t mind paying taxes on the income they have until they find out that their neighbor next door with the same income has figured out how not to pay taxes. There is a reason American families and American businesses can’t get through April without a bottle of aspirin. There is a reason this Tax Code creates headache after headache.

There is one estimate that individuals and businesses complying with the complicated tax system we have costs $267 billion a year. That is half of the defense budget. If people are spending half of their defense budget just to comply with the Tax Code, there has to be something wrong with that, and we can do better. I think the proposals we are talking about will do a better job.

Right now, the Individual Tax Code has seven different brackets—seven rates—and you have to figure out how they apply to whatever income you have had. It has 100 different credits, deductions, exclusions, and other provisions that make it extremely difficult to know what you owe or when you are going to owe what you owe.

According to the American Action Forum, the IRS currently imposes 8.1 billion hours of paperwork on Americans, which amounts to about 54 hours per taxpayer who is paying taxes. It is more for some, less for some, but a week of work for Americans who work for taxpayers who pay their taxes. Every taxpayer gives that week to the Federal Government.

We are streamlining the Tax Code, increasing the basic deduction that families can have. If they don’t want to go through the complicated Tax Code—here is how many of us there are who live at our house. Here is the basic deduction we get for each of those people living at our house. Here is how much we subtract from the money we make. Here is how much we need to pay.

There is no reason that one of the compliance options can’t be a postcard or a piece of paper. In fact, when the current income tax was imposed on the American people, the entire set of instructions were on one page, the entire set of instructions for everyone who had to fill out the income tax form— with the assurance that only the richest people would ever pay any income tax, so most Americans would never have had to read that instruction sheet at all.

Now most Americans find it almost impossible to read the 100 pages of instructions that just get them to the Tax Code itself. Streamlining the Tax Code, helping families keep more of their money, figuring out a way we can be more competitive so there is opportunity for better jobs in the future, all should be important priorities for this Congress.

Passing a budget today will allow us to take this first step, which then allows us to take the next step in tax relief that matters and makes sense to the American people. We will take that step today. We should take that step today.

We should then follow up as quickly as possible to win the fights that can start next year understanding that their Tax Code is simpler, the Tax Code is fairer, and their opportunities are
Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, very quickly, the principles that the Senate Democrats have laid out in our letter are very much in line with what the President says he wants. Now what we have to do is to have a bipartisan process to work that out. You do not get that with reconciliation. I hope the Senate supports my amendment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to each vote in the 11:45 a.m. vote series this morning.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania?

Mr. TOOMEY. The President at the White House, along with several members from both sides of the Senate Finance Committee. I said to the President flatout that Democrats agree that the Tax Code is a broken, dysfunctional mess. Finance Democrats yesterday laid out to the President our principles for reform, focusing on the middle class—not 1 percent—and being fiscally responsible so that Congress doesn’t turn around and look at gutting safety-net programs such as Medicare and Medicaid or Social Security.

I think it would be fair to say that a whole lot of ears in that room perked up when the President said: Hey, I am for those kinds of things. The President said about wanting help for the middle class. He said that this is not supposed to be about people like him, and he said that he doesn’t want to shred the safety net.

Unfortunately, as I have indicated, there was as wide as Crater Lake among all of the administration’s statements, the rhetoric about taxes, and the reality of what is actually written down on paper about its tax cut plan. The Republican plan—this administration’s plan, which actually is written down on paper, doesn’t resemble what the late President Reagan accomplished in partnership with Democrats in 1986. Back then, the two sides brought their best ideas forward and passed major tax reform bills, and the idea that America is strongest when the middle class is prospering. What is on paper today is just an immoral gift to the top of the top—the most fortunate special interests.

I hope the Senate, in a few minutes, will vote for my amendment to strike the reconciliation instructions from the budget because budget reconciliation is exactly the kind of partisan process, at least for taxes—especially for taxes, given the importance of taxes in this particular budget—budget reconciliation is exactly the kind of approach that President Reagan rejected in 1986.

I hope my colleagues will support my amendment, striking the reconciliation instructions from the budget. Let us have full-fledged, bipartisan and working-class families and will promote the kind of economic growth that we have been waiting for, but to do it, we are going to have to defeat this amendment and pass the underlying budget.

What my friend from Oregon is suggesting is that we give a minority in the Senate the opportunity to defeat tax reform by filibuster. That is what would happen if we were to pass this amendment.

I have disagree strongly with the notion that somehow this is not a bipartisan exercise. There is nothing about reconciliation that in any way discourages or prevents full Democratic participation. We are going to have a markup in the Senate Finance Committee, and there will be unlimited amendment opportunities. If we are able to report something out, then there will be unlimited amendment opportunities on the floor. There is nothing that we would do to stop it if we wanted to because those are the rules of reconciliation. Every Democrat in this body will have an unlimited opportunity to weigh in on this, to influence this, and to amend this, and it will be a fully bipartisan exercise.

I urge a “no” vote on the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendments.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

I urge my colleagues to support my amendment. The American people understand what it takes to tackle big issues. They understand that tax reform should be about the middle class. It should not be about the 1 percent, and it should not be about causing a huge, new sea of red ink.

I urge my colleagues to support my amendment to strike the reconciliation instructions from the budget.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks time in opposition?

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, we have an opportunity today to give ourselves the tool to pass a tax reform bill that will absolutely mean tax relief for middle-income and working-class families and will promote the kind of economic growth that we have been waiting for, but to do it, we are going to have to defeat this amendment and pass the underlying budget.

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I urge a “no” vote on the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.
The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I call up amendment No. 1393.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The Senator from West Virginia [Mrs. Car- rro] proposes an amendment numbered 1393 to amendment No. 1116.

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To help provide tax relief to middle-class Americans by reducing deductibility, for Federal tax purposes, of federal deductions, such as the state and local tax deduction which disproportionately favors high-income individuals.

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 3. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO TAX RELIEF FOR HARD-WORKING MIDDLE-CLASS AMERICANS.

The Chairman of the Committee on the Budget may revise the allocation of a committee or committees, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution, and make adjustments to the pay-as-you-go ledger, for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, amendments between the Houses, motions, or conference reports relating to changes in Federal tax laws, which may include reducing federal deductions, such as the state and local tax deduction which disproportionately favors high-income individuals, to ensure relief for middle-income taxpayers, by the amounts provided in such legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over either the period of the total of fiscal years 2018 through 2027.

Mrs. CAPITO. Thank you, Madam President.

I would like to speak, for my 1 minute, about this amendment, which prioritizes tax relief for the middle class over the State and local tax deduction, which disproportionately benefits the wealthy and high earners.

Only 1 percent of the State and local deduction goes to taxpayers who earn less than $50,000 annually. Tax reform means higher wages, lower taxes for middle-class workers. To unlock these benefits, we must reduce expensive deductions that do little to benefit everyday Americans. Keeping the State and local tax deduction without modification would cost more than $1 trillion over 10 years. That money would be better spent on relief for the middle class.

Middle-class workers will benefit so much that the bracketed amendment and its companion bill that raises taxes on middle-income individuals, to ensure relief for middle-income taxpayers, by the amounts provided in such legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over either the period of the total of fiscal years 2018 through 2027.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I rise to make the point that raises taxes on middle- income individuals, to ensure relief for middle-class families.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. ENZI. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There appears to be a sufficient second.

The roll will call the vote.

The bill clerk will report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The vote was announced—yeas 52, nays 47, as follows:

YEAS—52

NAYS—47

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I ask my colleagues to support this amendment. It gives people claiming the State and local deduction make less than $100,000. These hard-working, middle-class folks are not going to appreciate Congress double-taxing them.

The fact is, the Capito amendment is Washington lingo that would produce a Republican tax plan that hits the middle class, yet again, with more taxes. Under Capito, you could have one hand given and the other hand taketh away. You might have the Republicans say let’s double the standard deduction, but then when those middle-class folks lose their deduction for State and local taxes and their personal exemptions, they get the big hole.

Reject this amendment, reject sléght-of-hand tax policy and those approaches like this that hurt hard-working, middle-class families.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To create a point of order against legislation that would raise taxes on middle-class families by double-taxing income already taxed at the state or local level)

At the end of title IV, add the following:

SEC. 4. POINT OF ORDER AGAINST ANY TAX BILL THAT RAISES TAXES ON MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILIES BY ELIMINATING OR LIMITING THE STATE AND LOCAL TAX DEDUCTION.

(a) POINT OF ORDER.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, amendment between the Houses, or conference report that repeals or limits the State and Local Tax Deduction.

(b) WAIVER AND APPEAL.—Subsection (a) may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under subsection (a).

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, this amendment simply raises a point of order on any legislation that modifies or eliminates State and local tax deductions. I know there are many States that have the ability to itemize and deduct our sales tax from our Federal income tax. That has resulted in a savings to the taxpayers. Under the President’s proposal of increasing the standard deduction, even for households between $50,000 and $70,000, if you repeal their ability to continue to itemize, even with the standard deduction, you are raising taxes on them. It will not be covered. The standard deduction is only $12,000. For that bracket in my State, they are deducting up to $23,000.

Please do not raise taxes on our constituents without a due process and a budgetary point of order that says that we are all going to be a part of this process and discussion before you take away a way for our citizens to save money.

I ask my colleagues to support this amendment.
Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The point of order is sustained and the amendment falls.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes, and that following my remarks, the Senator from Washington, Ms. MURRAY, be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes.

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

HEALTHCARE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, a week ago Saturday night, I was having dinner with my wife. It was about 8:30 in the evening, and the telephone rang, my cell phone, sitting in my pocket. I pulled it out, and it was the White House operator. The President was calling. So I walked out of the restaurant, sat on a curb outside in the dark, and had about a 15-minute conversation with the President of the United States while my dinner got cold.

President Trump said: I am calling about the cost-sharing reduction payments. I have cut them off as of October 1. The court says they are illegal. I don’t want insurance companies to be bailed out. I think I can get block grants to replace ObamaCare, but I don’t want people to suffer in the meantime.

So I said to me: I think I might want to get a bipartisan interim deal, a short-term deal. I have called CHUCK SCHUMER and told him that.

The President put that out in a tweet that day.

So the President said to me: Why don’t you negotiate with Senator MURRAY and try to get one; meaning a short-term, bipartisan deal.

I said: Well, what about the CSR payments?

He said: I can put them back, and you can use that as a negotiating tool to get a better deal with the Democrats.

I responded that I was already working on an agreement with Senator MURRAY.

He said: Finish it, and let me know. I called him again last Saturday. We talked about it again, and we talked twice yesterday.

I reported to the President that we have finished our negotiations and that we are here today to present to the Senate the agreement we recommend.

The bill has 22 sponsors, half Democratic and half Republican—very few bills come to the floor with that many cosponsors originally—and there are a number of others on the Republican side and I understand from Senator MURRAY a number on the Democratic side who support the idea.

I ask unanimous consent that a list of the cosponsors I am about to read be printed in the Record following my remarks.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the agreement that Senator MURRAY and I would like to present to the Senate for its consideration and the President’s consideration and the consideration of the House of Representatives be printed in the Record following my remarks.

The Republican Senate leadership and the co-sponsoring the Alexander-Murray proposal, in addition to me, are Senator ROUNDS, Senator GRAHAM, Senator MCCAiN, Senator CASSIDY, Senator COLINS, Senator ERNST, Senator MURKOWSKI, Senator BURR, and Senator CORKER.

I thank them all for doing that. Senator MURRAY will talk about the equal number of Democratic co-sponsors that we have.

We hope Senator MCCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER, the President of the United States, and the House of Representatives will consider our proposal.

This is a first step—improve it and pass it, sooner rather than later. Our purpose is to stabilize and then lower the cost of premiums in the individual insurance market for the years 2018 and 2019.

In plain English, most Americans get their insurance from the government or on the job. About 6 percent of uninsured Americans, or 18 million Americans, buy coverage on the insurance market. We are concerned about protecting the workplace, and about the 350,000 such people in Tennessee—songwriters, farmers, small businesswomen—they are among the group who are terrified by the prospect of skyrocketing premiums and even the possibility that they might not be able to buy insurance at all.

Our agreement tries to help in two ways. No. 1, it permanently amends the Affordable Care Act to give new flexibility for States to create insurance policies that have a larger variety and lower costs. No. 2, it continues the cost-sharing reduction payments during 2018 and 2019.

Now, first, about cost-sharing. Cost-sharing reduction payments are subsidies that pay for co-pays and deductibles for low-income Americans. That is what they are. Every Democrat wants them to continue, so do many Republicans, including every Republican in the majority in the House who voted for their repeal-and-replace bill this year because it continued the cost-sharing payments for two years.

Let me say that again. Every Republican in the House who voted to repeal and replace ObamaCare this year voted for a provision that continued the cost-sharing payments for 2 years. Our bill does the same thing. The only difference is, we eliminate any question about whether paying them is legal.

Now, why would so many Republicans and so many Democrats support these payments for 2 years and why would the President of the United States be interested in them? It is because the Congressional Budget Office has told us that if we don’t do it—if we let them expire—premiums in 2018 will go up an average of 20 percent. They
are already set, in most cases. The Federal debt will increase by $194 billion because of the extra cost of subsidies to pay the higher premiums, and up to 16 million Americans may live in counties where they are not able to buy any insurance in the individual market.

So under the cost-sharing payments, which the President says are illegal—and I agree with him. The Federal Court in Washington, DC, has told him they are illegal, not properly authorized by Congress. Unless they are replaced by something else temporarily, there will be chaos in this country, and millions of Americans will be hurt.

The President says there should be no bailout of insurance companies—no bailout of insurance companies. I agree 100 percent and so does Senator MURRAY. She can speak for herself. I have said to the President in our telephone calls—as I mentioned, 4 of them in the last 10 days—that if there is a way to improve the language in our bill, we would do that. We have added a half to make it clear that the benefits go to consumers, not insurance companies. That can always be improved.

Some conservatives object to the idea of paying them at all, but I would ask this: What is conservative about unaffordable premiums? What is conservative about $194 billion of new Federal debt? What is conservative about creating chaos so millions can’t buy insurance or at least fail to deal with the chaos that has been created? What is conservative about a four-lane highway that would be the chaos that leads to a single-payer solution for insurance in this country? Do we really think that if 50 counties in Tennessee or Iowa or Kansas or any State are in a situation where no one can buy insurance on the individual market, that government-sponsored insurance is not far behind? Of course it is. That is why Senator CASSIDY knows that if we repeal and replace ObamaCare in 1 year or 2 years or 3 years, it takes 2 or 3 years for it to take effect. We still need the cost-sharing payments for the interim, and you can’t pass those in the Senate with 5 votes. Not during a government shutdown. The Republican House majority has voted for it. The sponsor of the Senate repeal-and-replace bills are cosponsors of this agreement. It sounds like something that might actually become law before the end of the year.

Second, flexibility. The biggest difference between the Senate Republicans and the Senate Democrats with regard to health insurance and the individual market is whether Washington should write most of the rules or States should write more of the rules. Our position has been that States should write more of the rules. We have had about 50 votes—maybe more—and we have lost them all. We have made thousands of speeches, and we have lost them all. In the last 7 years, we haven’t moved an inch toward our objectives of giving States more flexibility in creating insurance policies in the individual market. This agreement does.

It provides and authorizes States to offer an insurance policy called catastrophic insurance for people of all ages that would keep a medical catastrophe from turning into a financial catastrophe. It encourages interstate agreements among States in health insurance. It streamlines the innovation waiver—section 1332, we call it—for States that want to do what Alaska did, which is to create a fund to pay for the very sick and then reduce premiums for everybody else by 20 percent and use no new Federal dollars. Most important, it changes the law to make it easier for States like Iowa, Oklahoma, New Hampshire, Minnesota, and Kansas, plus Alaska, and many others to use their creativity to write policies that offer more choices and lower costs.

Some have said: Well, that is not enough. Well, that is more than we have gotten for 8 years, and it is the first step.

I welcome anyone who wants to negotiate further with Senator MURRAY or Senator SCHUMER. That is what the legislative process is about.

Now, before I put it to do it when I listed the sponsors, I would like to add Senator ISAKSON and Senator GRASSLEY to the sponsor list, which would be two additional Republican sponsors, I would say to Senator MURRAY. That gives us a total of 12. I thank Senator GRASSLEY for his support.

The only thing I would say to those who want to negotiate further to get more flexibility is to keep in mind that with the cost-sharing payments, you can’t stay in the insurance negotiations without 60 votes in the Senate.

I thank Senator MURRAY for being an able and effective negotiating partner. We have worked on many pieces of legislation together. She is tough and respected in her caucus. She does what she says she will do, and she is interested in getting a result. I respect that and I thank her.

I thank President Trump for his encouragement. He called me 10 days ago, he called me on Friday, and he called me again yesterday. I thank him for his encouragement—to encourage someone to come up with a bipartisan agreement to cover these 2 years so people wouldn’t be harmed—and his willingness to consider what we are offering today.

I thank Senator MCCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER because they have created an environment in which Senator MURRAY and I could make this proposal. I hope they and our other colleagues will seriously consider it. The President was right to suggest that we need a short-term agreement so people will not be hurt. Now, some people are still objecting to the idea of continuing these temporary cost-sharing payments for 2 years and the other provisions that would have as the objective to keep premiums from going up in 2018 and for premiums to begin to go down in 2019.

They are listening to groups around Washington, DC. I would suggest they listen to some other people. Listen to the waitress, listen to the songwriter, listen to the bricklayer, listen to the small businesswoman, and the people of Kentucky—and there are 350,000 in Tennessee—who may be terrified by the prospect of increasing premiums or even by the prospect of not being able to buy insurance at all. These are people who don’t get insurance from the government. They don’t get it on the job. They might never know when they are going to lose their job and they will be in this individual market.

We have a solution here. Senator MURRAY and I—24 total Senators—are offering it today. We are certain it can be improved. We are working with those who would improve it, but I do not believe Congress would want to fail to deal with a problem that will hurt millions of Americans if we allow it to continue.

I predict this agreement that we 24 Senators are suggesting today will become law in some fashion before the end of the year. I think most Senators and most House Members will be looking around for a solution when they consider the consequences of a failure to act. When they look for a solution, I believe this solution supported by 24 Senators—half Democrats, half Republicans—will be the easiest solution to adopt. I believe all the Democrats want it. Almost all of the House Republicans have already voted for it this year, and the Senate Republican leaders who would prefer to repeal and replace ObamaCare would put it in their bill if they could get it in there, but they can’t because the budget rules will not allow it.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

LIST OF REPUBLICAN CONSPONSORS

ALEXANDER, ROUNDS, GRAHAM, MCCAIN, CASSIDY, COLLINS, ERNST, MURKOWSKI, GRASSLEY, ISAKSON, BURB, and CORREER.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Title: To stabilize individual market premiums for the 2018 and 2019 plan years and provide meaningful State flexibility.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE. This Act may be cited as the “Bipartisan Health Care Stabilization Act of 2017”.

SEC. 2. WAIVERS FOR STATE INNOVATION.

(a) STREAMLINING THE STATE APPLICATION PROCESS—Section 1332 of the Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18052) is amended—
(1) in subsection (a)(1)(C), by striking “the law” and inserting “a law or has in effect a certification”; and
(2) in subsection (b)(2)—
(A) by striking paragraph heading, by inserting “OR CERTIFY” after “LAW”;
(B) in subparagraph (A)—
(1) by striking “A law” and inserting the following—
“(i) LAWS.—A law”;
and
(ii) by adding at the end the following:
“(ii) A certification described in this paragraph is a document, signed by the Governor of the State, that certifies that such Governor has the authority under Federal and State law to take action under this section, including implementation of the State plan under subsection (a)(1)(B);”;
and
(C) in subparagraph (B)—
(i) in the subparagraph heading, by striking “OF OPT OUT”;
and
(ii) by striking “may repeal a law” and all that follows through the end and inserting the following: “may terminate the authority provided under the waiver with respect to the State by—
“(i) repealing a law described in subparagraph (A)(1); or
“(ii) terminating a certification described in subparagraph (A)(ii), through a certification signed by the Governor of the State.”.
(b) Giving States More Funding Flexibility, to Establish Reinsurance, High Risk Pools, Insurance Stability Funds and Other Programs.—Section 1332(a)(5) of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18052(d)) is amended—
(1) by adding at the end the following:
“(2) by adding the end the following:
“(3) by adding after the second sentence the following:
“(A) in general—
“(i) URGENT SITUATIONS.—
“(II) FULL APPROVAL.—Subject to the requirements for approval otherwise applicable under this section, the Secretary shall make a determination on whether to approve a waiver described in paragraph (1)(D), the Secretary may take action under this section, including implemen-
tation of the State plan under subsection (a)(1)(B).”;
and
(ii) after clause (ii)—
“(D) by inserting ‘or for implementing the basic health program established under section 1311 before the period;”;
and
(2) in subsection (b)—
(i) in paragraph (1)—
(A) by striking paragraph heading, by inserting before the period, “, and with respect to participation in the basic health program and funds provided to such other States under section 1311;”;
and
(B) by inserting “, or basic health program funds the State would have received,” after “this title”;
and
(ii) by inserting “or for implementing the basic health program established under section 1311 before the period;”;
(3) in subsection (c)—
(i) in paragraph (1)—
(A) by striking subparagraph (B), by striking “at least as affordable” and inserting “of comparable affordability, including for low-income individuals, individuals with serious health needs, and other vulnerable populations,”;
and
(B) by adding after the second sentence the following: “A State may request that all or any portion of, such aggregate amount of such credits, reductions, or funds be paid to the State as described in the first sentence.”;
(c) Ensuring Patient Access to More Flexible Health Plans.—Section 1332 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18052) is amended—
(1) in subsection (b)—
(A) in paragraph (1)—
(1) in subparagraph (B), by striking “subject to the requirements for approval otherwise applicable under this section, for unlimited additional 6-year periods upon application by the State; and
(2) may not be suspended or terminated, in whole or in part, by the Secretary at any time before the date of expiration of the waiver period (including any renewal period under paragraph (2)), unless the Secretary determines that the State materially failed to comply with the terms and conditions of the waiver.”;
(d) Providing Expedited Approval of State Waivers.—Section 1332 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18052(d)) is amended—
(1) by striking “180 days” and inserting “180 days”;
and
(2) by adding at the end the following:
“(B) LIMITATION.—A determination made by the Secretary under paragraph (A)—
“(i) shall not be construed to affect any waiver approved during any period in effect for a period of 3 years, unless the State requests a shorter duration;”;
(3) by adding after the second sentence the following:
“(A) in subsection (a)(1)(C), by striking “sub-
section (b)(3));”.
(e) of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18052(e)) is amended—
(1) by adding at the end the following:
“(C) in subsection (a)(4)—
(1) by adding at the end the following:
“(A) in general—
“(i) URGENT SITUATIONS.—
“(D) by inserting ‘or for implementing the basic health program established under section 1311 before the period;”;
and
(2) in subsection (a)(5)—
(A) by striking paragraph heading, by inserting “OR CERTIFY” after “LAW”;
and
(B) in subparagraph (A)—
(1) by striking “A law” and inserting the following—
“(i) LAWS.—A law”;
and
(ii) by adding at the end the following:
“(ii) A certification described in this paragraph is a document, signed by the Governor of the State, that certifies that such Governor has the authority under Federal and State law to take action under this section, including implementation of the State plan under subsection (a)(1)(B);”;
and
(C) in subparagraph (B)—
(i) in the subparagraph heading, by striking “OF OPT OUT”;
and
(ii) by striking “may repeal a law” and all that follows through the end and inserting the following: “may terminate the authority provided under the waiver with respect to the State by—
“(i) repealing a law described in subparagraph (A)(1); or
“(ii) terminating a certification described in subparagraph (A)(ii), through a certification signed by the Governor of the State.”.
(f) Guiding and Regulating.—Section 1332 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18052) is amended—
(1) by adding at the end the following:
“(D) GUIDANCE AND REGULATIONS.—Section 1332 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18052) is amended—
(1) by adding at the end the following:
“(2) in subsection (a)(4)—
(A) in general—
“(i) URGENT SITUATIONS.—
“(D) by inserting ‘or for implementing the basic health program established under section 1311 before the period;”;
and
(2) in subsection (b)(3)—
(A) by striking paragraph heading, by inserting “OR CERTIFY” after “LAW”;
and
(B) in subparagraph (A)—
(1) by striking “A law” and inserting the following—
“(i) LAWS.—A law”;
and
(ii) by adding at the end the following:
“(ii) A certification described in this paragraph is a document, signed by the Governor of the State, that certifies that such Governor has the authority under Federal and State law to take action under this section, including implementation of the State plan under subsection (a)(1)(B);”;
and
(C) in subparagraph (B)—
(i) in the subparagraph heading, by striking “OF OPT OUT”;
and
(ii) by striking “may repeal a law” and all that follows through the end and inserting the following: “may terminate the authority provided under the waiver with respect to the State by—
“(i) repealing a law described in subparagraph (A)(1); or
“(ii) terminating a certification described in subparagraph (A)(ii), through a certification signed by the Governor of the State.”.
(g) Reimbursements for Reinsurance Costs.—The amendments made by this Act to section 1332 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18052)—
(1) with respect to applications for waivers under such section 1332 submitted after the
(a) IN GENERAL.—There is appropriated to the Secretary of Health and Human Services (referred to in this section as the ‘‘Secretary’’), out of any funds in the Treasury not otherwise obligated, such sums as may be necessary for payments for cost-sharing reductions (as defined under section 1302 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18052(a)(1)(B)(ii))) for the 2018 plan year, through a formal notice or correspondence.

(b) STATE OPTION TO REVERSE DIRECTIVE.—Nothing in this section shall prevent the State insurance regulator from reversing a directive described in subparagraph (A).

(c) STATE PLAN.—No later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, each State insurance regulator shall submit to the Secretary of Health and Human Services a certification that, with respect to plan year 2018, the State will ensure that each applicable issuer of a qualified health plan in the State (as defined under section 1302 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18052)) will meet applicable requirements under this section.

(3) by redesignating paragraph (3) as paragraph (4).

(4) the average wait time for callers contacting the call center; and

(5) the number of individuals who enroll in a qualified health plan; and

(b) OPEN ENROLLMENT AFTER ACTION REPORT.—For plan years beginning after 2016, the Secretary, in coordination with the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of Labor, shall issue biweekly public reports on the performance of the Federal Exchange and the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP) Marketplace for such reporting periods and shall include information on a State-by-State basis where available, of—

(1) the number of unique website visits;

(2) the number of individuals who create an account;

(3) the number of calls to the call center;

(4) the average time for callers contacting the call center; and

(5) the number of individuals who enroll in a qualified health plan; and

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—(1) Consumer Outcomes.—The Secretary shall annually adopt performance measures and standards for the SHOP Marketplace that would allow the Secretary to monitor and report to Congress the performance of the Federal Exchange and the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP) Marketplace for the applicable plan year.

(2) CONSUMER OUTREACH, EDUCATION, AND ASSISTANCE.—(a) OPEN ENROLLMENT REPORTS.—For plan years 2018 and 2019, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall submit in coordination with the Secretary of Labor a report to the Congress and the Committee, in accordance with subparagraph (C), on the performance of the Federal Exchange and the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP) Marketplace and shall include in such reports information on the number of consumers who—

(1) were assisted by a navigator;

(2) were assisted by an agent or broker;

(3) used a direct-to-consumer web platform; and

(4) used a television and radio advertising platform, including television and radio advertising platforms, including television and radio advertisements and digital media,
to raise consumer awareness of open enrollment;

(2) the division of spending on individual outreach platforms, including email and text messages, to raise consumer awareness of open enrollment; and

(3) whether the Secretary conducted targeted outreach to specific demographic groups and geographic areas.

d) OUTREACH AND ENROLLMENT ACTIVITIES.—

(1) OPEN ENROLLMENT.—Of the amounts collected through the user fees on participating health insurance issuers pursuant to section 156.50 of title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (or any successor regulations), the Secretary shall obligate $105,800,000 for outreach and enrollment activities for each of the open enrollment periods for plan years 2018 and 2019.

(2) OUTREACH AND ENROLLMENT ACTIVITIES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of this subsection, the term “outreach and enrollment activities” means—

(i) activities to educate consumers about coverage options or to encourage consumers to enroll in or maintain health insurance coverage, including association with the call center for the Federal Exchange; and

(ii) activities conducted by an in-person contact with a qualified insurer or a market intermediary to provide assistance to individuals covering enrollment in the Federal Exchange, and distribute or request or distribute materials or information concerning enrollment through such Exchange and the availability of tax credits and cost-sharing reductions.

(B) FEDERAL EXCHANGE.—Activities conducted under this subsection shall be in connection with the operation of the Federal Exchange, to provide special benefits to health insurance issuers participating in the Federal Exchange.

(3) CONTRACT AUTHORITY.—The Secretary may contract with a State to conduct outreach and enrollment activities for plan years 2018 and 2019. Any outreach and enrollment activities conducted by a State or other entity at the direction of the Secretary, in accordance with such a contract, shall be treated as Federal activities to provide special benefits to health insurance issuers participating in the Federal Exchange.

SEC. 6. OFFERING HEALTH PLANS IN MORE THAN ONE STATE.

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, shall issue regulations for the implementation of health care choice contracts established under section 1333 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18053) to allow for the offering of health plans in more than one State.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I yield the floor to Senator MURRAY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, first I thank Chairman ALEXANDER for his leadership in launching a bipartisan process, as well as his dedication to seeing it through and getting a result, as he said.

I have to say that, after 7 years of intense partisanship on these issues, which would lead everyone to believe that the Republicans and Democrats to come together and work to strengthen our healthcare, I am really pleased with this common ground we have been able to find, providing multiple years of certainty when it comes to payments to reduce out-of-pocket costs that affect the people Senator ALEXANDER just talked about—the waiters, the songwriters, and people who care and need this—restoring critical investments, making sure people know about enrollment and can get coverage, and offering States more flexibility to innovate, as the Affordable Care Act intended, while maintaining those essential health benefits, like maternity care, protecting people with preexisting conditions, and it does all this while making sure that costs do go down for our families and preventing insurers from double-dipping and getting the benefit of both cost reduction and higher premiums. If there are ways to do this that make sure that patients come first and insurers can’t pad their profits, I, as I know Senator ALEXANDER is, as well, am open to that.

Chairman ALEXANDER just took some time to lay out the policies we are putting forward in this legislation. So I will not go into those details. But I do want to take a few minutes to focus on what this legislation would mean for the people we are all here to serve because what is really at stake is that patients and families across the country are now looking ahead to next year, and they are realizing they are about to pay the price for the uncertainty and partisanship we have seen, especially from frustration on healthcare over the last 9 months.

To many of those families, that out-of-pocket cost-reduction payment we are debating in Congress has nothing to do with politics and has everything to do with whether they will be able to make ends meet at the end of the month. Now the law is very clear that these payments are required, but with the President’s decision to stop them, families are looking to this Congress and the administration and asking what we plan to do.

So I am very glad that Democrats and Republicans agreed that we need to act. We could do much better working together under regular order rather than doubling down on partisanship and dysfunction. As a result of the hard work of Chairman ALEXANDER and members of our HELP Committee and with input from both of the Senate, we were able to put forward an answer—a bipartisan solution that prevents families and patients from sabotage and uncertainty and one that Members on both sides of the aisle can be proud to support, starting with the list of original cosponsors we are revealing today. Senator ALEXANDER listed the 12 Republicans. The 12 Democrats are Senators MURRAY, KING, SHAHEEN, DONELLY, KLOBUCHAR, HERTKAMP, FRANKEN, MANCHIN, CARPER, BALDWIN, MARKEY, and EMILIOO.

We are doing this today not only because it will help protect our families from premium spikes that are set to kick off in the next year but also because it is a powerful message that, when Members of Congress past and present and our talking points and take a few steps out of our partisan corners, there is a lot we can agree on and a lot we can get done.

Chairman ALEXANDER and I are going to continue to make the case for this agreement. We are already getting a promising response from many Members on both sides of the aisle. I am very appreciative of Senator SCHUMER for his strong support and I am optimistic, with Chairman ALEXANDER working on this, we will continue to build momentum and, as he said, we will get this done.

At the end of the day, this isn’t about Republicans or Democrats. It is about doing the right thing for the people we serve. That means having an answer to the premium spikes that are going to set in and burden our families next year. We have been able to find one. It is bipartisan. We both gave on this. I really hope all of our colleagues will work with us to get this signed into law and show the American public that we can get the job done for them and we understand the priorities of this country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, if I could ask a question, through the Chair, to the Senator from Washington.

In my conversations with President Trump, he has made it clear—and several of our colleagues made it clear on the Republican side—that they don’t want to bail out insurance companies. What I responded is that I 100-percent agree.

I have already said this to the President, but I think it is important for our colleagues to know that probably the most heated debate Senator MURRAY and I had was not over whether we agreed with that but on how to actually do it in the most effective, strongest, toughest way possible.

So I wish to emphasize the point that these payments are designed to help low-income Americans pay their copays and deductibles. We have in our agreement a page and a half of language that requires every State to make sure the benefits of those payments go to the consumers in 2018 and not to the insurance companies.

I wish to ask Senator MURRAY if she sees any disagreement at all between her and me and some of our colleagues on that side of the aisle and over here, about whether we want to bail out insurance companies or whether we
would be willing to consider any effective language that would improve our own language.

Mrs. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I would respond to my colleague, through the Chair, that negotiations are ongoing. There are things you disagree on, and you have to work your way to an answer. The one issue we did not disagree on but we worked the hardest on and had the most discussion on was how we make sure we have the language in place on this—that consumers benefit and it is not a bailout for insurers. We absolutely share that point, and I know we both heard from Members on both sides of the aisle that they share that point.

We have strong language in here, but we are still open together to make it stronger under anybody's suggestion because our intent is to make sure our constituents get the result of this. We are together on that and working on that. I, absolutely, disregard anyone who says this is a bailout for insurers. We absolutely share that. I appreciate Chairman Enzi's willingness to include this instruction, and I have every confidence that our committee will be able to meet the instruction. There are good reasons why we should be able to meet it, and, really, very good reasons why we should oppose an amendment that would preemptively strike it. I think it is important to say that we have opportunities within the energy sector to help advance this country when it comes to our energy security, our national security, and our economic security. But we need to be able to move forward with that.

So what we are able to do within this instruction, which is pretty wide open, is to focus on those areas where we might be able to see increased energy production that could bring us new wealth—that could create new wealth in this country.

I am going to be the first to agree that some of our options within this open instruction are better than others. Some will create jobs. Some may end up reducing energy costs as opposed to raising them. Some will increase our energy and mineral security as opposed to sacrificing or selling it off.

What I hope Members will do is look at this instruction as an opportunity to do something constructive for the country. The best example of that is to expand energy development in our Federal areas where we have seen decline in recent years.

I think we recognize that responsible development not only will reduce our immediate deficits, but it is about jobs and job creation. It is about wealth and wealth creation, about allowing us to build new wealth and create prosperity. It is about the economic security for our families and businesses. That is something I hear about all the time. It will strengthen our national security and our competitiveness.

This is a point that needs to be emphasized over and over again. It is not only energy security, but it is national security. When we are dependent on other nations for our energy resources, there is an energy insecurity and vulnerability. We also realize energy production will ensure the type of growth we need to finally begin reducing the Federal debt, which is now over $20 trillion.

In short, what we will be able to do with this energy instruction is allow us to create new wealth. Why wouldn't that be something we would all embrace? I think the instruction will allow us to see some enduring benefits that will be felt all across our country. I think it is important to recognize and to state that this does not come at the expense of wildlife. This is not an either/or proposition. Anyone familiar with modern development can recognize that as the scare tactic it is.

Senator SULLIVAN, my colleague from the State of Alaska, was on the floor earlier this morning, and he spoke to the outdated, stale arguments we have heard repeated on the floor and why we must reject them.

Senator SULLIVAN, when he spoke earlier, spoke to the broader opportunities we have seen in the Arctic with Arctic development in general. I want to raise a few facts about ANWR more specifically, since it clearly has been put out there for discussion.

As an Alaskan, and one who has been part of these debates for many years not only on the floor but in Alaska, we know what we are talking about when we discuss the issue of Arctic development. We know and understand what ANWR is, where the wilderness area is, and what the 1002 area is.

I think it is important to put it into context. ANWR is an area of 19.3 million acres. It is about the size of the State of South Carolina. Included in this ANWR area are 6 million acres of Federal wilderness areas that have wilderness area, you have refuge area, but you have wilderness area designated as the 1002 area. That is this area on the coastal plain. This is an area of 1.5 million acres. Delaware is about 1.3 million acres. The 1002 area is what was specifically set aside under ANILCA that would allow for consideration for its oil and gas potential. When ANWR was established, it was recognized that there were areas that were inappropriate to develop and there were areas that were appropriate to be reviewed and considered for their exploration and production potential.

That is what we are talking about within the 1002 area. Even within this area that was specifically set aside, we are not asking to develop all of the 1002. We are asking to develop just 2,000 Federal acres within it, effectively one ten-thousandths of the refuge area.

You can’t see it, but that little red dot is basically what we are talking about. We can say this. We can say we don’t need to do more than 2,000 acres, in this 19.3 million-acre area that has been set aside specifically for oil and gas production, because of what has happened over the last decades with regard to new technology. That is what we have worked to reduce the footprint since Prudhoe Bay opened over 40 years ago. Well pads on the North Slope have shrunk by over 80 percent in these intervening years. We are talking now about 400 acres that are 12 acres in size—10, 11, 12 acres in size.

We have reduced the footprint dramatically, but what we have expanded.
dramatically is the subsurface reach. The new technologies have allowed us to increase the ability to reach out under the surface to an area 125 square miles—125 miles. We have increased it by 4,000 percent, in the years we have been producing, exploring, and innovating. Due to these technologies we use for exploration, Senator SULLIVAN showed the ice roads we use that reduce the impact on the surface and avoid the need for permanent roads.

We use forward looking infrared cameras to survey for polar bear dens so we can avoid them. There was actually a story just this spring about a polar bear that was denning. We found where she was by using the technologies that we know and literally working around where that polar bear was until she emerged from her den with her cub in the spring. It is working with the technologies we have to allow for the activity but with minimal disturbance to not only the land but to the wildlife there.

Caribou. We all know about the caribou in the North Slope area. What we have learned is that over the years, the caribou that occupy these areas have not suffered. In fact, they have thrived. When oil development first began, we were looking at herds in the numbers of about 5,000. Just this last year, the caribou herd is numbering about 22,000, and it has maintained steady and substantial levels.

When you understand what the 1002 area really is and what development would actually look like, it is not hard to understand why you have Alaskans’ support. Over 70 percent of Alaskans support responsible development there. I want to give you one of the best examples.

Matthew Rexford is the president of Kaktovik Inupiat Corporation, KIC, which is a member of the Voice of the Arctic Inupiat. This is a group of community leaders from our North Slope region. He is a great opinion piece not too long ago, explaining why he supports responsible development in the 1002 area.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD Matthew Rexford’s op-ed.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:


**ALASKANS SAY YES TO DRILLING IN ANWR**

*By Matthew Rexford*

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is the largest wildlife refuge in America. Spanning more than 19 million acres, it’s an area larger than 10 U.S. states. This vast expanse is home to caribou, fox, bears and other species. Much of that land is also home to the Native Inupiat, and our people have used the resources it has blessed us with for more than 10,000 years. One of those natural resources lies beneath this great land—oil and gas, and lots of it.

The debate over opening ANWR to drilling gained momentum nationally in 1980, when President Jimmy Carter set aside less than 8 percent of the refuge for potential oil and gas development. This section of ANWR became known as the 1002 area, after a section of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

Since then, Alaskans and the oil and gas industry have fought unsuccessfully to open the 1002 area to drilling, which literally requires an act of Congress. At the same time, the refuge’s coastal plain is the largest wilderness area in the contiguous United States, home to caribou, fox, bears and other species. The coastal plain across the country, folks and organizations around the world have waged war on the idea, citing the disruption of wildlife and the pristine Arctic environment.

As ANWR debates occur, the views of the Inupiat who call the area home are often-times left out. The wishes of the people who live and around the coastal plain frequently are drowned out by people who live hundreds—even thousands—of miles away, many of whom have never bothered to set foot anywhere near the Arctic. Well, today is a new day.

Voice of the Arctic Inupiat, an organization with 21 members from across the Arctic Slope region, including members from Kaktovik located inside ANWR, have voted unanimously to pass a resolution supporting oil and gas development in the 1002 area. This is an unprecedented show of unity by community leaders of the North Slope—those who live in and around the coastal plain of ANWR—emerging from her den with her cub in the spring.

Matthew Rexford is the president of Kaktovik Inupiat Corporation, KIC, which is a member of the Voice of the Arctic Inupiat. This is a group of community leaders from our North Slope region. He is a great opinion piece not too long ago, explaining why he supports responsible development in the 1002 area.

**I am with Matthew and a strong majority of Alaskans are. These are the voices we need to be listening to. My answer on this discussion is yes. Opening the non-wilderness 1002 area to development is an option to meet the instructions to the Energy Committee, but it is not the only option. I will tell you, it is the best option, and it is on the table.**

**We should be clear, amendment No. 1901 was not a vote to open the 1002 area or to keep it closed. It is about whether this instruction should stay in the budget resolution, and it is about whether we are going to recognize the substantial benefits that await us or whether we are going to ignore our future needs and once again wind up in a situation where we see prices rising, families hurting, and everyone is wondering: Why didn’t you act when you had a chance?**

**I think we all recognize that we are enjoying some benefits of lower energy prices, and some have suggested here: Hey, we are all fine. We don’t need to do anything. A few have even said that the oil and gas industry should be able to work in the 1002 area.**

**I think we all recognize that we are enjoying some benefits of lower energy prices, and some have suggested here:**

*Hey, we are all fine. We don’t need to do anything. A few have even said that the oil and gas industry should be able to work in the 1002 area.**

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**I think we all recognize that we are enjoying some benefits of lower energy prices, and some have suggested here:**

*Hey, we are all fine. We don’t need to do anything. A few have even said that**
because we are exporting oil now, we don’t need to do more for ourselves here. It is truly an open invitation to ignore the supply side. That is just a bad idea. Quite honestly, we have been down that road before, and we know enough not to do that again.

The EIA, the Energy Information Administration, projects that in 2040, the world will be using more oil, not less. They project that our country will still be importing about 7 million barrels a day on a net basis. They project prices will likely move $100 a barrel. There are other experts who are already pointing to other signs. The International Energy Agency recently found that “global oil supply could struggle to keep pace with demand after 2020, risking a sharp increase in prices, unless new projects are approved soon.”

My point here is we have an opportunity. We have an opportunity not only to help America create jobs, to allow for opportunities not only in my home State but around the country, but also we have an opportunity to ensure a level of energy security while at the same time broadening this to enhance our national security.

So what I am asking my colleagues today is to not preempt this very important conversation. Give us a chance to consider this instruction within our committee. We will have an opportunity for hearings, and we will be able to put these options out on the table and work fully how we can do more when it comes to energy production in this country. Let the Energy and Natural Resources Committee do its part in helping. Let’s not pull the plug even before we get going.

Given everything that we have heard here on the floor about strengthening our economy and protecting the middle class and making life better for people whom we serve, I think we really have to ask the very legitimate question: Why are we even leaving this energy discussion out of this debate? Why would we limit our opportunity to create new wealth in this country?

I would again urge the Senate to reject this amendment. It would deprive us of a substantial opportunity to benefit our country and ensure that we have great prospects and possibilities in front of us.

The Energy and Natural Resources Committee wanted to see this instruction understood not resolved. We have every confidence that we can meet it, so I would urge Members to vote no on the motion to strike when that comes up later today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

AMENDMENT NO. 1138 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1116

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I join my colleague from the State of Virginia, Senator WARNER, in offering an amendment that will prevent tax reform from ballooning our deficits.

The Republican budget, which we are currently considering, includes a troubling provision that would exempt a $1.5 trillion tax reform bill from the important requirement that legislation that adds costs to the U.S. Government must be paid for rather than merely added to our deficit. This rule, well known to our colleagues, is one by which I am troubled to see a number of my longtime friends choose to ignore this time around—a rule long known in the Senate as the pay-as-you-go rule, or pay-go. It is an important rule that forces Congress to be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. It forces Congress to pay for new programs or find offsets for reductions in revenue rather than to add to our national debt. It is the right policy, and it has been in place for years. So it is, frankly, jarring that this budget document would include a provision that explicitly exempts a $1.5 trillion tax reform bill from the pay-go rule.

Look, I agree that we need to work together toward a bipartisan tax reform bill. It is important that we have a middle class and simplifies our overly complicated Tax Code, but we cannot simply pass a budget that allows Congress to put $1.5 trillion more on the government’s credit card, on our credit card.

I thank Senator WARNER for his long leadership on the need for fiscally responsible governing. Senator WARNER is a former Governor and a successful business leader, and he understands the importance of sound fiscal management and the danger that our national debt poses to our long-term economic prosperity. I am proud to work with him and to remind our colleagues of the Senate’s longstanding support of pay-go. I encourage all Members, especially my Republican colleagues, to support this amendment.

Now, with the forbearance of my colleague, I will speak to one other amendment for a moment.

There is a provision that I have introduced that I know may well not get a vote but that I wanted to speak to. It would ensure that, as we consider tax reform, we do not forget those who are the most in need of our assistance right now and in the future.

The United States was hit very hard by three hurricanes and many wildfires this year. In particular, Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory of 3.4 million people, was devastated by Hurricane Maria, which made the entire island uninhabitable. The island lost massive damage and is now resulting in a humanitarian crisis. Puerto Rico’s 3.4 million people is several times more than live in my State of Delaware. It is about the size of Connecticut.

Once we get past this initial crisis and restore power, provide clean drinking water, get hospitals functioning, and ensure people have housing, then Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the areas of Houston, TX, and Miami, the communities affected by wildfires in all of these other parts of our country will have significant rebuilding needs.

We have representatives of the Governor of Puerto Rico and the Governor himself here on the Hill this week to clarify just how much more will be needed for the Marshall Plan-style investment to rebuild Puerto Rico. I am going to be advocating that we provide funding as part of our support for the Corporation for National and Community Service, AmeriCorps volunteers, and NCCC volunteers. Thousands of them have served in response to these emergencies. We are going to need investment not only in CDBGs for parks and infrastructure.

Before I hand it over to my colleague from Virginia, I want to reference a second amendment that would prevent us from moving forward with tax reform until we first provide for the needs of Americans who have been affected by these disasters and emergencies. I wish we would take that up. Let me close by thanking my colleague from Virginia for his long leadership on the issue of responsible fiscal management for our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, let me thank my friend, the Senator from Delaware, for his kind comments. More importantly, I think him for his good work that he brings to the issue of fiscal responsibility. Before he served here in the Senate, he served as the head of one of the largest counties in Delaware. Whether you serve as a county chairman or as a Governor, you are used to the notion that you have to pay your bills. I very much appreciate his support for this amendment, that of keeping pay-go in place.

Let me also echo that I absolutely support his notion that the American citizens in Puerto Rico deserve not to be forgotten and deserve to receive the same attention we have bestowed upon Americans in Texas or in Florida or in Louisiana or elsewhere around our great country when they were victims of natural disasters. I hope the Senator from Delaware gets a chance to submit his amendment.

While Puerto Rico is not receiving sufficient attention, there is another American territory nearby, the U.S. Virgin Islands, that also has those same kinds of challenges. If the Senator gets a chance to submit that amendment, I hope he will include the U.S. Virgin Islands in there as well.

Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 1138, which I filed at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) proposes an amendment numbered 1138 to amendment No. 1116.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:
we will actually see true deficit reduction, which that gap will close to zero, and prove our economy to the point at which a four-tenths of 1 percent increase in our GDP will essentially imply that we are going to be blown off at the outset. To address debts and deficits, but there is the notion that we are about to take on a budget resolution this afternoon and start with the premise that the rules that are there to try to protect us from being fiscally irresponsible are going to be blown off at the outset. To say that we are going to start with $1.5 trillion in the hole before we start counting is beyond irresponsible. I thank my friend, the Senator from Delaware, for joining me in offering this amendment.

Mr. CORNYN. Will the Senator from Virginia yield for a question?

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I am pleased to yield to my friend, the Senator from Texas, for a question as long as I still get a chance to finish my comments.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I appreciate that. And the Senator from Virginia is my friend. We work together closely on the Intelligence Committee and a number of matters.

I just want to ask a pretty basic question, which is whether the Senator from Virginia believes that it is possible to improve economic growth as a result of tax reform in such a way as it will close that $1.5 trillion gap that he is so concerned about. Some economists—ones who I believe are people we can depend on—have suggested that as much as a four-tenths of 1 percent increase in our GDP will essentially improve our economy to the point at which that gap will close to zero, and we will actually see true deficit reduction.

Does the Senator agree with that or disagree?

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Texas for his comment.

Let me say where I might agree with some of Senator CORNYN’s principles. I believe that we need a more simplified Tax Code. I believe that our goal of our Tax Code ought to put American business on a competitive basis with those of other countries around the world. I believe, as well, that to do that, one of the goals of tax reform ought to be to lower corporate rates. I will point out, though, three quick things so that I may get back to finishing my comments.

One, let’s actually look at where America’s tax burden stands versus those of other nations that actually have lower corporate tax rates, for example. Out of the 34 OECD nations—35 now—if you were to listen to some folks on this floor, you would think that America must rank at the top of that list, but we are 31 out of 35.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

Mr. CORNYN. Thank you, Mr. President. We will continue our conversation.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, since I had a few moments and I was trying to give courtesy to answer my colleague, for an additional 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. CORNYN. Just to clarify, is the request for an additional 5 minutes of debate?

Mr. WARNER. Five minutes to answer the Senator’s question and to make my very short statement.

Mr. CORNYN. I object to any additional time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona.

The amendment (No. 1138) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate as in morning business.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I came to the floor today in support of the budget resolution for one reason. It is because it provides the Senate a path forward on tax reform. I strongly support this effort to fix America’s burdensome tax system. It is my hope that reform will lead to simplifying the Tax Code, strengthening the middle class, and ultimately boosting our economy.

Unfortunately, I cannot offer my support without reservation, so I have come to the floor today to explain my concerns and remind my colleagues of the important work ahead of us. Even as we support this resolution as a means to achieve meaningful tax reform, we must acknowledge the fact that the underlying budget contains an insufficient level of funding for national defense. As chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, my highest priority is to ensure that our men and women serving in uniform have the training, equipment, and resources they need to keep our Nation safe.

The Senate budget resolution will set fiscal year 2018 defense spending at the levels dictated by the Budget Control Act cap. This budget is $54 billion less than the President’s request and $86 billion less than this body authorized just last month in the National Defense Authorization Act. We passed the National Defense Authorization Act by a vote of 90 to 9, a demonstration of the overwhelming bipartisan belief that the Budget Control Act level of defense spending is inadequate and unacceptable.

Let me be clear. There is no BCA-level defense budget that would be sufficient to provide our military with what they need to fulfill current missions and prepare for future threats.

For those of us who have been paying attention, we heard the warnings of the steady decline of our military. Time and again our senior military and civilian defense leaders have sounded the alarm about the dangers of the Budget
An Army Black Hawk helicopter went down during a training mission off the coast of Yemen, and one soldier died.

One soldier died during helicopter training at Fort Hood.

An amphibious vehicle explosion at Camp Pendleton injured 15 Americans.

A demolition accident in Fort Bragg killed one soldier and injured seven others.

Two Navy pilots died in a T–45 crash in Tennessee.

My friends, we are now losing more of our men and women in uniform in totally avoidable training accidents than we are in combat. There are plenty of blame to go around for all of these incidents, but we cannot ignore the fact that Congress's inability to provide adequate, stable, and predictable budgeting has contributed to the troubling state of affairs. While increased funding is not the only answer, there is no scenario where our military can get healthy and ready to meet the challenges of an increasingly unstable world without additional resources. That is necessary.

Just this week, Secretary of Defense Mattis sent a letter to the Armed Services Committee expressing his concerns with regard to the National Defense Authorization Act that we are currently negotiating with the House. The very thing he said before addressing any of the policy changes and reforms in the bill is that his primary concern is the Budget Control Act, and we know why—because the defense spending caps are doing such immense harms to our military. Secretary Mattis wrote:

As I have testified before your committee, no enemy has done more to harm the warfighting readiness of our military than sequestration. I will repeat that for the benefit of my colleagues.

...no enemy has done more to harm the warfighting readiness of our military than sequestration. Current caps continue to unnecessarily defer critical maintenance, limit aviation availability, delay modernization, and strain our men and women in uniform.

We have seen the evidence of this harm. Over the last few months there have been a rash of training accidents, collisions, and crashes. We are seeing the tragic accidents in the news far too often.

Seven sailors were killed when the USS Fitzgerald collided with a container ship off the coast of Japan.

A Marine KC–130 crash in Mississippi killed all 16 troops on board.

An Army helicopter crashed off the coast of Australia and that resulted in the deaths of three marines.

An Army helicopter crashed off the coast of Hawaii, with five soldiers presumed dead.

Ten sailors perished when the USS McCain collided with a tanker near Singapore.

So now we have this list, as I just read off, of men and women serving in the military and we are responsible, at least partially, for their death and injury. Why? Because they are not able to be trained. They are not able to be equipped. They are not able to be maintained, and 60 percent of our jets are not able to fly. We have sailors and airmen who are working 100-hour workweeks. We have gigantic problems with the ability to simply operate.

I yield the floor.
should be a statement about priorities for the coming year and for the coming decade.

Let's take a moment and examine what this budget says about the majority's priorities. With any budget, I think you need to look at the end result. I ask a couple of very simple questions.

First, does this budget help reduce Federal deficits and debt with a responsible, sensible approach? Second, does this budget, that is, actually, put us on a sustainable fiscal path?

The answer to these questions is a clear no. Instead, this budget is primarily intended to allow the majority to use an expedited procedure to move tax breaks that would increase the deficit by $1.5 trillion over the next decade.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle will say that this lost revenue is offset by spending cuts and promises of new revenues from economic growth far beyond what almost every single mainstream economist predicts.

Let's look at the trillions in cuts that the majority is proposing. Where the budget is specific, it is bad. Medicaid is cut by $1 trillion, Medicare, which provides essential healthcare services to our seniors, is cut by $70 billion. On top of that, the budget includes over $3 trillion in unspecified cuts.

You don't have to be an expert in the Federal budget to know that $3 trillion in unspecified cuts means one of two things. They are either, No. 1, cuts to programs that families and communities rely on, like Head Start, Pell grants, and transportation funding, or, No. 2, they are unspecified because they are simply never going to happen.

That is what we are voting on today. There is nearly $1.5 trillion in cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, and then there are trillions in cuts that are either so unclear that no one dares name what they are or trillions more in deficits because there is not a plan.

The Federal budget is about choices. You can learn a lot about which choices a budget puts in black and white and which are left deliberately unspecified. When it comes to the majority's tax plan, we know only a few details, but we know enough to see where there will be winners and where there will be losers. The winners will be the wealthiest Americans in our country and global corporations.

We also need to look at what it means for Michigan families and small businesses, but there is a deliberate lack of detail that makes figuring out what the bottom line is for working families impossible. We don't know where the tax brackets will start and where they will stop. We don't know what personal exemptions families will be able to take. We don't know the size and scope of the child tax credit. We don't know if important incentives for charitable contributions will be kept. The majority is even keeping open the possibility of raising taxes on Americans who are trying to save for their retirement.

This budget should be straightforward. We should reduce the tax burden on middle class families. We should make it simpler for Americans to file and understand their tax. We should make it easier for them to save for reitrement. We should increase take-home pay for Americans that work hard each and every day to make a living.

Unfortunately, none of these details that are important for middle-class folks were important enough to include in this budget. That is why I will vote against it. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

We cannot add another $1.5 trillion to the deficit. We cannot slash Medicare and Medicaid. This is simply the wrong direction for our country.

So why are we moving forward with this budget at all? Well, on this issue, I think the administration has been clear. It is all about passing a so-called tax reform bill. However, passing this budget is not a requirement for passing tax reform. Passing this budget is only a requirement to pass a tax bill with as few votes as possible. It is an input, or buy-in from Members of the minority. This is not the way we should pass real tax reform. If tax reform is going to be successful, it must have broad bipartisan input.

We stand ready to work with my colleagues on real tax reform. Modernizing and streamlining our Tax Code can boost Michigan businesses, raise take-home pay for workers across sectors, and help create the type of 21st century economy we need. We can make it easier for small businesses, including manufacturers and family farms, to invest in themselves, and we can make the code fair across sectors. We can establish incentives for smart investment in our communities. We can implement strong, enforceable rules to prevent companies from gaming our tax system and moving profits and jobs overseas.

For families, we can meaningfully boost take-home pay. We can expand the child tax credit and earned-income tax credit, and we can work together to find real ways to help alleviate the cost of child care. We can lessen the burden of student debt, and we can help people save for retirement.

Tax reform can help create more good jobs right here at home, fix some of the issues in the code that drive jobs and companies overseas, and put more money in the pockets of working families.

In 1986, Congress passed the most dramatic reform of the Federal Tax Code in modern history. How many votes did this sweeping overhaul of the tax system get? When tax reform ultimately passed the Senate in 1986, it received 97 votes. If we want to repeat that accomplishment and truly overhaul our code to make it work better for American families and American businesses, that level of bipartisanship should be our goal, not 50 or 51.

I know we can do these things in a truly bipartisan manner if we are just given the chance. Let's work together to pass real tax reform with broad support from both sides of the aisle. The American people deserve nothing less.

I stand ready to work with the majority, and so do my colleagues. I urge the majority to abandon this effort and start over. Make the decision not to add trillions more to the deficit. Make the decision not to cut Medicare and Medicaid for Americans in need. Start over. Let's find a path forward to find real, lasting, bipartisan solutions.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, budget resolutions set general spending priorities for the Federal Government. The budget resolution before us today, however, sets a path for so-called tax reform that will benefit the wealthiest Americans in our country and global corporations. We cannot slash Medicare and Medicaid for Americans in need. For all their talk of reining in spending and reducing the debt, the majority is promoting a budget that will explode the debt by $1.5 trillion. They propose increasing the debt not to invest in our future or in educating the next generation. They propose increasing the debt not to expand access to healthcare or promote medical research. No—they propose exploding the debt to give corporations and the top one percent a tax cut.

Once again, they may be talking away from the bipartisan traditions of this Senate and toward the hyperpartisan tactics that do not result in progress for the American people.

This budget invests in millionaires and billionaires like the Trump family, the Koch brothers, wealthy corporations, and the top one percent. It turns its back on millions of hard-working American families. While the resolution authorizes a $1.5 trillion increase in the debt, independent experts calculate that the real cost of the Trump tax plan will far exceed that amount.

How will the majority pay for the difference? It will slash Medicaid. It will slash Medicare. It will slash programs for veterans and infrastructure.

It will be middle-class Americans who bear the brunt of these cuts. According to independent analysts, middle-class Americans will see their home values drop and will experience a tax increase as a result of the Trump tax plan. This shameful budget sends the message that the Senate supports putting tax cuts for the wealthy and biggest corporations on our Nation's credit card and, to the extent we pay for any of it, that we do so on the backs of the middle class and seniors and at the expense of protecting the environment.

This budget proposes invading the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. These are not Vermont values. These are not American values. This is not how our Nation became the greatest country on Earth.
After years of claiming that the deficit is one of the greatest threats to our country, the majority today will waive away any concern about the long-term impact of increasing it. They argue that the economic growth spurred by tax cuts will outpace the foregone revenue, but as we saw with the Bush tax cuts, this claim is simply not based in reality. This argument is based on a pyramid scheme of assumptions on top of assumptions, and will be taking for a close look at the Congressional Budget Office’s projections—a range of both dynamic and conventional scores—this budget resolution eliminates the only existing mechanism that requires the Senate to have a CBO estimate in advance of a vote. Why might the majority want to rush a vote before examining the long-term economic impacts of these proposed tax cuts?

Our Tax Code is complex—very much, overly complex—and I share the view that it is in need of improvements and simplification. We can and should have a meaningful debate about tax reform, but any reforms must be certain to benefit middle-class Americans, not just the top 1 percent. We need to strengthen tax credits that promote community development and the construction of affordable housing. We should extend and make permanent tax credits that help those who are struggling to make ends meet. I am in favor of bipartisanship reform that brings both parties together and results in balanced changes to the current system. That is in the best tradition of the Senate, and it is the path to enacting truly meaningful reforms that will benefit every single American.

The Senate should reject this partisan effort, just as it rejected last month the unsuccessful bipartisan efforts to roll back health coverage for millions of Americans. We should—and can—to craft a fair and sustainable budget and tax reform package. No package will be perfect, but it should be bipartisan. It should be fair. The budget before us today fails to meet that test, which is why I will oppose it.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, last week, people across this country celebrated National Wildlife Refuge Week—and rightfully so. National Wildlife Refuges are one of the crown jewels of public lands network. These refuges provide essential habitat for some of our most imperiled species, including many impacted by climate change. Millions of refuge visitors also fuel local and regional economies by generating billions of dollars in sales and have been championed by the current administration. The budget resolution is another such effort to promote development in a refuge, an effort that should be rejected. In some cases, refuges are compatible with development and increased human activity. In others, such as the siting of oil and gas drilling, could negatively impact the future of both human and animal inhabitants.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, one of the largest intact ecosystems in the world, is an example of the latter. The Refuge has been home to the Gwich’in people for more than 20,000 years. These Native people subsist primarily on caribou. Research shows that oil and gas development in the Refuge, even with a small footprint, could significantly alter Porcupine Caribou migration patterns and calving behavior. These changes would threaten the Gwich’in people’s way of life. The U.S. 30-year-old treaty with Canada to protect the Porcupine Caribou Herd could also be at risk.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Arctic Refuge is the only national conservation area where polar bears regularly den. It is the crucial calving and feeding ground for the Porcupine Caribou Herd in Alaska. These iconic bears are increasingly vulnerable due to climate change, so the undisturbed Refuge land denning area is especially critical for their survival. The Refuge also hosts some of the most species of migratory birds, musk oxen, and wolves.

As the Senate contemplates the future of this spectacular natural area, I want to remind my colleagues that this body has said no to opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge dozens of times. With oil prices significantly lower than they were earlier this decade and oil supplies at historic highs, it is hard to understand why we would change course now. The risks far outweigh the negligible gains, and the American public has consistently opposed drilling in the Arctic Refuge.

I also want to express my strong concerns with possible pending administrative action in the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, another national treasure. This Refuge is located on the U.S.-Mexico border, along the southernmost stretch of the Rio Grande River at the confluence of the Central and Mississippi flyways. It is home to more than 400 bird species, more than 300 species of butterflies, and more than 450 varieties of plants.

The Santa Ana Refuge supports rare wildlife species, some found only deep in south Texas. The Refuge also provides habitat for at least eight species protected under the Endangered Species Act, including the ocelot. There are less than 50 ocelots left in the United States, so this Refuge is essential to the species’ recovery.

The Santa Ana Refuge is also a popular bird-watching destination. The Refuge hosts more than 165,000 visitors each year. The booming ecotourism industry in the area is critical for local economies, which is another key reason why we need to ensure this Refuge and its inhabitants can thrive.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers planning actions earlier this year suggest that the Trump administration will seek to construct a segment of border wall through the Santa Ana Refuge.

As I have said before, we already have construction miles of border fence on our southern border with Mexico in the areas where it is most effective. I am not unequivocally opposed to physical barriers where they are needed and where they can be shown to be the most effective method of border security, but the Santa Ana Refuge is not a known problem area for border crossing. Furthermore, a wall through the Refuge would permanently damage critical habitat, block wildlife migration routes, and would likely trap wildlife within floods.

Again, a wall through the refuge would not yield intended outcomes and would harm both wildlife and communities. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to question and oppose construction of this wall segment.

From Alaska to Texas to Delaware, our National Wildlife Refuge System is well worth protecting and preserving for future generations. I look forward to continued work with my colleagues and constituents to this end.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 1116, 1139, 1205, 1228, 1422, 1234, AND 1249 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1116

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following amendments be called up en bloc and reported by number: Flake No. 1178, Baldwin No. 1139, Rubio No. 1205, Hekamp No. 1228, Portman No. 1422, Daines No. 1234, and Jones No. 1249.

I further ask consent that at 3 p.m., all time on the resolution be yielded back and the Senate vote in relation to the amendments in the order listed; that there be no second-degree amendments in order to these seven amendments prior to the votes; finally, that there be 2 minutes equally divided between the managers or their designees prior to each vote and that all votes after the first in this series be 10 minutes in length.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the amendments en bloc by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senate from Wyoming [Mr. ENZI], for others, proposes amendments numbered 1178, 1139, 1205, 1228, 1234, and 1249 to amendment No. 1116.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 1178

(Purpose: To make the American tax system simpler and fairer)

At the end of title III, add the following:

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The Associate Justice of the Senate, for the Clerk, for others, proposes amendments numbered 1116, 1139, 1205, 1228, 1234, and 1249 to amendment No. 1116.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 1116

(Purpose: To make the American tax system simpler and fairer)
SEC. 3. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO MAKING THE AMERICAN TAX SYSTEM SIMPLER AND FAIRER FOR ALL AMERICANS.

The Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may revise the allocations of the committee or committees, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution, and make adjustments to the pay-as-you-go ledger, for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, amendments between the Houses, motions, or conference reports relating to changes in Federal tax laws, which may include provisions to make the American tax system simpler and fairer for all Americans, by the amounts provided in such legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the period of the total of fiscal years 2018 through 2027.

AMENDMENT NO. 1238

(Purpose: To prohibit reconciliation legislation that would increase the deficit or reduce a surplus.)

At the end of subtitle A of title IV, add the following:

SEC. 41. SENATE POINT OF ORDER AGAINST RECONCILIATION LEGISLATION THAT WOULD INCREASE THE DEFICIT OR REDUCE A SURPLUS.

(a) POINT OF ORDER.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any reconciliation bill, resolution, amendment, amendment between the Houses, motion, or conference report, pursuant to section 318 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (2 U.S.C. 641) that would cause or increase a deficit or reduce a surplus in either of the following periods:

(1) The period of the current fiscal year, the budget year, and the ensuing 9 fiscal years following the budget year.

(2) The period of the current fiscal year, the budget year, and the ensuing 4 fiscal years following the budget year.

(b) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEAL IN THE SENATE.—

(1) WAIVER.—This section may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.

(2) APPEAL.—An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, on a point of order raised under subsection (a).

The Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may revise the allocations of a committee or committees, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution, and make adjustments to the pay-as-you-go ledger, for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, amendments between the Houses, motions, or conference reports relating to changes in federal tax laws, which may include international tax provisions that provide or enhance incentives for businesses to invest in America, generate American jobs, retain American jobs, and return jobs to America.

AMENDMENT NO. 1242

(Purpose: To provide for an international tax system that provides or enhances incentives for businesses to invest in America, generate American jobs, retain American jobs, and return jobs to America.)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 3. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO THE PROVISION OF INCENTIVES FOR BUSINESSES TO INVEST IN AMERICA AND CREATE JOBS AMONG ALL AMERICANS.

The Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may revise the allocations of a committee or committees, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution, and make adjustments to the pay-as-you-go ledger, for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, amendments between the Houses, motions, or conference reports relating to changes in federal tax laws, which may include international tax provisions that provide or enhance incentives for businesses to invest in America, generate American jobs, retain American jobs, and return jobs to America.

AMENDMENT NO. 1326

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to tax cuts for working American families.)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 3. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO TAX CUTS FOR WORKING AMERICAN FAMILIES.

The Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may revise the allocations of a committee or committees, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution, and make adjustments to the pay-as-you-go ledger, for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, amendments between the Houses, motions, or conference reports relating to increasing per-child Federal tax relief, which may include amending the child tax credit, for the amounts provided in such legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over the period of the total fiscal years 2018 through 2027.

AMENDMENT NO. 1228

(Purpose: To create a point of order against legislation that would increase taxes on taxpayers whose annual income is below $250,000.)

At the end of title IV, add the following:

SEC. 4. POINT OF ORDER AGAINST RAISING TAXES ON TAXPAYERS WHOSE ANNUAL INCOME IS BELOW $250,000.

(a) POINT OF ORDER.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, amendment between the Houses, or conference report that raises taxes on taxpayers whose annual income is below $250,000.

(b) WAIVER AND APPEAL.—Subsection (a) may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under subsection (a).

AMENDMENT NO. 1422

(Purpose: To create a point of order against legislation that allows companies that have outsourced jobs to foreign countries to benefit from any tax breaks.)

At the end of title IV, add the following:

SEC. 4. POINT OF ORDER AGAINST ANY TAX BILL ALLOWING COMPANIES THAT HAVE OUTSOURCED JOBS TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES TO BENEFIT FROM ANY TAX BREAKS.

(a) POINT OF ORDER.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any bill, joint resolution, motion, amendment, amendment between the Houses, or conference report that permits companies which have outsourced jobs to foreign countries to benefit from any tax breaks.

(b) WAIVER AND APPEAL.—Subsection (a) may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under subsection (a).

AMENDMENT NO. 1132

(Purpose: To modify section 4111 to reinstate and strengthen a prohibition on voting on legislation without a Congressional Budget Office score.)

On page 83, strike lines 12 through 15, and insert the following:

SEC. 4111. REPEAL OF CERTAIN LIMITATIONS.

Section 3206 of S. Con. Res. 11 (114th Congress), the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2016, is repealed.

SEC. 4112. PROHIBITION ON AGREERING TO CERTAIN AMENDMENTS TO LEGISLATION WITHOUT A SCORE IN THE SENATE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In the Senate, it shall not be in order to vote on the adoption of a concurrent resolution that requires an estimate under section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (2 U.S.C. 635), unless an estimate described in such section 402 for the covered amendment was made publicly available on the website of the Congressional Budget Office not later than 28 hours before the time the vote commences.

(b) COVERED AMENDMENT DEFINED.—In this section, the term ‘‘covered amendment’’ means an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

(c) SUPERMAJORITY WAIVER AND APPEAL.—

(1) WAIVER.—In the Senate, subsection (a) may be waived or suspended only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.

(2) APPEAL.—An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, on a point of order raised under subsection (a).

Mr. ENZI. For the information of all Senators, these are the first seven amendments we will consider during vote-arama, and we will work to get an agreement on a final list of amendments during these votes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I think I am the only one standing between this body and a vote on something that 2 years ago I didn’t know existed, and that is a ‘‘vote-arama’’ in local Senate terminology. Then the best of order. There is a vocabulary centered around what we are going to be doing this afternoon, but I want to speak to the budget process itself.

First of all, I want to be very clear with my colleagues on both sides. I support this budget. I am going to vote on today for one very strong reason. It is a vehicle to get to tax reform in the United States. I will not speak on taxes today in the few minutes that I have, but I do want to speak about the process.

What we are doing in America right now in the Senate and the Congress—and what we have been doing over the
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last 43 years—is losing the right to do the right thing. Let me say that again. We are losing the right to do the right thing.

Just a few weeks ago, we voted without batting an eye for $15 billion of allocated funds for the victims of hurricanes in Florida, Texas, and other southern States, with every dime of that money in borrowed money. We have to go to China and other places and borrow that money so we can spend and do nothing. That is not an embellishment or an exaggeration.

What about research for the rising, spiraling cost of our healthcare, driven by Alzheimer’s, cancer, and diabetes? We spend almost the same amount of money on that as we spend on all foreign aid. Yet, if we were to do more, we could cure those heinous diseases and lower our medical costs. We can invest in our infrastructure. We can absolutely take care of victims of wildfires, and Puerto Rico.

Tonight we are going to be asked to vote up or down on a supplemental bill for some $30 billion plus for the needs of these catastrophes. We have lost the right to do the right thing, which is, of course, to meet those needs.

Here is the biggest one. You just heard my great colleague, Senator McCain from Arizona. He is the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, of which I am a member. He talked about how decimated our military is from a funding standpoint. He talked about readiness. He talked about capitalization. But today, we are borrowing every dime we spend on our military, on our veterans, and on every domestic discretionary program in the United States. That is a fact. Where do we get the money when we run out of our own money? We spend every dime of our own. By the way, we collected over $3.5 trillion of Federal tax revenue last year. It is the largest amount America has ever collected in income taxes and total taxes for the Federal Government—the most we have ever collected—but all of that money goes to mandatory expenses.

As a matter of fact, since 2000, under one Republican President and one Democratic President, our government has grown from $2.4 trillion to $4 trillion. That is not the worst of it. The worst is yet to come. We have added in two Presidencies $14 trillion to our Federal debt. Of our $20 trillion, $14 trillion of it was added under these two Presidents.

In the next 10 years, the current budget under which we are working will add another $11 trillion to our debt.

Here is the problem. The blue line here is what you heard Senator McCain talk about earlier. That is our discretionary spending. It is flat. As a matter of fact, between 2009 and today, we have lowered discretionary spending by over one-third, by $400 billion. But what has happened is that our mandatory expenses have exploded.

On this chart, this line here, are our mandatory expenses; that is, Social Security, Medicare, pension and benefits for Federal employees, and the interest on our debt. This is a formula for financial disaster.

At this point, we already have $20 trillion of debt. Over the next 30 years, we are contributing that we will have over $130 trillion of future commitments, liabilities coming at us like a freight train.

We are hamstrung because we have a budget process that doesn’t work. One of the attributes that we have is, this is a process that over the last 43 years, since the 1974 Budget Act was put in place, which created this budget process, the budget has worked only four times in 43 years. It has funded the Federal Government only four times. That is not a partisan comment; that is an indictment on this body and on the body across the hall.

In any other environment—sports, medicine, business, military—imagine if you had a process that worked only four times when you had a tank in World War II, and you are over there, and every 43 times you fired it, it worked only four times. Imagine what that would be.

What we have here is a system that doesn’t work. I am going to try to explain that very quickly.

First, we have committees in the U.S. Senate that involve themselves in appropriations and the funding of the Federal Government. Some are called authorizing committees. These are committees like the Foreign Relations Committee; we have Appropriations. We have all of these authorizing committees over here on the left. On the right here are Appropriations Committees. Today, these committees have to pass 12 bills in order to fund the Federal Government.

Over the last 43 years, out of the 12 bills we have to appropriate to fund the government, we have averaged only 2½ bills. It doesn’t work. It doesn’t work. So we ended up with 179 continuing resolutions to get us past the end of our fiscal year to continue spending at last year’s rate, and then we go to an “omnibus”—another new term that I had never heard of—at the end of the calendar year.Basically, most times, six or eight people will get in a room and decide how to spend $1 trillion. This current budget deals with, primarily, issues that are not on the mandatory side.

There is a process forward. There are Members on the other side—and I am going to call out one—my good friend from the State of Rhode Island. Senator Whitehouse and I and others have been working on this for quite some time. He has a great idea: Let’s pick a point in the future, make the debt a percentage of our GDP, and work backward from there with guardrails on what we can do every year.

There is a budget process we have been working on that creates a politically neutral platform that allows both sides, in a bipartisan way, to argue and fight over what we think the budget should include, because we believe the budget should be a law.

Today, the budget is only a resolution, which means it is nothing but a political statement by the majority party.

We then go to an authorizing process where the minority party, because they weren’t asked to play in the budget process—we have an authorizing process in which, today, we have over $300 billion of Federal expenditures a year that are not authorized, over $300 billion.

Then we are supposed to go to an appropriations process. As I have just said, we have appropriated, on average, over those 43 years, only 2½ bills a year instead of 12.

We can, it is this. It is not a partisan issue. We will absolutely fix this budget process in a bipartisan way. I am going to vote for this. I hope my colleagues will vote for this budget bill so we can go on and devote our time to the ground or the sea or the air or the space.

This debt crisis is the No. 1 crisis we face in our country. It keeps us from doing the right thing—funding our national defense and taking care of our needs.

I will support this budget today, and I urge my colleagues to do the same. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

LIEUTENANT PATRICK L. RUTH

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, this is not about the budget, but it is about something that all of us can, unfortunately, understand the importance of.

On October 1, 2012, U.S. Naval aviation instructor, LT Patrick L. Ruth, and student naval aviator, LTJG Wallace Burch, were both killed when their Goshawk training jet crashed in Tellico Plains, TN. Lieutenant Ruth was a native of Louisiana, growing up in Metairie. Lieutenant Ruth served in the Navy for 9 years, beginning his career in the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps at Tulane University. He was commissioned in May of 2008. After flight training, he served as a Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 126, based in Norfolk, VA, in 2012.

Lieutenant Ruth flew the E-2C Hawkeye as part of the tactical air forces of the U.S. Navy. His primary mission was early warning defense of the carrier battle group, as well as air strike control, ocean surveillance, and search and rescue coordination.

In April 2015, he moved to Naval Training Squadron 7, based in Meridian, MS.

As an instructor, Lieutenant Ruth trained the next generation of naval aviators in strike aviation, basic aircraft maneuvering, and landing skills.
Lieutenant Ruth was a dedicated naval aviator. As evidence, he earned two Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals during his distinguished career.

Our brave men and women in uniform take an oath every day to defend our Nation. The risks are necessary, made to ensure that our military is fully prepared to face any threat. We are forever grateful for Lieutenant Ruth and those who answer the call of duty to keep us safe.

We must also think of the incredible sacrifices of Lieutenant Ruth’s family and all military families. They may not be wearing uniforms, but they, too, serve our country.

I had the privilege of speaking with Lieutenant Ruth’s family. I learned that his younger brother Shane is Active Duty Navy. His older brother is retired Navy. His sisters were, and are, so supportive.

Lieutenant Ruth’s parents, David and Mary Ann Ruth, still grieve. How could any parent not?

But to borrow from President Lincoln’s letter to a grieving mother:

I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Lieutenant Ruth is survived by his parents, David and Mary; his fiancé, Jessica; and his four siblings. We grieve with you. You are in our prayers.

Lieutenant Patrick Ruth will not be forgotten.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all time on the resolution is yielded back.

AMENDMENT NO. 1178

There will now be 2 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to a vote in relation to Flake amendment No. 1178.

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, this amendment would set up a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to making the American tax system simpler and fairer for all Americans.

Not only do we need to do tax reform, but we need to do it urgently. It has been more than 30 years since we have reformed the Tax Code in any significant way. We have more preferences and loopholes and deductions out there than we do to do with. In fact, if we total all of them together, there are more expenditures in the Tax Code, or money avoiding coming to Washington—tax avoidance—than we spend on our entire discretionary budget. It is about $1.26 trillion annually.

So we have to have a code where we lower the rates and broaden the base. Broadening the base means going after some of these popular loopholes and deductions and preferences that make the Tax Code a lot bigger and scarier and more complicated than it should be.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASSIDY). Who yields time in opposition?

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, we yield back the time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 1178.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 98, nays 0, as follows:

YEAES—98

Alexander  Franklen  Nelson
Balduin  Gardner  Paul
Barrasso  Grassard  Peru
Benet  Graham  Peters
Blumenthal  Grassley  Portman
Blunt  Harris  Reed
Boorke  Haseen  Risch
Boozman  Hatch  Roberts
Brown  Heinrich  Rounds
Burr  Hietkamp  Rubio
Capito  Holt  Sanders
Cardin  Hoeven  Schatz
Carpin  Inboken  Schumer
Casey  Isakson  Scott
Cassidy  Johnson  Shaheen
Collins  Kaine  Shelby
Corker  King  Shubert
Curnyn  Klobuchar  Strange
Cortez Masto  Lankford  Sullivan
Cotton  Leahy  Tester
Crapo  Lee  Thane
Cruz  Manchin  Tillis
Daines  Manley  Toomey
Donnelly  Martin  Udall
Duckworth  McCaskill  Van Hollen
Durbin  McConnell  Warner
Ezzi  McConley  Warner
Ernst  Moran  Whitehouse
Feinstein  Murkowski  Wyden
Fischler  Murphy  Young

The amendment (No. 1178) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 1139

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to a vote in relation to Baldwin amendment No. 1139.

The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I rise to speak to Baldwin amendment No. 1139. Wisconsin families need a tax break, and this is what I am working for. This budget will fast-track enormous tax breaks for the wealthiest few. It increases the deficit and puts Medicare and Medicaid on the chopping block.

I don’t think it is right to ask the middle class to pay for tax breaks for the top 1 percent with cuts to Medicare and Medicaid and rising deficits—deficits that will surely be used by my Republican colleagues to continue to justify an unwillingness to invest in the essential pillars of economic security for families.

The entire reason reconciliation was created was for deficit reduction, which the majority claims to care so much about. My amendment is very simple. It would reinstate a point of order, known as the Conrad rule, against reconciliation legislation that increases the deficit. Let’s use reconciliation to add to our deficit.

I urge my colleagues to support my commonsense amendment that has been cosponsored by Senators WARNER, WHITEHOUSE, Kaine, Coons, King, Wyden, and Van Hollen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment, which would create an uneven playing field for the upcoming congressional reconciliation. If adopted, this amendment would reinstate a point of order from the fiscal year 2008 budget resolution, which Congress repealed 2 years ago. It was repealed to ensure equal treatment of all reconciliation bills by restoring the level playing field that had existed prior to the adoption of the point of order in 2008. That was used under the Byrd rule.

The Byrd rule specifically does not require such budget neutrality inside the budget window. Why? Because reconciliation was designed to be neutral in its orientation. The Budget Act states that reconciliation instructions must enumerate changes in spending and revenue amounts. It does not stipulate those changes must be increases or decreases.

The fiscal year 2016 budget resolution restored the longstanding neutrality principle of the Byrd rule. It was the right thing to do then, and we should reaffirm that position today. I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator’s time has expired.

The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. ENZI. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 47, nays 51, as follows:
One of issues is making it refundable so the tax credit is available and useful to lower income families, who are the hardest hit by high child care costs, and also making it available to those families who use these funds to care for perhaps an aged relative or an injured relative.

I agree with the amendment, and I support it, but I think we need to make the point that there is more work to be done. I have introduced a bill with Senator HELLEN, Senator BURR, and Senator CORNYN on this subject, and I look forward to bringing that forward for consideration at an appropriate moment.

I urge support for Senator RUBIO’s amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to extend debate by 30 seconds.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I rise in support of this amendment.

This would correct a great defect in our Tax Code—the parent tax penalty. We have been punishing parents for decades because of the way our Federal tax system and our senior entitlement programs—Social Security and Medicare—interact. We have to end this tyranny and end this now. This amendment does that, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there any further debate on the amendment? If not, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 1205) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to a vote in relation to Rubio amendment No. 1226.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, this amendment relates to the child tax credit. It is abundantly clear that perhaps one of the most effective ways to deliver tax relief—tax cuts—to working families is through the expansion of this credit, as it is our hope to achieve during tax reform.

I think it is important to point out that the U.S. Department of Agriculture compiles data on how much it costs to raise children in the 21st century. Today, it is expected that middle-income families are going to spend $23,000 to raise their children. By the way, that does not include the cost of their going to college.

Being able to deliver relief to hard-working families through the expansion of the child tax credit, which is applicable not just against income tax but payroll tax, is perhaps the single most effective way to do that given the framework under which we will be working. That is what this amendment intends to reserve the opportunity to do.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I rise not in opposition to the amendment but to compliment the Senator for bringing this issue forward. I intend to support the amendment, but I just want to make the point that this is a broader issue in that we are going to have to address the child and dependent tax credit.

One of issues is making it refundable so the tax credit is available and useful to lower income families, who are the hardest hit by high child care costs, and also making it available to those families who use these funds to care for perhaps an aged relative or an injured relative.

I agree with the amendment, and I support it, but I think we need to make the point that there is more work to be done. I have introduced a bill with Senator HELLEN, Senator BURR, and Senator CORNYN on this subject, and I look forward to bringing that forward for consideration at an appropriate moment.

I urge support for Senator RUBIO’s amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, pursuant to section 904 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, I move to waive section 305(b)(2) of that act for purposes of the pending amendment, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 47, nays 51, as follows:

[Nay Rollcall Vote No. 231 Leg.]
The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 47, the nays are 51.

Three of the Senators not chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The point of order is sustained and the amendment falls.

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Donnelly amendment be modified with the text of his amendment No. 1423, which is at the desk.

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

The amendment (No. 1234), as modified, is as follows:

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to eliminating tax breaks for companies that ship jobs to foreign countries)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 3. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO ELIMINATING TAX BREAKS FOR COMPANIES THAT SHIP JOBS TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

The Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may revise the allocations of a committee or committees, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution, and make adjustments to the pay-as-you-go ledger, for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, amendments between the Houses, motions, or conference reports relating to eliminating tax breaks for companies that outsource jobs to foreign countries, by the amounts provided in such legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over either the period of the total of fiscal years 2018 through 2022 or the period of the total of fiscal years 2018 through 2027.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I further ask that the pending Kaine amendment be temporarily laid aside and that the Brown amendment No. 1378 be made pending and be the next vote in the series, with 2 minutes of debate prior to the vote.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 1222

There will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote in relation to Portman amendment No. 1422.

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise to speak on amendment No. 1422, which is a commonsense and, up to now, bipartisan approach to international tax reform. It simply says that under this budget we would do international tax reform. It would create incentives to have more jobs here in this country. Those are incentives for both U.S. companies and foreign companies to create jobs here in America.

This is not a partisan issue; it has been bipartisan. In fact, it was part of the Simpson-Bowles provisions with regard to reform. Only a couple of years ago, I cochaired a working group on this issue with the now minority leader, Senator SCHUMER, where we came up with a proposal which said that the international system is broken and that we need to move to one like the one we are talking about in this amendment that brings back jobs. One of the problems is that the current Tax Code actually encourages companies to keep their money offshore. We think we could bring back a lot of that money. There is probably $2.5 to $3 trillion locked out offshore. But it is worse than that. It also leads to American jobs being taken over by foreign companies and these inversions we have heard so much about. In the last 24 hours, we had another major inversion. Companies that have household names are picking up and leaving our country and taking their jobs and investment with them.

This amendment is common sense, Mr. President. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, I rise in support of the Portman amendment. We can all agree that tax reform should help create more good jobs and protect the ones we already have. I support the Portman amendment, and I look forward to colleagues supporting my amendment that ensures that companies that ship American jobs to foreign countries are not eligible for tax breaks. I want to work with my colleagues to make sure any tax reform package is good for American workers. Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields to the Senator from Indiana?

If no one yields time, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 1422) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 1234, AS MODIFIED

There will now be 2 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to a vote in relation to Donnelly amendment No. 1234, as modified.

The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the amendment I offered to address the outsourcing of American jobs. Currently, American companies that ship jobs to foreign countries can still claim massive tax breaks, which is wrong, and we should claw back incentives and prohibit companies from receiving tax breaks for outsourcing jobs.

My end outsourcing amendment is common sense for taxpayers, supporting American workers, not those shipping jobs to foreign countries. I urge all of my colleagues to support this amendment.

Mr. President, I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

If no one yields time, the question is on agreeing to the amendment, as modified.

The amendment (No. 1234), as modified, was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 1378 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1116

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to a vote in relation to Brown amendment No. 1378. The clerk will report the amendment. The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) proposes an amendment numbered 1378 to amendment No. 1116.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment reads:

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to providing tax benefits to patriot employers that invest in American jobs and provide fair pay and benefits to workers)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 3. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO PROVIDING TAX BENEFITS TO PATRIOT EMPLOYERS THAT INVEST IN AMERICAN JOBS AND PROVIDE FAIR PAY AND BENEFITS TO WORKERS.

The Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may revise the allocations of a committee or committees, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution, and make adjustments to the pay-as-you-go ledger, for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, amendments between the Houses, motions, or conference reports relating to income taxes paid by businesses, which may include measures providing tax breaks for companies that have not moved overseas to avoid paying their fair share of taxes, have maintained or expanded their United States workforce, or have provided fair wages and quality health insurance, prepared workers for retirement, hired veterans and workers with disabilities, and provided paid family medical leave, by the amounts provided in such legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over either the period of the total of fiscal years 2018 through 2022 or the period of the total of fiscal years 2018 through 2027.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask for support of the Patriot Corporation Act amendment. It is all pretty simple. Over the years, we have seen companies shut down plants in Mansfield, OH, or Dayton, OH, and move to Tijuana, Mexico, or Hunan, China, and then sell their production back in the United States.

Under this simple idea, the Patriot Corporation Act, companies that do the right thing—companies that pay their workers decent wages; companies that do the right thing by their workers in terms of benefits, healthcare, and pensions; companies that make their products and keep their production in the United States—will get a tax break. They will pay a lower tax rate.

Yesterday at the White House, about 15 Senators met with President Trump. I talked to him about the Patriot Corporation Act. He said he likes the idea.

It is about time that U.S. companies that do the right thing should be rewarded instead of those companies that shut down production and move overseas and sell their products back. It is the right thing to do. It is a simple idea. Its time has come, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.
Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment. The budget resolution’s reconciliation instruction to the Finance Committee does not and should not specify the policies or provisions that are being reported out of the Budget Committee resolution. The Finance framework includes international tax reform that will incentivize companies to invest domestically and create jobs in the United States. But this amendment defines “patriot employers” with a long list of criteria and is a punitive tax breaks for these companies. “Patriot employers” should not be defined by the budget process or by politics but by those that allow our constituents to join and remain in the workforce so as to participate in the American dream.

American companies will be able to create additional jobs based on tax relief envisioned by the Finance Committee. As such, we should pass the resolution and reconciliation in a timely manner, and we should oppose this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. BROWN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

There appears to be a sufficient second among the Members present.

The clerk will call the roll.

Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 47, nays 51, as follows:

[Roll Call Vote No. 232 Leg.]

YEAS—47

Baldwin
Bennet
Blumenthal
Booker
Brown
Cantwell
Cardin
Carpenter
Casey
Coons
Cortez Masto
Donnelly
Duckworth
Durbin
Feinstein
Franken
NAYS—51

Alexander
Barrasso
Blumenthal
Blunt
Boozman
Burr
Capito
Cassidy
Collins
Corker
Coryn
Cotton
Crapo
Cruz
Daines
Enzi

Sullivan
Thune
Tillis
Toomey
Young

Cochran
Menendez

S6621

SEC. 2001. RECONCILIATION IN THE SENATE.

(a) AMENDMENTS NOS. 1296 AND 1375 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1116

The amendment (No. 1378) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

AMENDMENTS NO. 1296 AND 1375 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1116

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following amendments be called up en bloc and reported by number: Paul No. 1296 and Cardin No. 1375.

I further ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote in relation to these amendments in the order listed; that there be no second-degree amendments in order to the amendments prior to the votes; finally, that there be 2 minutes, equally divided between the managers or their designees, prior to each vote, and that all votes in this series be 10 minutes in length.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the amendments en bloc by number.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Wyoming [Mr. ENZI], for others, proposes amendments numbered 1296 and 1375 en bloc to amendment No. 1116.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 1296

(Purpose: To modify reconciliation instructions to reduce the deficit)

Strike section 2001 and insert the following:

SEC. 2001. RECONCILIATION IN THE SENATE.

(a) COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE.—The Committee on Agriculture of the Senate shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction that—

(1) that reduce the deficit for fiscal year 2018 by not less than $4,800,000,000.

(b) COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES.—The Committee on Armed Services of the Senate shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction that—

(1) that reduce the deficit for fiscal year 2018 by not less than $480,000,000.

(c) COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS.—The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction that—

(1) that reduce the deficit for fiscal year 2018 by not less than $9,660,000,000.

(d) COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES.—The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction that—

(1) that reduce the deficit for fiscal year 2018 by not less than $12,970,000,000.

(e) COMMITTEE ON FINANCE.—The Committee on Finance of the Senate shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction that—

(1) reduce new budget authority for fiscal year 2018 by not less than $30,500,000,000; and

(2) that increase the deficit by not more than $1,500,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2018 through 2027.

(f) COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS.—The Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction that—

(1) that reduce the deficit for fiscal year 2018 by not less than $6,760,000,000.

(g) COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS.—The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction that reduce the deficit for fiscal year 2018 by not less than $16,900,000,000.

(h) COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY.—The Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction that reduce the deficit for fiscal year 2018 by not less than $21,720,000,000.

(i) COMMITTEE ON VETERANS’ AFFAIRS.—The Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction that reduce the deficit for fiscal year 2018 by not less than $490,000,000.

(j) SUBMISSIONS.—In the Senate, not later than November 13, 2017, the Committees named in subsections (a) through (i) shall submit their recommendations to the Committee on the Budget of the Senate. Upon receiving such recommendations, the Committee on the Budget of the Senate shall report to the Senate a reconciliation bill carrying out all such recommendations without any substantive revision.

AMENDMENT NO. 1375

(Purpose: To create a point of order against legislation that includes deficit-financed tax cuts)

At the end of title IV, add the following:

SEC. 4. POINT OF ORDER AGAINST LEGISLATION THAT INCLUDES DEFICIT-FINANCED TAX CUTS.

(a) POINT OF ORDER.—It shall not be in order in the Senate to consider any bill, joint resolution, conference report, amendment, amendment between the Houses, or conference report that includes tax cuts and would cause or increase a deficit or reduce a surplus.

(b) WAIVER AND APPEAL.—Subsection (a) may be waived or suspended in the Senate only by an affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members, duly chosen and sworn. An affirmative vote of three-fifths of the Members of the Senate, duly chosen and sworn, shall be required to sustain an appeal of the ruling of the Chair on a point of order raised under subsection (a).

AMENDMENT NO. 1296

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote in relation to Paul amendment No. 1296.

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, this amendment is about whether or not we are serious about the debt. In the current budget, there is no plan to reduce the debt by $96 billion in mandatory spending. I applaud that, but we need budget reconciliation instructions to allow it to happen. This amendment will allow instructions so we can really do what we say we are going to do, which is to cut spending.

I think, in light of the fact that we are for tax cuts, we ought to also be for reducing spending so we don’t explode the debt.

I recommend a “yes” vote on reconciliation instructions to allow for mandatory savings and spending.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I rise in strong opposition to the Paul amendment. This amendment includes reconciliation instructions to cut nearly $100 billion in programs that are vital to working families in this country, including education, healthcare, nutrition, affordable housing, and many, many other programs.

This amendment paves the way to make it easier to cut Medicare by over
$400 billion and Medicaid by over $1 trillion over the next decade in order to provide almost $2 trillion in tax cuts to the top 1 percent.

This amendment should be defeated. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment. Mr. PAUL. I ask for the yeas and nays. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll. The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN).

The amendment (No. 1298) was rejected.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following amendments be called up en bloc and reported by: Paul No. 1298, Lee No. 1430, and Paul No. 1277 to Amendment Nos. 1298, 1430, and 1277 to Title II of H.R. 1, the “Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.”

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote in relation to the above amendments in the order listed; finally, that there be 2 minutes equally divided between the managers or their designees prior to all further votes tonight and that they be 10 minutes in length.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered. The bill clerk read as follows:

Mr. ENZI. The next four votes will be on the Kaine amendment No. 1249, the Paul amendment No. 1298, the Lee amendment No. 1430, and the Paul amendment No. 1277.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendments en bloc by number. The bill clerk read as follows:

Mr. ENZI. The next four votes will be on the Kaine amendment No. 1249, the Paul amendment No. 1298, the Lee amendment No. 1430, and the Paul amendment No. 1277.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment (No. 1296) was rejected.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment. Budget rules don’t accommodate current tax policy. This means at least $460 billion of scored revenue loss can be attributed to the difference between a current law baseline and a current policy baseline. Many of the tax extenders covered by this amount are popular and are supported on a bipartisan basis.

This amendment is corrosive to the budget resolution’s privilege. It falls outside the scope of what is appropriate for inclusion. Adoption of corrosive amendments could be fatal to the resolution’s privilege, and loss of privilege could compromise our ability to pass tax reform and to enforce the budget spending limits.

Further, this amendment is also non-germane. The Congressional Budget Act requires that amendments to a budget resolution be germane—a statutory regulation we can’t ignore.

So I raise a point of order against this amendment under the Budget Act’s section 305(b)(2). The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, what the chairman is saying is, basically, the process will be used in order to add to the deficit. Therefore, pursuant to section 904 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, I move to waive section 305(b) of that act for purposes of the pending amendment, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The clerk will call the roll. The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the amendment falls.
On page 6, line 2, decrease the amount by $6,450,000,000.

On page 6, line 3, decrease the amount by $800,000,000.

On page 6, line 15, decrease the amount by $33,260,000,000.

On page 6, line 16, decrease the amount by $800,000,000.

On page 6, line 17, decrease the amount by $6,450,000,000.

On page 7, line 3, decrease the amount by $33,260,000,000.

On page 7, line 4, decrease the amount by $6,450,000,000.

On page 7, line 5, decrease the amount by $800,000,000.

On page 7, line 19, decrease the amount by $43,000,000,000.

On page 7, line 20, decrease the amount by $33,260,000,000.

On page 7, line 24, decrease the amount by $6,450,000,000.

On page 8, line 3, decrease the amount by $600,000,000.

AMENDMENT NO. 1298
(Purpose: To provide for reconciliation instructions to the relevant committees for the purpose of repealing and replacing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.)

In section 2001, strike subsection (c) and insert the following:

(c) COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS.—The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction to reduce the deficit by not less than $1,000,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2018 through 2027.

(d) COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY.—The Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction to reduce the deficit by not less than $1,000,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2018 through 2027.

(e) COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS.—The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate shall report changes in laws within its jurisdiction to reduce the deficit by not less than $1,000,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2018 through 2027.

(f) SUBMISSIONS.—In the Senate, not later than November 13, 2017, the Committees named in subsections (a) through (e) shall submit their recommendations to the Committees on the Budget of the Senate. Upon receiving such recommendations, the Committee on the Budget of the Senate shall report to the Senate a reconciliation bill carrying out all such recommendations without any substantive revision.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

AMENDMENT NO. 1299
Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 1299.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment is pending.

Mr. KAINE. The amendment is a simple amendment, folks. It is about transparency. Two years ago, the Senate passed a budget that added a laudatory requirement to have a Congressional Budget Office score for reconciliation legislation 24 hours in advance of voting on the legislation. There are obvious benefits to the Members who are voting and obvious benefits to the American public.

The majority resolution before us from committee repealed that requirement. The majority has argued that it is unnecessary because the requirement has never been triggered. But I remember that just a couple of months ago, the Senate was debating the Obamacare legislation that hadn't seen the light of day and didn't have a CBO score.

Do we really believe the answer to our problem is to make it easier to pass legislation without knowing the cost? I think the 24-hour requirement is worthy, it should be continued, and I think it should be extended to include amendments in the nature of a substitute.

I ask all my colleagues to support transparency and not embarrass the institution by enabling us to more easily pass important legislation without the public knowing the score.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment. The congressional budget clearly empowers the Budget Committee chair as scorekeeper. Since becoming chairman in 2015, I am pleased to say that the Budget Committee has always discharged its responsibilities with scores in hand, proving our important work and function without this amendment.

In fact, the 28-hour rule is a recent creation, and its repeal shows no deviation from Senate practice. It would upset the rules that the congressional Budget Act is a law and its repeal shows no deviation from Senate practice. It would upset the Budget Committee chair as scorekeeper.

The amendment (No. 1298) was rejected.

AMENDMENT NO. 1299
The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to a vote in relation to Paul amendment No. 1299.

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, this amendment is about the debt. We have a $20 trillion debt. It is about whether we are serious about tackling that debt. The budget before us exceeds our own spending caps by $43 billion.

You will be told that technically that is not so because we hide the money by sticking it in an account we call the Overseas Contingency Operations. Over the past 3 years, we have spent more than $1.7 trillion in this account, but we don't account for it, and we don't budget for it. What I am asking us to do is to be responsible, budget for this, stay within our self-imposed caps, and actually act as though we really believe in what we say—that the debt is a problem.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment. The amendment seeks to reduce discretionary appropriations this fiscal year by $43 billion. As Members are aware, the resolution's discretionary figures for this fiscal year are fully consistent with the Budget Control Act spending limits. If they weren't, then the resolution would be subject to a 60-vote point of order.
members of the Budget Committee worked hard to craft a resolution with levels that would put us on a better fiscal path, with $5.1 trillion in spending reductions over the next 10 years. The resolution already contains ample restraint to both discretionary and mandatory spending.

As the Appropriations Committee has reported many of its bills already, this amendment could be detrimental to the appropriations process as it stands today and the allocation this resolution will provide.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEAHY. My President, I agree with my colleague that there are no recommendations on where these cuts are coming from. Do they come from the programs that support our Nation’s veterans, from the National Institutes of Health—the cutting-edge cancer research it conducts? You can’t turn research on and off. Scientists don’t hit a button and say, this is the program I want to cut”—not do something like this, where we don’t know if the cut will be for veterans, education, cancer research, or anything else.

I oppose the amendment.

To reiterate, President PAUL provides no recommendations on who he wants to hurt. Should it come from programs that support our Nation’s veterans? Should it come from the National Institutes of Health and the cutting-edge cancer research it conducts? You cannot turn research on and off. Scientists don’t hit a button and say, this is the program I want to cut.”—not do something like this, where we don’t know if the cut will be for veterans, education, cancer research, or anything else.

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I oppose the amendment.

The amendment (No. 1298) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to a vote in relation to Lee amendment No. 1430.

The Senator from Utah. Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I am offering amendment No. 1430 to repeal ObamaCare regulations that are wreaking havoc on our health insurance market. Healthcare costs are rising dramatically, unsustainably, and unaffordably. Healthcare costs are rising as a result of ObamaCare’s despot’s regime of aggressive healthcare regulations. Countless working families are treading water just to try to stay afloat. A good chunk of these costs also can be pinned directly on the burdensome ObamaCare regulations.

According to one HHS study, ObamaCare regulations caused pre-
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN, The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 33, nays 66, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 238 Leg.]

YEAS—33

NAYs—66

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN, The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Kentucky.

The amendment (No. 1277) was rejected.

AMENDMENT NO. 1277

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to a vote in relation to Paul amendment No. 1277.

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, across the country, Republicans promised to repeal ObamaCare. They promised to repeal all of ObamaCare, root and branch. Not one Republican promised to keep and block grant ObamaCare. They promised to repeal ObamaCare.

Tonight I present another chance. My amendment will provide budget reconciliation instructions so Republican Senators can fulfill their promise; so they can actually repeal ObamaCare, root and branch, as they promised.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, this amendment provides reconciliation instructions to three Senate committees for the purpose of repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act; in effect, rerunning the same bad movie the Senate has now seen three times. By now, Americans understand what these partisan Republican healthcare bills have in store for the middle class: higher premiums, worse healthcare, and a safety net in tatters.

I will close by saying that there is now a desire on both sides of the aisle to set aside this my-way-or-the-highway approach to governing. Bipartisanship is about taking each other’s good ideas, and I believe the Senate can work together to lower people’s premiums.

This amendment is a vote to look for more partisan ideological trophies when the Senate ought to be working together to find common ground.

I urge my colleagues to reject this amendment.

The Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI), for himself and others, proposes amendments numbered 1553, 1428, 1404, 1429, 1552, 1391, 1561, and 1167 en bloc to amendment No. 1116.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 1553

(Purpose: To establish a deficit-neutral reserve fund relating to the provision of full, permanent, and mandatory funding for the payment in lieu of tax revenue that would be due to a State or local government if the State or local government owned the land)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 3. DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO PROVIDING FULL, PERMANENT, AND MANDATORY FUNDING FOR THE PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES PROGRAM.

The Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may revise the allocations of a committee or committees, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution and make adjustments to the pay-as-you-go ledger, for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, amendments between the Houses, motions, or conference reports relating to providing full, permanent, and mandatory funding for the payment in lieu of taxes program by the amounts provided in such legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not increase the deficit over either the period of the total of fiscal years 2018 through 2022 or the period of the total of fiscal years 2018 through 2027.

AMENDMENT NO. 1428

(Purpose: To modify a deficit neutral reserve fund relating to public land and the environment to address making payments under the payments in lieu of taxes program equivalent to the property tax revenue that would be due to a State or local government if the State or local government owned the land)

On page 47, line 6, strike “$1,500,000,000,000” and insert “$2,500,000,000,000”.

AMENDMENT NO. 1429

(Purpose: To establish a spending-neutral reserve fund relating to prohibiting Federal regulation of entirely intrastate species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973)

At the end of title III, add the following:

SEC. 3. SPENDING-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND RELATING TO CLARIFYING FEDERAL JURISDICTION RELATING TO INTASTATE SPECIES.

The Chairman of the Committee on the Budget of the Senate may revise the allocations of a committee or committees, aggregates, and other appropriate levels in this resolution and make adjustments to the pay-as-you-go ledger, for one or more bills, joint resolutions, amendments, amendments between the Houses, motions, or conference reports relating to prohibiting Federal regulation of entirely intrastate species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), by the amounts provided in such legislation for those purposes, provided that such legislation would not raise new revenue and would not increase the deficit over either the period of the total of fiscal years 2018 through 2022 or the period of the total of fiscal years 2018 through 2027.
we will do these 10-minute rollcall votes and wrap it up.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I thank the majority leader. We completely agree on this issue. We hope Members on both sides will stay in their seats so we can finish quickly, without going through the ridiculous vote-arama that we have done in previous years.

I yield the floor.

AMENDMENT NO. 1553

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to a vote in relation to Udall amendment No. 1553.

The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, this amendment calls for legislation to fully and permanently fund the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program. Senator HEINRICH and I have long called for this solution. Rural counties in New Mexico and other States across the West and across the country have large amounts of Federal lands within their boundaries. These counties rely on funding from the PILT Program to provide better schools, maintain roads and bridges, and support thousands of local jobs.

We currently fund PILT year by year. I have fought for this funding as a member of the Appropriations Committee, but we need to do more. We need permanent funding to ensure that local communities can count on our resources being there every year to provide basic services. I urge support for the Udall-Heinrich amendment and yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment, reluctantly. I have always fought to make sure the rural communities can keep the lights on. Approximately half of the land in my home State of Wyoming is under Federal control, and counties, therefore, are unable to obtain property tax revenue from a large part of the State.

Payment in lieu of taxes isn’t a giveaway to these counties. It is compensation for the money they lose because they are unable to tax Federal lands within their borders, even though they are required to provide services on these lands. However, this resolution already has the reserved funds for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program. I find this amendment to be duplicative and unnecessary. Furthermore, the vote-arama isn’t the correct forum to contemplate making any program permanent and mandatory, even one I have long supported.

I look forward to working with my colleague from New Mexico and with Members from Western States on fiscally responsible legislation to provide fairness and equity for America’s rural counties and their communities.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. UDALL. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 58, nays 41, as follows:

(Rollcall Vote No. 239 Leg.)

YEAS—58

Mr. McConnell. Mr. President, I look forward to working with my other interested Members from Western States on fiscally responsible legislation to provide fairness and equity for America’s rural counties and their communities.

The result was announced—yeas 58, nays 41, as follows:

(Rollcall Vote No. 239 Leg.)

YEAS—58

Mr. McConnell. Mr. President, I look forward to working with my other interested Members from Western States on fiscally responsible legislation to provide fairness and equity for America’s rural counties and their communities.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 58, nays 41, as follows:

(Rollcall Vote No. 239 Leg.)

YEAS—58

Mr. McConnell. Mr. President, I look forward to working with my other interested Members from Western States on fiscally responsible legislation to provide fairness and equity for America’s rural counties and their communities.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 58, nays 41, as follows:

(Rollcall Vote No. 239 Leg.)

YEAS—58

Mr. McConnell. Mr. President, I look forward to working with my other interested Members from Western States on fiscally responsible legislation to provide fairness and equity for America’s rural counties and their communities.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 58, nays 41, as follows:

(Rollcall Vote No. 239 Leg.)

YEAS—58

Mr. McConnell. Mr. President, I look forward to working with my other interested Members from Western States on fiscally responsible legislation to provide fairness and equity for America’s rural counties and their communities.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 58, nays 41, as follows:

(Rollcall Vote No. 239 Leg.)

YEAS—58

Mr. McConnell. Mr. President, I look forward to working with my other interested Members from Western States on fiscally responsible legislation to provide fairness and equity for America’s rural counties and their communities.
The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I am offering this amendment to pay back western communities for the loss that occurs to them as a result of the widespread ownership of Federal public land.

As I have long stressed, Federal land is often a bad bargain for State and local governments, like those in Utah, where almost two-thirds of the land is owned and controlled by the Federal Government, thus prohibiting local governments from taxing that land. Not only does Federal ownership reduce economic opportunity on that land, not only does it rob local residents of local control, but it also shrinks the property tax base that Utahns rely on to fund essential community services.

The Payments in Lieu of Taxes Program, or PILT, was designed to address this very inequity by paying States for the property tax revenue they lost as a result of Federal land ownership, but the current formula for PILT does not adequately compensate local governments for this loss. In fact, it doesn’t even come close. My amendment offers these predominantly rural communities a revisited, revised, and improved PILT formula to compensate them for these very losses.

I encourage my colleagues to support it, and I request a voice vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, there is wide support for PILT from both Democrats and Republicans, as witnessed by this last vote. What we need to do now is to make sure that it works fairly for counties and is not done arbitrarily.

The CRS found that taking the approach in Senator LEE’s amendment would break the PILT Program. Not only would calculating each county’s payments be nearly impossible, the program would not be fair. In fact, the CRS cited a 2010 study that found that the approach in Senator LEE’s amendment would result in two-thirds of all the counties that receive PILT funding receiving lower payments than they do now.

I urge my colleagues to vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. PAUL. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?
The amendment (No. 1552) was agreed to.

The amendment (No. 1301) was rejected.

The amendment (No. 1501) was agreed to.
amendment paves the way for a $91 billion increase in defense spending in fiscal year 2018.

This amendment would renew the Republican effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act and throw up to 32 million Americans off of the health insurance they currently have, increase premiums for older workers, and make even more harmful cuts to Medicaid.

This amendment includes a provision requiring the use of so-called dynamic scoring, or what President George H.W. Bush appropriately referred to as voodoo economics, allowing the Republicans to claim that their massive tax breaks for the rich will pay for themselves.

At a time when the cost of college education is skyrocketing, this amendment calls for dramatic cuts to student financial aid.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. ENZI. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 52, nays 48, as follows:

The amendment (No. 1167) in the nature of a substitute, as amended, was agreed to, nays 49, as follows:

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 49, as follows:

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 71, as amended), was adopted.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader...
to take more money out of Washington’s pockets and put more in yours.

With this budget, we are on a path to delivering much needed relief to American individuals and families who have borne the burdens of an unfair tax code for entirely too long. I want to particularly thank Chairman MIKE ENZI and the members of the Budget Committee and the staff for their extraordinary work on this budget.

BANKRUPTCY JUDGESHIP ACT OF 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate the message to accompany H.R. 2266.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the House agree to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2266) entitled “An Act to amend title 28 of the United States Code to authorize the appointment of additional bankruptcy judges; and for other purposes.”, with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to concur in the Senate amendment to H.R. 2266.

CLOTURE MOTION

I send a cloture motion to the desk on the motion to concur.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 2266. Mitch McConnell, Pat Roberts, Roy Blunt, Shelley Moore Capito, Mike Rounds, John Thune, Orrin G. Hatch, Deb Fischer, Cory Gardner, John Barrasso, Johnny Isakson, John Boozman, Thom Tillis, Richard Burr, James M. Inhofe, Roger F. Wicker, Lindsey Graham.

MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 1568

Mr. MCCONNELL. I move to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 2266, with a further amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] moves to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 2266, with an amendment numbered 1568.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 1569 to amendment No. 1568.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

At the end add the following.

“Thanking Senator Enzi and the Budget Committee Members and Staff

Mr. CORY, Mr. President, I want to take a few minutes following the remarks of the majority leader to thank Chairman Enzi, the manager, and the whole Budget Committee for the tremendous work that has been done on this budget resolution. I also want to express my gratitude and our collective gratitude to the Budget Committee staff, who has done such heroic work to get us this far. This might well be the best and most well-run budget consideration process during my time in the Senate. Certain things that Senator Enzi has gotten us to this point at this time of night, when typically this ends in the wee hours of the morning, I think he is to be commended.

The resolution has gone through regular order from the very start, working its way through the Budget Committee where amendments were considered and adopted from both sides. Chairman Enzi has been a very effective floor manager as we have been considering this year’s budget resolution obtaining consensus from both sides of the aisle to ensure that the Senate has considered a number of amendments in a timely fashion. That is something that is not always so common around here.”

I want to take a moment to note the great job the chairman has done in getting us to this point. As we all know, without a budget resolution, there will be no tax reform. This is the first step to get for us to get tax reform, which will unshackle the sleeping giant of the American economy, something from which all Americans will benefit.

I yield the floor.

THE BUDGET

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, having been away for a while from the Senate, I am pretty amazed to come back today and see a budget that is passed that throws away years of rhetoric about fiscal conservatism. The Senate just passed a budget that adds $1.5 trillion to our national debt, a budget that slashes seniors’ healthcare by $470 billion. It decimates the Medical Program for parents and grandparents in nursing homes, those who are disabled, and those who are among the poorest, with cuts of over $1 trillion over the next decade.

In total, the Republican budget would cut more than $5 trillion over the next decade from education, healthcare, affordable housing, childcare, nutrition assistance, transportation, and other programs that all Americans rely on.

The question many New Jerseyans will be asking me is, Why? Why do Republicans in Congress add $1.5 trillion