

that, he will see a bipartisan vote in the House of Representatives that will be responsible and do the right thing.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

THE FARM BILL

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, while I have a moment—I thought that there were others wishing to speak—since there are not, I wanted to take one more moment to speak about something else that is running out today that I am deeply involved in and deeply concerned about.

That is the 5-year agriculture, nutrition, and conservation policy of this country, the farm bill. We have seen the end today of the extension that was put in place last year because of House inaction. Starting tomorrow, we essentially begin to operate on fumes. We will see a time period in a few weeks when we will see the full impact of having no farm bill.

It is incredibly important that we use this time immediately to negotiate a final farm bill that will not only reduce the deficit, as our bill does by \$24 billion, but one that can get a straight bipartisan vote as we did here in the Senate with over two-thirds of the Senate twice voting for a comprehensive reform bill that addresses supporting our farmers and ranchers from a risk management standpoint, while eliminating subsidies that do not make sense from a taxpayer standpoint, strengthening crop insurance, strengthening conservation to protect our land, and air, and water, focusing on regional and local foods, farmers markets, small farmers, to support them as well, new jobs and bioenergy, as well as investing in rural communities all across America through our rural development efforts.

What we call the farm bill really is the rural economic development bill for the country. Some 16 million people work in this country because of agriculture. This is the biggest jobs bill we will pass. Our farmers and all of those impacted have been waiting and waiting and waiting and, frankly, have had enough. They want this to get done.

So I call on our House colleagues again to join with us to be able to finally get this passed into law. This is incredibly important for the economy, for small towns such as the one where I grew up in Clare, MI, all across Michigan, all across the country.

It is incredibly important for our efforts to continue to protect our soil and our forests and our air and our water and to be able to maintain the beautiful outdoors that we do and support for hunters and fishermen and

others that we do through efforts in the farm bill. It is incredibly important that this get done. It is long overdue.

So I couldn't let this evening go by without indicating that on the long list of things that have not been done, the September 30 date is incredibly important for rural America, for our farmers and ranchers who need help when they have a loss, for our families who need help when they have a loss, and for our ability to continue to grow jobs.

Our largest area of exports is in agriculture. It is a vibrant, important part of the economy. There is no excuse for this not having already been done. Again, too many games have been played attacking families who need help and choosing not to proceed in a reasonable, balanced way as we did in the Senate.

I am recommitting myself again, as I have day after day—and tomorrow—to making sure I do everything I possibly can. I call on House colleagues and on the Speaker to do everything they can in order to finally get a 5-year comprehensive food, farm, and jobs bill done so that we may continue to grow a very important part of the economy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

Mrs. MURRAY. I know many of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle are deeply frustrated this evening. Once again, with only a few hours left on the clock, House Republican brinkmanship has us struggling to avoid burdening our families and our economy with more dysfunction and uncertainty. This pattern is simply unacceptable, and some of us, Democrats and Republicans, have been trying for months to break it.

When the Senate budget passed, I was hopeful that we could move to a bipartisan budget conference where Democrats and Republicans from the House and Senate could all come together, sit down, and try to work out our differences. Democrats tried to begin a budget conference 18 times. Many Senate Republicans agreed with us that we should continue negotiations and begin working toward that deal. Each time tea party Republicans and Republican leadership stood and said no. They made it very clear why: They believed they would have more leverage in a crisis—such as the one we are hours away from—than they had a few months ago when we were asking for orderly negotiations.

Instead of working on a bipartisan budget that would strengthen our economy, tea party Republicans began manufacturing this crisis to defund the Affordable Care Act.

This is a law, by the way, that is helping millions of Americans and beginning tomorrow, shutdown or no shutdown, is going to begin helping many more.

Due to Republican refusal to come to the table, we are now scrambling to avoid a shutdown.

I am confident the American people, including many in my home State, are looking at House Republicans and asking the same questions many of us are. They are asking: What are they thinking, and why would they hurt their own constituents simply to make a point?

Even if tea party Republicans don't want to admit it, a government shutdown wouldn't just impact people in Washington, DC, it would be felt across the country. In my home State of Washington, the impacts could be severe. First, Washington State is home to tens of thousands of Federal employees who will be furloughed or stop getting paid. It is also home to one of our Nation's largest veterans communities. The VA has confirmed this week that if the shutdown goes long enough, disability and GI benefits will stop for veterans in places such as Tacoma, Everett, and Spokane due to some tea party Republicans in Washington, DC, who can't have their way.

That is not all. If the tea party forces this government to shut down, our State's gorgeous national parks, such as Olympic National Park and Mount Rainier, will be closed to the public. Students at the University of Washington and Washington State University may not be able to access student loans to pay their tuition bills. Funds for important public health programs, such as WIC, would be cut for women and children who rely on them. Federal support for dozens of Head Start facilities in Seattle and across our State would be at risk.

The good news is that none of this has to happen. We still have time, and the Senate has passed a shutdown-prevention bill that would avoid all of this harm. The Senate's short-term funding bill would keep the government open at current spending levels with no changes in policies while we continue to work on that important long-term budget bill.

The Senate bill by no means is a long-term solution. It is not even close. But as we work to bridge the gap between the parties on budget issues, the absolute bare minimum Congress should be able to do, the very least we owe to our constituents is to not actively hurt them and sabotage the economy.

Playing partisan games with a temporary stopgap continuing resolution is like trying to take away health care from millions of Americans. Tea party Republicans are doing exactly that. Many of their fellow Republicans believe this is an irresponsible and unworkable attitude. Many Republicans have spoken to discourage their own colleagues from waging this pointless, harmful fight over defunding the Affordable Care Act. They have agreed with Democrats that while we might not see eye to eye on everything, we don't have to abandon our basic responsibilities—like keeping the government open—in order to negotiate.