ban on Federal funding of abortions is weakened in the Senate bill compared to the House.

As I speak today, the Senate bill is being written behind closed doors by the majority leader and others. If their final product includes anything less than the House-passed ban, the critical vote for pro-life Senators will be their vote on cloture on the motion to proceed. Why? Because if the motion to proceed is successful, it will end, in my opinion, any chance to match the House bill's ban on using Federal funds to fund abortion. It is the way the Senate works, according to its rules. Sixty votes would be needed to change the bill once a motion to proceed passes. Let me repeat: 60 votes would be needed to change the bill once a motion to proceed passes. We all know, regrettably, that there are not 60 Senators who would support the House provision that bans Federal funding for abortions; therefore, we would lack the votes to close the door on Federal funding of abortions if this bill proceeds to the floor with a weakened approach.

The ban on Federal funding of abortions must be a part of the Senate bill before debate is allowed to proceed. Don't be fooled by the claims that the motion to proceed to the bill is a first step in improving the bill; it will be the final say for the pro-life community.

I applaud my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have declared they will accept nothing less than a complete separation between Federal funds and abortion services. I wish to express unequivocally, I stand firmly with them. If we are presented with a weakened ban on Federal funding of abortion compared to the House version, we must vote against cloture on the motion to proceed to the bill. In my judgment, this point should be nonnegotiable.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3082, which the clerk will report by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3082) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Johnson/Hutchison amendment No. 2730, in the nature of a substitute.

Udall (NM) amendment No. 2737 (to amendment No. 2730), to make available from Medical Services, $150,000,000 for homeless veterans comprehensive service programs.

Johnson amendment No. 2733 (to amendment No. 2730), to increase by $50,000,000 the amount available for the Department of Veterans Affairs for minor construction projects for the purpose of converting unused Department of Veterans Affairs structures into housing with supportive services for homeless veterans, and to provide an offset.

Franken/Johnson amendment No. 2745 (to amendment No. 2730), to ensure that $5,000,000 is available for a study to assess the feasibility and advisability of using service dogs for the treatment or rehabilitation of veterans with physical or mental injuries or disabilities.

Inouye amendment No. 2754 (to amendment No. 2730), to permit $68,500,000, as requested by the Missile Defense Agency of the Department of Defense, to be used for the construction of a test facility to support the Phased Adaptive Approach for missile defense in Europe, with an offset.

Coburn amendment No. 2757 (to amendment No. 2730), to require public disclosure of certain reports.

Durbin amendment No. 2759 (to amendment No. 2730), to enhance the ability of the Department of Veterans Affairs to recruit and retain health care administrators and providers in underserved rural areas.

Durbin amendment No. 2760 (to amendment No. 2730), to designate the North Chicago Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Illinois, as the ''Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center''.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. JOHNSON. Madam President, I look forward to making progress on the MILCON–VA bill today so we can reach agreement on a finite list of amendments and vote on them next Monday, followed by final passage of the bill. I wish we were in that position today, but since that is not possible, I hope we can at least arrive at a roadmap to final passage next week.

This bill is too important to our military troops and their families and to our Nation's veterans to allow it to become caught up in petty politics. We do not need grandstanding on this bill or message amendments or delaying tactics driven by a political agenda. We just need to get the job done and get this bill to the President.

We will be working throughout the day to try to clear and dispose of noncontroversial amendments and to try to come up with a short, finite list of amendments that can be voted on next Monday so we can clear the way for final passage of the bill that same day.

I know the leaders and the cloakrooms, as well as the committee staff, are working hard to clear amendments. I hope we will be at a point to dispose of some of those amendments soon.

I do not need to remind my colleagues that tomorrow is Veterans Day. If we cannot complete this bill today, let us at least return home with a plan to finish the bill next Monday.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

AMENDMENT NO. 2752 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2730

Mr. JOHANNS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment, if there is one, be set aside and that amendment No. 2752 be called up.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nebraska [Mr. JOHANNS] proposes an amendment numbered 2752 to amendment No. 2730.

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

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: Prohibiting use of funds to fund the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN))

On page 60, after line 24, insert the following:

SEC. 6____. None of the funds made available under this Act may be distributed to the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) or its subsidiaries.

Mr. JOHANNS. Madam President, this is an amendment I have offered on several appropriations bills. Each time, it has passed with overwhelming bipartisan support. Additionally, the continuing resolution includes similar language. But, of course, the CR runs out on December 18.

We need to continue passing this amendment; therefore, I need to continue to offer it. It basically says we are blocking all Federal funding under this bill to ACORN. I do have a piece of legislation pending that would take care of this across the Federal system, but that has not come to a vote yet. So I am offering today this amendment on ACORN. This amendment will continue to protect taxpayer dollars.

I do want to indicate to the manager of the bill that, of course, I am happy to work with my colleagues on a voice vote whenever the appropriate time arises for that to occur.

With that, Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I rise today on the eve of Veterans Day to honor all those who have and are now serving to protect our freedoms, especially the service men and women of my State who have such a vital role in our Nation's defense.

At trouble spots across the world—from Afghanistan to Korea, Iraq to Kosovo—Alaskan servicemembers are on the front lines.

Today, I welcome the opportunity to praise Alaska's service men and women, their families who are such a key part of our communities, and the thousands of veterans who have chosen to live in the 49th State.

Nearly 75 years ago, Air Force GEN Billy Mitchell testified before Congress and famously said:

Alaska is the most strategic place in the world.

General Mitchell's pronouncement might have been an eye-opener for Members of Congress in 1935, but the importance of Alaska's strategic location has been well known to Alaskans for centuries.

Shortly after Alaska's purchase from Russia in 1867, the U.S. Army was dispatched to help administer the new American territory. Within 10 years, a significant presence was established in Alaska by both the Navy and the Reserve Service, which later became the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Army helped maintain law and order during the turn of the century Gold Rush, which saw thousands scramble north in search of fame and fortune.

With the buildup to World War II, Alaska's vital role in the Nation's defense grew dramatically. Alaska's Aleutian Islands were the only American territory occupied by the Japanese during the war. Dislodging them in brutal conditions cost American and Japanese troops more than 6,000 casualties combined.

Servicing Alaska's strategic military needs during the war required construction of the 1,400-mile Alaskan-Canadian Highway, known as the ALCAN. This road was built largely by three African-American regiments, and their success helped spur the Army to end segregation among its ranks.

Some of the Nation's most essential eyes and ears during the war were soldiers of the Alaska Territorial Guard. These Eskimo volunteers, capable of living off the land as they guarded against invasion, knew every nook and cranny of Alaska's coastline. Today, some two dozen of these scouts are still with us—most in their eighties and still living largely off the land through subsistence hunting and fishing.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee and working with my colleague, Senator MURKOWSKI, we guaranteed in next year's military budget bill that these brave guardsmen will receive proper Federal benefits and recognition for their service.

Today Alaska is home to some 30,000 Active-Duty service men and women. Another 30,000 Alaskans are the family members of these soldiers and airmen.

Alaska's major military installations include Elmendorf, Eielson, and Clear Air Force Bases, Army Forts Richardson, Wainwright, and Greely, and Kulis Air National Guard Base. Through these bases, about one in five Alaskans has a personal tie to the military.

To maintain these vital posts, the Department of Defense spends in excess of $1.5 billion a year in our State. That is a huge part of Federal spending in Alaska, which constitutes about 18 percent of the State economy.

Alaska is also proud to have the highest per capita population of veterans of any State. The more than 75,000 veterans who call our State home comprise 11 percent of our population.

Alaska's bases support the latest and greatest in the military's arsenal: from the F–22, the Air Force's latest fifth generation fighter aircraft; the C–17 cargo aircraft; the Army's Stryker vehicle; and the Ground-Based Midcourse element of missile defense.

Today more than 4,000 servicemembers stationed in Alaska are supporting overseas contingency operations around the world.

Just last month, we welcomed home the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team of the 25th Infantry Division based at Fort Wainwright. This brigade spent 12 months in Iraq's Diyala Province doing a remarkable job protecting the people of Iraq.

Still in Iraq is the 545th Military Police Company of the Arctic Military Police Battalion that continues to patrol the streets of Baji.

The Alaska National Guard also has a vital role in that theater. The Guard's 207th Aviation Regiment continues to fly C–23 Sherpa military aircraft missions, delivering more than 1 million pounds of cargo throughout Iraq.

Back home, the Guard plays a significant role in the defense of our Nation around the clock. At Fort Greely, they staff the operations center for the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense system, protecting the United States from ballistic missile threats from countries such as North Korea and Iran.

The Guard also provides invaluable search and rescue support and other vital missions to ensure the safety of our citizens in our vast State.

Alaskans continue to serve in harm's way in Afghanistan and Iraq. The 4th Airborne Brigade Combat Team of the 25th Infantry Division operates in Afghanistan's Regional Command-East in support of the International Security Assistance Force.

These soldiers are bravely serving on the front lines, hunting down al-Qaida terrorists, securing the border, and trying to establish governance in this vital part of the world.

Since their arrival in February, the 4–25 BCT has suffered significant casualties. In fact, since the 9/11 attacks on America, 143 servicemembers from Alaskan units deployed in support of the global war on terror have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Madam President, I would like to honor those based in Alaska who were killed in action since September 11, 2001.

The pictures beside me which I show in the Chamber are of those who have fallen in the past year, just since Veterans Day 2008.

Just 2 weeks ago, a lifelong Alaskan paid the ultimate sacrifice. On October 23, in Afghanistan's Helmand Province, two U.S. aircraft collided in midair in the predawn dark. Marine Corps Cpl Gregory Fleury was the crew chief aboard one of those aircraft.

Corporal Fleury was just 23 years old, a graduate of Anchorage's Service High School. He had already served two tours of duty in Iraq as a combat helicopter mechanic and gunner.

The helicopter crash that took the young corporal's life was a bad one. But the Marines were able to recover one item that belonged to him—an Alaskan flag.

I spoke to Corporal Fleury's grandfather last week to thank him for his grandson's service on behalf of this proud Nation.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the names of all the Alaskan troops who have made the ultimate sacrifice since September 11, 2001, be printed in the RECORD.

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

Following is a list of Alaskan, or Alaska-based, soldiers who have died since 2003. They are presented chronologically.

2009–11–04: Spc. Julian Berisford
2009–10–26: Cpl. Gregory Fleury
2009–09–19: Spc. Michael S. Cote
2009–09–11: Pfc. Matthew M. Martinek
2009–09–08: Pfc. Zachary T. Myers
2009–09–08: Pfc. Thomas F. Lyons
2009–09–08: Staff Sgt. Shannon M. Smith
2009–09–06: Staff Sgt. Michael C. Murphrey
2009–09–04: Second Lt. Darryn Andrews
2009–08–26: Staff Sgt. Kurt R. Curtiss
2009–08–18: Pfc. Morris L. Walker
2009–08–18: Staff Sgt. Clayton P. Bowen
2009–07–29: Staff Sgt. Anthony S. Schmachtenberger
2009–07–06: Pfc. Nicolas H.J. Gideon
2009–07–04: Pfc. Justin A. Casillas
2009–07–04: Pfc. Aaron E. Fairbairn
2009–06–25: 1st Lt. Brian N. Bradshaw
2009–06–03: Spc. Jarrett P. Griemel
2009–03–15: Staff Sgt. Timothy Bowles
2009–03–09: Pfc. Patrick DeVoe II
2009–02–23: Spc. Michael B. Alleman
2009–02–23: Spc. Cpl. Michael L. Mayne
2009–02–23: Spc. Zachary F. Nordmeyer
2009–01–25: Spc. Cody L. Lamb
2008–11–28: Lt. William K. Jernigan
2008–11–15: CWO Donald V. Clark
2008–11–15: CWO Christian P. Humphreys
2008–10–24: Pfc. Cody J. Eggleston
2008–10–16: Pfc. Heath Pickard
2008–10–09: Cpl. Jason A. Karella
2008–09–15: Sgt. 1st Class Daniel R. Sexton
2008–02–02: Sgt. Naquan Reinaldo Williams, Jr.
2007–11–05: Staff Sgt. Carletta S. Davis
2007–11–05: Sgt. Derek T. Stenroos
2007–10–14: 1st Lt. Thomas M. Martin
2007–10–09: Sgt. Jason Lantieri
2007–08–01: CWO Jackie L. McFarlane Jr.
2007–08–14: Spc. Steven R. Jewell
2007–08–14: Staff Sgt. Stanley B. Reynolds
2007–08–14: Staff Sgt. Sean P. Fisher
2007–08–14: Christopher C. Johnson
2007–08–04: Pfc. Jaron D. Holliday
2007–08–04: Cpl. Jason K. LaFleur
2007–08–04: Sgt. Dustin S. Wakeman
2007–07–31: Sgt. Bradley W. Marshall
2007–07–31: Spc. Daniel F. Reyes
2007–07–23: Pfc. Jessy S. Rogers
2007–07–22: Sgt. Shawn G. Adams
2007–07–05: Michelle R. Ring
2007–06–25: Sgt. Trista L. Moretti
2007–06–10: Spc. Adam Herold
2007–05–22: Sgt. Robert J. Montgomery
2007–05–21: Cpl. Michael W. Davis
2007–05–21: Sgt. Brian D. Ardron
2007–05–21: Staff Sgt. Shannon Weaver

2007–05–19: Cpl. Ryan D. Collins
2007–05–18: Sgt. Ryan J. Baum
2007–05–17: Pfc. Victor M. Fontanilla
2007–05–17: Sgt. 1st Class Jesse B. Albrecht
2007–05–17: Spc. Coty J. Phelps
2007–05–03: Spc. Matthew T. Bolar
2007–05–03: First Lt. Colby J. Umbrell
2007–04–28: Staff Sgt. Michael R. Hullender
2007–04–12: Spc. James T. Lindsey
2007–04–12: Spc. John G. Borbonus
2007–04–12: Cpl. Cody Putman
2007–04–09: Cpl. Clifford A. Spohn
2007–04–08: Sgt. Adam P. Kennedy
2007–04–03: Staff Sgt. Shane R. Becker
2007–03–23: Spc. Lance C. Springer II
2007–03–16: Sgt. 1st Class Christopher R. Brevard
2007–03–11: Sgt. Daniel E. Woodcock
2007–02–19: Pfc. Adare W. Cleveland
2007–02–11: Sgt. Russell A. Kurtz
2007–01–22: Staff Sgt. Jamie D. Wilson
2007–01–20: Spc. Jeffrey D. Bisson
2007–01–20: Spc. Toby R. Olsen
2007–01–20: 1st Lt. Jacob N. Fritz
2007–01–20: Pfc. Shawn Patrick Falter
2007–01–20: Sgt. Phillip D. McNeill
2007–01–20: Pfc. Johnathon M. Millican
2007–01–20: Sgt. Sean Patrick Fennerty
2007–01–20: Sgt. Johnathan Bryan Chism
2007–01–15: Cpl. Jason J. Corbett
2007–01–05: Cpl. Jeremiah J. Johnson
2007–01–04: Staff Sgt. Charles D. Allen
2006–12–31: Pfc. Alan R. Blohm
2006–12–28: Spc. Dustin R. Donica
2006–12–26: Spc. Douglas L. Tinsley
2006–12–26: Spc. Joseph A. Strong
2006–12–20: Staff Sgt. Jacob McMillan
2006–12–20: Sgt. Scott Dykman
2006–12–10: Pfc. Shawn M. Murphy
2006–12–10: Sgt. Brennan C. Gibson
2006–12–10: Spc. Philip C. Ford
2006–12–07: Staff Sgt. Henry Linck
2006–12–07: Spc. Micah Gifford
2006–11–04: Spc. James L. Bridges
2006–11–02: Cpl. Michael H. Lasky
2006–10–30: Sgt. Kraig Foyteck
2006–10–11: Sgt. Nicholas Sowinski
2006–10–03: Sgt. Jonathan Rojas
2006–09–17: Sgt. David J. Davis
2006–09–10: Spc. Alexander Jordan
2006–09–02: Staff Sgt. Eugene H.E. Alex
2006–08–21: Master Sgt. Brad A. Clemmons
2006–08–09: Spc. Shane Woods
2006–07–12: Sgt. Irving Hernandez
2006–06–29: Sgt. Bryan C. Luckey
2006–06–07: 2nd Lt. John Shaw Vaughan
2006–05–31: Sgt. Benjamin Mejia
2006–05–29: Spc. Jeremy Loveless
2006–05–09: Spc. Aaron P. Latimer
2006–04–27: Staff Sgt. Mark Wall
2006–04–25: Pfc. Raymond Henry
2006–04–11: Cpl. Kenneth D. Hess
2006–04–09: Spc. Joseph I. Love-Fowler
2006–04–08: Spc. Shawn Creighton
2006–04–06: Spc. Dustin James Harris
2006–02–26: Spc. Joshua M. Pearce
2006–02–06: Spc. Patrick W. Herried
2006–02–05: Spc. Jeremiah J.Boehmer
2006–02–05: Staff Sgt. Christopher R. Morningstar
2006–01–22: Staff Sgt. Brian McElroy
2006–01–22: Tech. Sgt. Jason L. Norton
2006–01–07: 1st Lt. Jaime Lynn Campbell
2006–01–07: Spc. Michael Ignatius Edwards
2006–01–07: Spc. Jacob Eugene Melson
2006–01–07: CWO Chester William Troxel
2005–11–19: Pvt. Christopher Alcozer
2005–11–11: Staff Sgt. Stephen Sutherland
2005–10–19: Spc. Daniel D. Bartels
2005–10–18: Spc. Lucas Frantz
2005–10–02: Staff Sgt. Timothy J. Roark
2005–09–11: Sgt. Kurtis Dean Kama-O-Apelila Arcala
2005–09–05: Sgt. Matthew Charles Bohling
2005–08–16: Lance Cpl. Grant Fraser
2005–04–04: Lance Cpl. Jeremiah Kinchen
2004–08–29: A1C Carl Anderson, Jr.
2003–04–07: Capt. Eric Das
2003–07–17: Sgt. Mason Douglas Whetston

Mr. BEGICH. In addition to these fallen heroes, hundreds more servicemembers will forever contend with the physical and mental wounds suffered in service to our Nation.

I have had the honor to visit several of these brave soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and at the Elmendorf Warrior Transition Unit also. It is critical that the transition of our servicemembers from the care of the Defense Department to Veterans Affairs is as smooth and as comprehensive as possible. We must ensure the VA is funded to meet the current demands of this generation of veterans.

I am proud to have been one of the original cosponsors with Senator AKAKA on a bill signed into law by the President last month which will ensure 2-year advance funding for the VA. This allows the VA to focus on providing care for our veterans instead of worrying annually about their funding.

Today's veteran population is much different from all previous wars. Thanks to improvements in protective gear and equipment, many survive serious wounds which previously would have been fatal. We also have a much greater population of female veterans who have unique needs and require specialized care. Today's veterans often have families with exceptional needs.

In World War II, nearly one in five Americans served in the armed services. Today less than 1 percent of our population currently serves. Still, some 25 million veterans live among us, representing every conflict since World War II. Our commitment to each and every one of these veterans must be full, honorable, and proud.

We honor Veterans Day this week on the anniversary of the armistice that ended World War I. In my State, we also celebrate Women Veterans Day on November 9.

On these occasions, let us rededicate ourselves to our commitment to our Nation's veterans and service men and women so their sacrifice is never taken for granted or forgotten.

Thank you, Madam President. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BEGICH). The Senator from New York is recognized.

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

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

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of health care reform and on behalf of greater access to health care for all Americans. This weekend, the House took a historic step, passing a health care reform bill that ensures affordable, quality care for all, including a public plan that will bring real competition to the market and drive down costs. Passing this bill in the House represents a monumental step toward the goal of achieving meaningful reform this year and is the furthest we have come in the decades-long fight for health care reform in this country.

However, there is one aspect of the House bill about which I wish to voice my strong disagreement—the Stupak-Pitts amendment.

While proponents of the measure say this is a continuation of current Federal law, this amendment will, in fact, bring about significant change and dramatically limit reproductive health care in this country. This is government invading the personal lives of many Americans, establishing, for the first time, restrictions on people who pay for their own private health insurance. We all agree it is important to reduce abortions in this country and I have and will continue to work on many ways to reduce unintended pregnancies and to promote adoption. However, the Stupak amendment prohibits the public plan as well as private plans offered through the exchange, if they accept any subsidized customers, from covering abortion services, effectively banning abortion coverage in all health insurance plans in the new system, whether they be public or private. This ban puts the health of women and young girls at grave risk.

Proposing that women instead purchase a separate abortion rider is not only discriminatory but ridiculous. It would require women to essentially plan for an event that occurs in the most unplanned and sometimes emergency situations.

There are currently five States that require a separate rider for abortion coverage, and in these five States it is nearly impossible to find such a private insurance policy. In one State, North Dakota, one insurance company holds 91 percent of the State's health insurance market and refuses to even offer such a rider. A lack of access to full reproductive health care puts the lives of women and girls at grave risk.

This anti-choice measure poses greater restriction on low-income women and those who are more likely to receive some kind of subsidy and less likely to be able to afford a supplemental insurance policy. Denying low-income women reproductive coverage in this way is discriminatory and dangerous.

Without proper coverage, women will be forced to postpone care while attempting to find the money they need to pay for it—a delay that can lead to increased costs and graver health risks, particularly for younger girls, or these women will be forced to turn to dangerous, back-alley providers. Women and girls deserve better.

In fact, this amendment represents the only place in the entire health care bill where the opponents are actually correct: It limits access to medical care by giving the government, not the

patient and the doctor, the power to make medical decisions.

The Senate bill already ensures that no Federal tax dollars may be used to pay for reproductive services in any public or private insurance plan beyond cases of rape, incest, and life endangerment. The House language goes much further and should be removed from the final bill.

This health care package must move us forward, toward quality, affordable health care for all Americans. I ask my colleagues to oppose any similar amendment in the Senate and work to end disparities among race and gender in our health care system.

Thank you. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. GILLIBRAND). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

OMNIBUS HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I rise today in support of our Nation's veterans and in support of their families.

Ninety years ago tomorrow, our Nation marked the very first Armistice Day in recognition of the end of World War I. In 1954, Armistice Day became Veterans Day, and every year since, we have marked the occasion through ceremonies, pageants, parades, and other events designed to honor the men and women who have served this Nation so selflessly in the Armed Forces. I encourage all Americans to use the opportunity of Veterans Day to let those around you who have served our Nation, those in your community, know how thankful we are for their contributions.

I know that across our Nation there will be remembrances of those we have lost and honors to those who have served in the past or who are serving today, but we can and should do more to honor our Nation's veterans. We should make sure they have access to the health care we have promised. We should make sure their caregivers are given the support they need to assist our wounded warriors. We should expand health services for female veterans. We should do more for veterans in hard-to-reach rural areas. We should increase our mental health services for veterans because injuries to the brain deserve the same attention as injuries to the body.

These programs—access to health care, support to caregivers, services for female veterans, services to rural veterans, improved mental health services—are all included in the bills that have been put into the veterans package, the Caregiver and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2009. I have cosponsored a number of these bills and will passionately support this package. Our servicemembers stand up for America when on duty. America must stand up for our servicemembers when they return home.

The legislation before us has wide bipartisan support. It has been endorsed by organizations, including the Disabled American Veterans and the Paralyzed Veterans of America. It has been endorsed by the American Legion. It has been endorsed by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. It has been endorsed by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It has been endorsed by the Wounded Warrior Project. Each of these groups wants to see a vote on this omnibus package of support for our veterans and to see that vote happen now. But we in the Senate are not here debating this package, we are not here preparing to vote on this bill because a single Senator has objected to having an up-or-down vote. Our veterans deserve to have this Chamber debate this bill. They deserve to have this Chamber vote up or down on this bill.

Tomorrow we will honor our veterans through ceremonies across this Nation. But we should do more than simply honor our veterans; we should act to stand up for our veterans. We need to stand with them and their families as they have stood up for us when on duty. We should move expeditiously, and I encourage all Senators to support the effort to quickly have this bill before us for a debate and an up-or-down vote.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. KAUFMAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

RECOGNITION OF SERGEANT MAJOR GREGORY SYMES

Mr. KAUFMAN. Madam President, 90 years ago this Wednesday, President Wilson signed a proclamation marking the first anniversary of the Armistice that ended World War I. At the time, many believed the cruelty experienced by the combatants and civilian victims of that war would never be surpassed. Unfortunately, as we learned later, they were mistaken. But it was the tragedy of that conflict and the harrowing stories brought back from the trenches that led to the establishment of a day honoring America's veterans.

Veterans Day is a moment of pause to remember the sacrifices made by those who wore our Nation's uniform. It also presents an opportunity to reflect on the dual nature of our Federal Government.

When average Americans hear ''Federal employees,'' they usually think of the 1.8 million civilian government employees. However, it is all too often forgotten that the 1.4 million men and women serving in uniform are also Federal employees. Our Federal workforce has two legs—the civilian and the military. But they march together in step, because we depend on both and they depend on one another.

Without the military, we could not remain free and secure. Without the civilian Federal workforce, we could not keep America on the path toward prosperity and the continued pursuit of happiness. Civilian Federal employees work closely with the military not only to craft strategies and policies but also to pay, arm, and care for our troops.

While some choose to serve in uniform and others in civilian roles, there are many who do both. According to the 2006 study by the Office of Personnel Management, one out of every four civilian Federal employees is a military veteran. Moreover, a fifth of these are disabled veterans. And that is just in the executive branch. This number doesn't even include those who currently serve in the National Guard or the many veterans working right here on Capitol Hill and in the Federal Judiciary. They work in nearly every department and agency.

Not surprisingly, some of the agencies with the highest percentage of veterans are those that relate to law enforcement. The Pentagon too employs many veterans, as does the Department of Homeland Security. Almost half of the civilian employees in the Veterans Benefits Administration are veterans themselves. However, many Americans do not realize that roughly one in every three employees at the Department of Transportation is a veteran. The same is true of the Mine Safety and Health Administration at the Department of Labor. Over a third of those working at the U.S. Mint are veterans. I bet most Americans would be surprised to learn veterans make up a quarter of those who work at the Smithsonian's National Gallery of Art.

It would take me a long time to read through all the departments and agencies with large numbers of veterans on staff. But the point I emphasize is that so many of our Federal employees share a tradition of national service that began with their service in the military.

Today, I wish to continue my weekly tradition of recognizing an outstanding Federal employee by sharing the story of a man from my home State of Delaware. Not only does he fill a full-time job as a Federal technician for the Delaware National Guard, but he also recently completed a year of active-duty service.

CSM Gregory Symes had already served in the Delaware Army National Guard for 7 years when he started working as a Federal technician for the Guard in 1989. A graduate of John Dickinson High School in Wilmington, Gregory trained as an automotive mechanic. While he began his Federal employment in that role, he studied telecommunications and in 2001 became a telecommunications specialist for the Delaware Guard's Director of Information Management.

Gregory has served truly as a mentor to those working alongside him and he has risen to become the senior enlisted adviser to the battalion commander for the 722nd Troop Command. In this capacity, he is often given the task of looking after the well-being of other soldiers in the battalion.

Last month, Gregory completed a 1-year deployment on active duty with the 261st Signal Brigade, and he was stationed at Fort Bliss, NM, in support of Iraqi Freedom. Decorated for his service, Gregory has received the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, and the Noncommissioned Officers Professional Development Ribbon, among others.

He continues to serve with dedication and distinction in his Federal role with the Guard, staying in the forefront of ever-changing telecommunications technology. For Gregory and all the other veterans and National Guard members who work as Federal employees, sacrifice and service are a life's pursuit. They are a constant reminder of why Veterans Day is so important.

While on Memorial Day we remember those who never made it home, on Veterans Day we dedicate ourselves to the task of caring for those who did. Care and gratitude for our veterans remains a sacred responsibility, and one that was as relevant to those who fought at Bunker Hill as it is to those stationed in Baghdad today.

George Washington once said:

> The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their country.

I hope all Americans will take the opportunity this week to express their appreciation of all our veterans, especially those who continue to serve in the public as Federal employees. I invite my colleagues to join me in thanking Command Sergeant Major Symes, the Federal employee of the Delaware National Guard, and all who have served our Nation in uniform. They continue to make us all proud.

REMEMBERING SAMUEL J. HEYMAN

Madam President, I cannot let this occasion pass without also noting with sadness the passing yesterday of Samuel J. Heyman. Each week, I have been speaking from this desk about our excellent Federal employees. I continue to do so because I believe that Americans need to hear more about the outstanding men and women who serve in government, and we need to do more to encourage our graduates to consider careers in public service.

Samuel J. Heyman was a champion of this cause. Mr. Heyman attended Yale University and Harvard Law School, and he felt called to public service as a young law graduate in 1963. Working at the Justice Department under then Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, Mr. Heyman served as chief assistant U.S. attorney for his native Connecticut.

After 5 years, he left government service to take over his family's real estate development business, but he would never forget the sense of duty and pride he felt as a Federal employee. Mr. Heyman knew that Federal employees were those who shared his level of determination and work ethic. He knew that the men and women who choose to spend their careers working for the American people not only deserve more credit than they typically receive, but he understood as well that they have the benefit of looking back on their careers with the great satisfaction of having made a difference.

It is for that reason that, in 2001, Mr. Heyman founded the Partnership for Public Service, which promotes Federal employment, and he received the Presidential Citizen Medal last year for his work as its chairman. The partnership also awards annual Service to America Medals in several categories, which have affectionately been called ''Sammie'' in his honor. I have been privileged to be able to share the stories of Sammie winners from this desk.

It is with deep regret that I share with my colleagues this news of Mr. Heyman's passing. A respected business leader, philanthropist, and a champion of public service, Mr. Heyman will be truly missed. My thoughts are with his wife Ronnie, their four children, and their nine grandchildren, as well as his mother, who also survives him.

I also extend my condolences to the Partnership for Public Service family. I know they will continue working to carry on Mr. Heyman's legacy. I hope my colleagues will join me in remembering Samuel J. Heyman and his tireless efforts to inspire a new generation to pursue careers in public service and to celebrate the enormous contribution made by Federal employees to our great Nation.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

HEALTH CARE DISPARITIES

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, this Congress has taken a giant step forward in our effort to reform the Nation's health care system. Saturday evening, the House of Representatives passed its bill, which is estimated by the Congressional Budget Office to provide affordable health coverage to 96 percent of Americans while reducing our deficit by $109 billion over the next 10 years.

On behalf of the 760,000 uninsured Marylanders and the countless more who are underinsured or facing huge premium increases next year, I am encouraged by my colleagues' success, and I look forward to debating this most important issue here in the Senate in the weeks ahead.

Today, I rise to discuss an issue that has received scant attention on the floor of the Senate, and that is health disparities. It is an issue directly affecting 1 out of every 3 Americans: the 45 million Latinos, 37 million African Americans, 13 million Asians, 2.3 million Native Americans and Alaskan Natives, and 400,000 Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in our Nation. While they represent one-third of our Nation's population, they are fully one-half of the uninsured. So when we enact legislation that expands access to millions of uninsured Americans, it will make a difference in minority communities, in overall minority health, and in the health of our Nation.

But it is not enough to just get people health insurance coverage. Research tells us that even after accounting for those who lack health insurance, minority racial and ethnic groups face inequities in access and treatment, and they have adverse health care outcomes at higher rates than Caucasians.

That is right, even when insurance status, income, age, and severity of conditions are comparable, racial and ethnic minorities tend to receive lower quality health care, so coverage is not enough.

Despite many attempts over the years by health policymakers, providers, researchers, and others, wide disparities still persist in many facets of health care. When it comes to equitable care for minorities, low income, geographic, cultural and language barriers, and racial bias have been found to be common obstacles. These inequities carry a high cost in terms of life expectancy, quality of life, and efficiency.

And they cost our Nation billions of dollars each year. Researchers from Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland found that between 2003 and 2006, racial and ethnic disparities cost the Nation more than $229 billion in excess direct medical costs.

Adding in indirect costs reveals a staggering $1.24 trillion from lost wages and premature and preventable deaths and disabilities. By elevating the focus on health disparities, we can bring down these costs and improve the quality of care across the board. So health disparities should matter to us

all, in terms of improved value for our health care dollars, both public and private.

If we are to improve the health care status of America, we must focus on these inequities and make a concerted effort to eliminate them. There is no better place to commit ourselves to that effort than in the health reform legislation that we are about to consider. There is no better time to begin than right now.

Examples of grim health disparities are found in all racial and ethnic minority groups and across a broad range of diseases and conditions. The overall life expectancy for African Americans is 5.3 years less than Whites, but as the Kaiser Family Foundation has reported, health disparities begin even before birth.

The use of prenatal care varies widely by race, with 88 percent of White mothers receiving care in the first trimester of a pregnancy, but only 76 percent of Black mothers and 77 percent of Latino mothers.

This disparity is evident at birth, when Black women experience preterm births at a rate 50 percent higher than White women—18.5 percent compared to 11.7 percent, and the rates of low-birth weight babies are also higher among Black babies—14 percent, compared to the 8.3 percent national average.

In August of 1967, 8 months before his assassination, Martin Luther King addressed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Tenth Anniversary Convention in a speech entitled, ''Where Do We Go from Here?''

He said that to answer that question:

> We must first honestly recognize where we are now. When the Constitution was written, a strange formula to determine taxes and representation declared that the Negro was sixty percent of a person. Today another curious formula seems to declare that he is fifty percent of a person. ''Of the good things in life, the Negro has approximately half those of whites. Of the bad things in life, he has twice those of whites.

He goes on to discuss housing, income, and employment rates, before saying, ''the rate of infant mortality among Negroes is double that of whites.'' Today, in 2009, the Kaiser Family Foundation reports that the overall rate of infant mortality in the United States is 6.9 deaths per 1,000 live births, a white infant mortality rate is at 5.7 deaths, but African Americans have an infant mortality rate more than twice that of Whites at 13.6 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.

So 46 years after Dr. King's ''I Have a Dream'' speech, and 41 years after his death, we have not made progress in closing the gap in infant mortality.

There is no other way to put it: this is a crisis, it has been a crisis for decades, we have known it, and we have failed in our response.

Health disparities continue through life, and the data cut across diagnoses and conditions. These are just a few of the statistics:

African-American children have a 60 percent higher rate of asthma than White children and visited the emergency room for asthma related services 4.5 times more often than White children in 2004.

The incidence of diabetes is nearly twice as high in African Americans as in Whites. Complications from diabetes and death from the disease are also higher in African Americans, and the rate of hospital admissions for uncontrolled diabetes for African Americans and Latinos is nearly 5 and 3 times, respectively, the rate for Whites and Asians.

High blood pressure accounts for 18 percent of the Nation's overall death rate, but 41 percent of deaths in African-American women and 50 percent of deaths in African-American men are attributed to hypertension.

Regarding early detection of colon cancer, African Americans, Asians, Native Americans and Latinos over age 50 all have lower rates than Whites when it comes to receiving any form of colon cancer screening. This disparity increased between 1999 and 2006.

Incidence of, and death rates from, kidney cancer in Native Americans and Alaska Natives are higher than in any other racial or ethnic group.

Native Americans and Alaska Natives die from heart disease much earlier than the overall population—36 percent are under age 65 compared with only 17 percent for the U.S., according to the American Heart Association's data.

Perhaps the greatest disparities are in the rates of HIV and AIDS. African Americans experience an AIDS case rate nearly 10 times that of Whites: 60.1 per 100,000 adults and adolescents, compared to 6. per 100,000 for Whites. Latinos and Native Hawaiians and other Pacific islanders have an AID case rate nearly 3 times that of Whites, at 20.4 per 100,000.

Disparities also affect oral health care, which—as I have discussed on the floor before—is an integral part of overall health care—and without which, patients cannot have good overall health. Regardless of age, minorities are less likely than Whites to have visited a dentist in the past year. The percentage of people who had untreated dental disease is substantially higher for African Americans and Latinos than for Whites, and the prevalence of periodontal disease is 2.5 times greater for Native Americans and Alaskan Natives than for Whites. We know that periodontal disease leads to heart disease, brain infections, and other serious illnesses.

Last year, the American Journal of Public Health published research showing the vast disparities in mortality rates. Using data for the decade between 1991 and 2000 from the National Center for Health Statistics, the researchers, including Dr. David Satcher, the 16th Surgeon General of the United States, found that the mortality rate for African-American infants and adults aged 25 to 54 years was more than double that of Whites.

Had the mortality rates of the two races been comparable during that decade, the researchers calculate that 886,202 deaths could have been averted.

Let me repeat that—the lives of nearly 900,000 African Americans could have been lengthened and the quality of life improved for many more if we had been able to close the gaps in health disparities.

This chart illustrates the higher death rate observed among African Americans across Maryland and the United States, based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data, for the years 1999 to 2003. The striped bar shows that in the U.S., African Americans had a 31.5 percent higher death rate from all causes of disease than Whites.

Maryland has a comparable discrepancy at 30.8 percent, shown by the red bar. The number of excess deaths varies by county, with the lowest discrepancy in death rates in Charles County—4.1%—and the highest discrepancy in Talbot County—64.5%.

We cannot afford to wait. We need action at every level: local, State, and Federal, but the leadership must come from the Secretary of Health and Human Services. HHS will need a strengthened institutional capacity to achieve these goals.

Codifying the Office of Minority Health and elevating it to report directly to the Secretary will empower the agency to continue its important work—protecting and improving the health of racial and ethnic minority populations, advising the Secretary of HHS on the needs of minority communities, coordinating and supporting research and demonstration programs, and supporting the community organizations that enhance outreach and education efforts. These offices will be able to promote activities related to disease prevention, wellness, access to care, and research related to racial and ethnic minorities with the goal of reducing and eliminating disparities.

The offices will be authorized to administer grant programs and also help train health professionals to care for diverse populations. The bill passed by the House on Saturday includes a provision to codify the Office of Minority Health.

I will be working to expand that provision in the Senate bill so that it reflects concerns echoed by many health advocates and provider groups across the nation who know that we must marshal the resources necessary to eliminate disparities.

The bill reported by the HELP Committee contains many important provisions, including section 221, which would codify and increase the authority of the Office of Women's Health across several agencies in HHS. I believe strongly that the Office of Minority Health should receive the same prioritization that the Office of Women's Health is set to receive, particularly in light of the vast amount of data documenting racial and ethnic

disparities. This is really an issue of equality in the efforts to achieve health equity. As we champion efforts to achieve equity in women's health, let us also do the same for minority health.

I will also be working to ensure the codification of the Office of Minority Health at HHS and the network of minority health offices throughout the Department's various agencies.

I will close with another quote from Dr. King, who said that ''of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhuman.'' As with other forms of inequality in America, it is within our power to change it, and I ask my colleagues to join me in the quest to do so without further delay.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

FORT HOOD VICTIMS

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I rise today in honor of those killed last week at Fort Hood. They died serving their country, and that means they died as heroes.

Tomorrow, as we honor the service and sacrifice of the brave men and women of America's military on Veterans Day, I ask all Americans to say a prayer for these 13 folks who gave the ultimate sacrifice and the 30 who were injured. Remember them and their families, their friends and the places they called home as we pay our respects.

Today, flags are flying at halfstaff across Montana in honor of the 13 victims killed and 30 wounded. One of the men who died was a veteran of Montana's Army National Guard. Michael Grant Kahill worked throughout Montana for many years as a guardsman and as a physician's assistant. To Michael's wife Joleen and to all of his loved ones, Montana joins the rest of the Nation in saying that our thoughts and prayers are with you.

What happened at Fort Hood doesn't make sense. It never will. But working together, we need to focus on keeping something such as this from happening again. What can we do right now? We can keep working together to live up to the promises we make to all of our troops while serving our country in the field or after they come home, and we can improve access to health care and mental health care that they deserve.

I join in mourning the lives lost at Fort Hood. I ask all Americans to keep those 13 heroes in their thoughts and prayers, and I urge my colleagues to keep working together to better serve all the men and women who have worn our country's uniform, and their families and their communities.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

THE CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I rise to talk about the Kerry-Boxer climate change bill which, sadly, was reported out of the EPW Committee, contrary to its rules and precedents, without any discussion or amendment.

First of all, let me underscore that I think it is very unfortunate that a 1,000-page bill, a bill with enormous potential impact on our economy—indeed, on our way of life—was pushed out of committee with no Republicans being present, with not a single amendment being considered, and, in my opinion, directly contrary to the very rules and precedents of the committee. But I want to focus on specific provisions of the bill that are particularly troubling to me that underscore how serious a matter this is and what an enormous impact it could have on our economy and, indeed, on our way of life.

I guess in many ways the title of the presentation is ''Why Carbon Credits Don't Matter.'' So many folks, so many companies, so many people particularly within the beltway are concerned about their allocation of carbon credits. But because of these significant sections in the bill which also exist word-for-word in the Waxman-Markey bill, the carbon credits will not matter because sections 705 and 707 will shut down significant economic activity, no matter what carbon credits certain people and certain companies have.

Let me explain what I am talking about. Section 705(e) and section 707 are very important in the bill. Basically, section 705(e) says that we are to track the global measurement of greenhouse gas emissions and specifically to see if they are held below a threshold set in the bill, a goal set in the bill of 450 parts per million carbon dioxide equivalent. Then section 707 says that, beginning July 1, 2015, if the global concentrations are above this 450 parts per million line, then:

> . . . the President shall direct relevant Federal agencies to use existing statutory authority to take appropriate actions identified in the reports submitted under sections 705 and 706 and to address any shortfalls identified in such reports.

What does that mean? That means if you bust this 450 parts per million line, the President does not have authority to take action; he is mandated to take every administrative action possible, to use every agency in the Federal Government under him—he shall direct them to address whatever shortfalls there are between that 450 parts per million line and where the measurements are.

One significant factor in all of this, whether we can ever reach that goal of limiting greenhouse gases to 450 parts per million, is what other countries, particularly the developing world, are going to do.

One thing that is really problematic with this entire plan is the G5 developing countries and Russia have made it crystal clear that they will not accept any hard caps. I cite here a clear quote from a top Chinese Foreign Ministry official, a clear quote from the Minister of State for Environment of India and the top economic adviser of Russia's President about that issue. All of these statements and many more make it crystal clear that the G5 and Russia will not accept any such hard cap.

This is a pretty significant issue. Because of this, I wrote to the EPA on July 15 and asked several questions. One is basic to this issue: What does your modeling say if the G5 and Russia reject hard caps? That is a pretty significant scenario because it seems pretty clear that it is the scenario that will happen based on the statements of those countries. The EPA answered that it has not even analyzed that scenario. These other countries have made it clear they are going to reject hard caps. The EPA has not analyzed this scenario.

Because of that, I then went to the Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. That is the leading modeling expert in these matters that Federal Government agencies, starting with the EPA, depend upon. In fact, the EPA helped direct us to this laboratory. I asked the same question: What does the modeling say if the G5 and Russia reject hard caps as they have absolutely promised to do? The Pacific Northwest National Laboratory answered that none of the models they use—and they use 10 models—none of those models, under this scenario, produced global concentrations at or below 450 ppm of CO-equivalent greenhouse gases. So under all of those models we break through this goal set in the bill.

This chart shows what DOE's specific Northwest National Laboratory model predicts when the G5 and Russia reject all hard caps. Already we are in the four hundreds. In about 1 year we break through the 450 limit—451. Then it goes up from there.

What does that mean in the context of this legislation and, specifically, the sections I talked about a minute ago? Well, the legislation says that on July 1, 2015, if this green line is above 450, then the President is mandated to take whatever action is necessary: Use all tools available to get us back to this 450 limit.

Under this scenario, the G5 and Russia rejecting hard caps, which is an absolute certainty based on their clear pronouncements, this mandate, under those significant sections of the legislation, both Kerry-Boxer and Waxman-Markey, exactly the same language in both, this mandate goes into effect and would absolutely go into effect.

What does that mean? Well, the first thing it means is carbon credits, which everybody is so focused on, so many people and companies are fixated on, carbon credits will not matter if your project, if your economic activity takes any discretionary Federal permit because, beginning July 1, 2015, the President will be mandated, not authorized, not encouraged, nothing is suggested, he will be mandated to take

any action possible to get us down to that limit. That would include denying all discretionary permit requests.

What else does it mean? It means, under that mandate in the law, you can bet that every leftwing environmental group in the world, much less in this country, will sue to block all economic activity that requires discretionary permits. Quite frankly, they will have a very compelling case. They will point to this legislative language, if it is enacted, and say: Time out. The President is not just authorized to do this, the President is not just encouraged to do this, the President is mandated to take every action he can, which clearly would include denying all discretionary permits to push that curve, that green curve, back down to 450 or as low as it can go.

So what does that mean? That means carbon credits are meaningless if you need a discretionary permit for certain economic activity or for any new economic project. This is a very important aspect of the bill. Again, it is in Kerry-Boxer. Exactly the same language is also in Waxman-Markey as it passed the full House of Representatives.

This gives an enormous mandate to the President of the United States to absolutely take action once those global greenhouse gas emissions get above 450. So my message is clear, particularly to the companies that have supported this legislation because they have been assured certain carbon credits.

The message is clear: Carbon credits will not matter if any of your activities, if any of your new projects or proposed projects requires any discretionary Federal permit. To deliver that message, crystal clear, to those companies, in particular, tomorrow I am writing to a significant leading handful of those companies that so far have supported the legislation, pointing out the enormous impact of those sections, 705 and 707, and asking them to focus very clearly on what it means to their projects, to their economic activity, to their bottom line because, again, carbon credits will not matter once this enormous mandate and authority of the President goes into effect.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time is 12:35 p.m.

Mr. VITTER. I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:35 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m., and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. UDALL of Colorado).

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the bill and urge its quick and prompt adoption.

In doing so, I wish to pay tribute to a fallen warrior from the State of Maryland who died in the terrible massacre at Fort Hood. I wish to express my condolences to all families who suffered the loss of life or were injured at that terrible shooting. It was a terrible tragedy for them at Fort Hood, for their families, and for our country.

We know the 13 families are now dealing with the loss of loved ones, and 30 other families have members who were wounded in the attack. We in Maryland suffered a casualty as well. I am here today to pay my respects and express my condolences to the family of LTC Juanita Warman, a wonderful woman who moved to Maryland 5 years ago as a call to duty. She had a 25-year military career in both the Active and Reserve Army. She devoted her career to serving fellow soldiers.

Lieutenant Colonel Warman was a nurse practitioner. Her field was in psychiatric and emotional counseling. She served in other parts of the country and came as a call to duty to Perry Point Veterans Hospital in Maryland. There she served to help our wounded warriors. Perry Point is the designated facility in Maryland to help wounded warriors, those who bear the permanent injury of war, who bear the wounds of either emotional or mental illness. She was absolutely on their side. She was viewed as a consummate professional by her colleagues and by the people who relied upon her for her talented counseling.

A master's degree in nursing, she was an expert in posttraumatic stress as well as traumatic brain injury. She devoted her career to helping these soldiers as she did her family. Her family saw her as a mother to two, a grandmother to eight, and two stepchildren as well. She was raised in a military family. She understood the bonds between fellow soldiers. She also volunteered as part of a program called the Maryland Yellow Ribbon Program to help soldiers reintegrate into the community. She developed guidelines to dispel myths about PTSD. She particularly would reach out to women soldiers who had unique challenges, both in their own life and the lives of their families.

She provided mental health counseling to soldiers coming out of a war zone trying to come into a family zone so that family zone didn't become a battleground as well. She also was well known for her work at Ramstein Hospital. She traveled there in many instances to help our soldiers make the transition from battlefield to the hospital in Germany to back here. She received an Army commendation medal for her meritorious service at Ramstein. She was a great soldier.

She was at Fort Hood less than 24 hours. She was getting ready to deploy to Iraq. She was ready to go, though she was sad to go. From her last posting on Facebook, she knew she would be away for the holidays from her beloved husband Philip, her children, grandchildren, and stepchildren. But there were no stepchildren; they were all her children to Lieutenant Colonel Warman.

We are going to miss her. Her family is going to miss her. We are going to miss her in Maryland because she was an active member of the community. The Army is going to miss her. Most of all, those who need mental health counseling will miss her. We are so sorry this happened to her.

There will be those who will want to wear yellow ribbons and black armbands and have flags at half mast. And we should. We should do all the symbols to honor what happened to those who fell at Fort Hood. But the best way to honor the people in the massacre at Fort Hood, to honor the people who have been wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan is to pass this legislation.

The legislation pending is the Military Construction and VA health bill. There is so much good in this bill that will provide medical services to those who bear the permanent and sometimes invisible wounds of war. While we want to salute those who fell at Fort Hood and on the battlegrounds of Iraq and Afghanistan, the way we honor their memory and their service, the service of all who have been abroad, is by making sure when they come home, they get the medical and social services they need, a bridge to get them back into civilian life.

Again, my condolences to the Warman family and to all who fell, but most of all I thank everybody for their service. Let's thank them not only with words but with deeds. Let's pass this bill.

I yield the floor.

AMENDMENT NO. 2740 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2730

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside.

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

Mr. AKAKA. I call up amendment No. 2740 and ask for its consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Hawaii [Mr. AKAKA] proposes an amendment numbered 2740.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To extend the authority for a regional office of the Department of Veterans Affairs in the Republic of the Philippines)

On page 52, after line 21, add the following:

SEC. 229. Section 315(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking ''December 31, 2009'' and inserting ''December 31, 2010''.

Mr. AKAKA. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, this week, thousands of families across our country are stopping to honor the